Reviewl Article

Towards gender egalitarianism: Sexual violence, exploitation and Srimad Bhagavad Gita's teachings for sustainable development

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Abstract

In the current era, sexual violence, exploitation, and gender-based violence have extensive effects, including physical and emotional harm, social stigma, and trauma. These issues are global concerns and require education, awareness, and policy amendments. Any harmful or unwanted sexual act without consent refers to sexual violence. In contrast, sexual exploitation involves the abuse of power or position to coerce sexual acts, and gender-based violence includes any harm against a person based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Drawing from the teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, a sacred Hindu text, the study explores principles of self-control, compassion, dharma, and non-attachment to cultivate healthy relationships and prevent harm. By promoting character development, the Gita can guide youth toward a moral compass, supporting Quality Education (SDG 4). Its emphasis on selflessness, duty, and respect for all beings aligns with Gender Equality, Reduced Inequalities, and Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 5, 10 and 3, respectively). Additionally, Gita's lessons on self-control can help young individuals develop healthy attitudes toward sexuality and build meaningful relationships based on mutual respect and trust.

Introduction

In the pursuit of a more just and equitable world, the intersection of gender, violence, and

sustainable development remains a critical area of concern. Sexual violence and exploitation, pervasive across cultures and contexts, undermine the very fabric of society. Gender egalitarianism has been defined by some as the actual state of gender equality in a culture[1], as the view that women's position shouldn't be based ontheir reproductive behaviour and that men and women should achieve some level of equality in both the public and private spheres of society.[2] In contrast, others concentrate on perceptions of women's roles and status in relation to men's.[3] Gender egalitarianism envisions a world where individuals, regardless of their gender, enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and dignity. Achieving gender

equality is not only a moral imperative but also essential for the sustainable progress of society. In addition to tackling overt forms of prejudice, this also challenges systemic, subtle biases that are present in many facets of society.

Sexual exploitation is characterised as any actual or attempted misuse of a position involving vulnerability, disparate power, or trust for sexual purposes. This includes actions aimed at gaining monetary, social, or political advantages from another person's sexual use. It encompasses involvement in sex work, sexual servitude, forced marriage, or the production of pornographic materials. On the other hand, sexual violence or abuse is defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether exerted through force or under equal or coercive conditions.[4] The collection of literature affirms that sexual exploitation can manifest in various ways, encompassing activities such as sexual grooming, engaging in sexual acts in exchange for concrete (money, drugs, alcohol, etc.) or abstract rewards (attention, affection, etc.), the creation or dissemination of sexual images, and abuse perpetrated by an individual who has ostensibly established a consensual relationship with a young person.[5-7]

Sexual violence and exploitation persist across cultures, impacting millions of lives and perpetuating social inequality. These acts, ranging from workplace harassment to human trafficking, undermine social cohesion and sustain gender-based injustices. Rooted in historical injustices and prevailing norms, these issues are sustained by power dynamics that uphold gender inequalities. Research indicates that sexual violence often stems from entrenched gender norms and power disparities, reinforcing beliefs in male superiority and female submissiveness. Moreover, societal expectations tie a man's identity to his sexual conquests. Intersectional analyses reveal the importance of informed policies, particularly regarding sexual consent within commercial exploitation contexts. Recent studies have shed light on the experiences of Venezuelan women in the Caribbean, exposing the exploitation, trafficking, violence, and discrimination they face, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.[8-10]

Intersections of sustainable development and gender equality

Sustainable development is a form of development that prioritises the well-being of humans, ecological integrity, gender equality, and social justice both in the present and for future generations.[11] Scholarly studies that look at how gender equality and sustainable development interact highlight the fundamental connection between these two important aspects.[12] Establishing a link between gender equality and sustainable development is crucial for ethical, practical, and transformative reasons. Firstly, it is a moral obligation to create equitable gender relations that uphold the human rights and dignity of women, considering diverse identities and circumstances. Second, in order to keep women from becoming victims and to maintain their crucial roles in providing support to society as a whole, it is imperative to address the disproportionate effects of environmental and economic issues on them. Thirdly, improving the efficiency of resources, encouraging sustainability, and creating resilient systems depend on women's empowerment.[11]

Maintaining all human rights, including access to resources like food, water, and security, is necessary for achieving gender equality. To be fulfilled, these rights must be recognised, empowered, and challenged by current institutions; just acknowledging them is insufficient. Women's mobilisation and group action are essential to this endeavour.[13]

Gender inclusive policies and societal well-being

Research consistently shows that gender-inclusive policies improve economic, health, and educational outcomes, which contribute to the development of sustainable communities.[14,15] The care sector, which women mostly run, is highly dependent on unpaid and under-compensated care labour. For instance, investing in the growth of care work as a collective help may boost economic growth, provide employment, and enhance well-being without adding to carbon emissions.[16]

Addressing gender disparities for broader sustainability objectives

Achievement of sustainable development goals is hindered greatly if gender inequality is a prevailing issue in society.[11] Elimination of persisting issues of gender gaps in areas such as healthcare, job prospects, and education is not only a step towards gender equality but also supports the central tenets of sustainable development.[17] Numerous indices have been developed to measure gender

differences, one of which is the Global Gender Gap Index of The World Economic Forum (WEF), which aims to evaluate disparities among both genders in four primary domains, namely economic engagement and prospects, educational achievement, health and survival, and political leadership. These help in working towards changes in the legislative framework, equal accessibility of laws, and challenging deep-rooted norms of the society for gender equality. Broadly, these initiatives can also include solutions to unforeseen global challenges such as pandemics or novel developments like digitisation and climate change.[18]

Role of ethical dimensions in gender-inclusive sustainable development

Gender inequalities lead to limitations in the accessibility of resources for women. It also takes away their freedom of decision-making in many aspects, resulting in achieving SDGs. Research suggests that power inequalities and gender disparities are maintained by the use of violence to exercise control over resources.[19] Incorporating ethical and spiritual aspects into gender-inclusive sustainable development initiatives can lead to new insights and increase the efficacy of programs.[20] The principles of justice, kindness, and equality that are emphasised in the teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita may be used to analyse gender equality in sustainable development initiatives.

Empowerment and participation as catalysts for sustainable development

Promoting fair involvement with decision-making processes is critical for long-term growth, irrespective of gender. Gender equality not only coincides with ethical standards, but it also maximises individual potential and promotes societal resilience.[21,22] Empowering women small-scale farmers results in real benefits such as increased food security and environmentally friendly practices. Research shows that when women have equal access to resources, their farm yields rise, consequently improving global food security. Furthermore, various crops grown by smallholder farmers improve resistance to environmental shocks.[16]

Srimad Bhagavad Gita's teachings: A guiding light

The holy scripture Srimad Bhagavad Gita offers timeless knowledge.[23] It is a part of the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata, ranging from chapters 23 to 40 of Book IV, consisting of 700 verses. It offers significant life lessons through discussions

Figure 1: Theoretical framework for gender egalitarianism and sustainable development through the lens of Srimad Bhagavad Gita

between Lord Sri Krishna and Arjuna that transcend time, culture, and religion. It encourages courage and gender equality by recognising the eternal soul and endorsing dignity regardless of gender, caste, or religion. Additionally, its teachings on self-control foster healthy attitudes toward sexuality and relationships, contributing to a more just and violence-free society. These principles coincide with sustainable development goals, emphasising mindful behaviour for the betterment of society.[24]

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the study is formed on the basis of ethical and philosophical teachings of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, which is considered to be a highly regarded ancient Hindu text. The framework aims to integratefour fundamental ideas from the Srimad Bhagavad Gita: the pursuit of self-realisation, karma (action),dharma (righteous duty), and inter connectedness and holistic sustainable development, through which issues related to gender equality, exploitation, and sexual violence in the context of sustainable development can be viewed and addressed.

Dharma and ethical foundations

The framework highlights the concept of Dharma, focusing on individuals' moral obligations within social structures. Applied to issues of sexual abuse and exploitation, dharma encourages an examination of moral principles and fosters a deeper understanding of gender roles and equity. Numerous verses in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita emphasise the significance of Dharma as the foundation of morality and ethical conduct.

Shloka 2.51 and 3.16, for example, portray Dharma as a guiding principle that goes beyond simple prohibitions and, at the same time, highlights the significance of one's moral duty to align one's actions with one's intrinsic nature.

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः |
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ||**2.51**||

"The wise endowed with equanimity of intellect, abandon attachment to the fruits of actions, which bind one to the cycle of life and death. By working in such consciousness, they attain the state beyond all suffering"

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः |
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति||**3.16**||

"O Parth, those who do not accept their responsibility in the cycle of sacrifice established by the Vedas are sinful. They live only for the delight of their senses; indeed, their lives are in vain"

Shlokas 16.1, 16.2, and 16.3 further expand on the ethical dimensions of Dharma, highlighting its contextual nature and the significance of moral obligation and altruistic deeds, especially with regard to the safety and well-being of individuals.

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः |
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम्||**16.1**||

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्याग: शान्तिरपैशुनम् |
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ||**16.2**||

तेज: क्षमा धृति: शौचमद्रोहोनातिमानिता |
भवन्ति सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत ||**16.3**||

"The Supreme Divine Personality said: O scion of Bharat, these are the saintly virtues of those endowed with a divine nature—fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastness in spiritual knowledge, charity, control of the senses, sacrifice, study of the sacred books, austerity, and straight forwardness; non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, restraint from fault-finding, compassion toward all living beings, absence of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, and lack of fickleness; vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, bearing enmity toward none, and absence of vanity"

Ethical decision-making: Srimad Bhagavad Gita's explanation of the ethical basis of Dharma empowers people to make moral decisions for themselves and their communities. Communities can establish a climate that discourages sexual violence by coordinating activities with moral obligations and altruistic behaviour. Promoting a Dharma-based culture fosters a sense of community responsibility for stopping and dealing with sexual assault.[25]

Redefining gender roles and promoting inclusivity: Dharma promotes equality of opportunity and treatment while questioning established gender conventions. By reviewing policies, encouraging gender-inclusive education, and dispelling stereotypes, social institutions can put these lessons into practice.[26] The Bhagavad

Gita's ideal of fair and equal treatment can be reflected in the diverse and inclusive settings that workplaces and educational institutions can cultivate.[27,28]

Empowerment and self-realisation for resilience: Dharma's focus on self-realisation implies the cruciality of empowering individuals. Initiatives Programs that offer psychological support, education, and skill development enable people to identify and reject exploitation. People who are empowered and led by the Dharma's precepts actively contribute to the welfare of society. By ensuring that people have the skills and knowledge to overcome obstacles, the use of Dharma in empowerment efforts lowers their susceptibility to exploitation and strengthens communities as a whole.[29,30]

Holistic sustainable development through ethical governance: Dharma's holistic perspective, which places a strong emphasis on moral leadership, is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. By incorporating these principles into their decision-making procedures, leaders can make sure that economic, social, and environmental policies are morally righteous and take into account how they will affect one another in the long run.[31-33]

Cultivating compassion and support for survivors: Dharma emphasises the value of empathy and compassion. These lessons can be put into practice by setting up networks of support for people who have experienced sexual exploitation and abuse. People can heal and reintegrate into society by fostering an environment of understanding and acceptance. Responding with compassion helps create a supportive culture in society, which lowers stigma and promotes survivors' well-being as they work toward recovery.[34]

Karma and ethical decision-making

Srimad Bhagavad Gita's concept of karma is an essential building block for moral decision-making that can be used to navigate the intricacies of social issues like gender equality, exploitation, and sexual abuse. Fundamentally, karma stresses the idea that all actions have repercussions because they are motivated by intention. It is based on the universal law of cause and effect. This idea is deep-seated in the moral principle of the scripture and encourages

thoughtful consideration of the moral repercussions of both individual and collective actions.

Shlokas 3.6 and 2.64 illuminate the challenging internal conflicts faced by an individual, due to which arises a difficulty in holding on to morality. In the Shloka, Sri Krishna suggests that individuals can truly be ethical when there is harmony between their outward actions and inner intentions and should be cautious against merely controlling outward actions while allowing immoral thoughts to internally persist. Therefore, a focus on only outward actions is not sufficient. Instead, a sincere commitment towards moral values is crucial in both actions and underlying beliefs to bring a meaningful change while addressing sexual abuse and exploitation. It is also necessary on the part of a leader to consider this while decision making processes.

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् |

इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचार: स उच्यते ||**3.6**||

"Those who restrain the external organs of action, while continuing to dwell on sense objects in the mind, certainly delude themselves and are to be called hypocrites"

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् |

आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ||**2.64**||

"But the self-controlled Sådhaka, while enjoying the various sense-objects through his senses, which are disciplined and free from likes and dislikes, attains placidity of mind"

Shloka 10.28 is pertinent to ethical decision-making and karma, especially when it comes to sexual behaviour. In it, special emphasis has been placed upon the significance of inner intentions and ethical obligations in sexual gratification by differentiating between two viewpoints, namely "Beastly Gratification"- having sex for the gratification of desire without any regard to morality or ethical ideals, which implies a "beastly" behaviour motivated solely by desires regardless of morality; and "Virtuous Conduct"- self- restraining sexual conduct with self-control, motivated by the need to procreate, and guided by the wisdom of the scripture is regarded as "virtue". The latter places emphasis on actions guided by self-discipline,

commitment to principles, and regard for the greater ethical framework and ethical dimensions of karma.

आयुधानामहं वज्रं धेनूनामस्मि कामधुक् |

प्रजनश्चास्मि कन्दर्प: सर्पाणामस्मि वासुकि: ||10.28||

"The intention is to show that sexual enjoyment indulged in by sensual men for the gratification of the sense is beastly and hardly consistent with virtue; only such enjoyment as is indulged in by men of self-control only for the sake of procreation, and as enjoined by the scriptures, is consistent with virtue and, therefore, good"

By applying this perspective to modern issues like sexual abuse and exploitation, the framework implies that moral judgments on intimacy should take into account both the actions and the motivations behind them. A culture of polite and consensual interactions is fostered by encouraging people to interact in relationships with self-control, respect, and adherence to ethical values.

Personal conduct and introspection:

Individuals can use the karma principle as a guide for their behaviour, particularly when it comes to interpersonal relationships and interactions. Individuals can make a positive impact towards a much more moral and respectful society by exercising self-control and thinking about the ethical consequences of their conduct, which would ultimately promote reflection and self-awareness while instilling a sense of accountability for actions and decisions made. By this, individuals can get a sense of how their actions affect other people and society at large.

Ethical decision-making in relationships:

Individuals can use the Karma principle to improve their decisions when it comes to intimacy and relationships. A culture of respect and understanding amongst people can be built by acting with good intentions, exercising consent, and following moral guidelines in interpersonal interactions so that relationships that are consensual and healthy can be encouraged, reducing the risk of harm and creating an environment where everyone feels respected and valued.

Ethical leadership and decision-making in institutions:

Leaders all over a range of institutions, including corporate, governmental, and educational institutions, can incorporate the concept of Karma into their decision-making process. A culture of integrity and responsible leadership is facilitated by giving ethical issues a top priority and taking the whole picture into account when making decisions. It promotes an environment at work or in an institution that values moral behaviour, transparency, and social responsibility. Trust and a positive company culture are more likely to be established by leadership that is based on ethical principles.

Character development for students:

Character development programmes in educational settings might incorporate the concept of karma. Training students to consider the repercussions of their actions can help them develop virtues including responsibility, empathy, honesty, and moral judgement, which encourages overall growth and instils principles that go beyond scholastic success towards sustainable development goals. Students who receive character education based on the ideas of karma are more equipped to make moral decisions in both their personal and professional lives.

Self- realisation and societal transformation

Srimad Bhagavad Gita emphasisesthe importance of pursuing self-realisationas a life-changing path that has significant effects on society dynamics. Self-realisationis viewed as a catalyst for significant personal growth and, eventually, societal reform, and it is based on the teachings of scripture. This idea stimulates a heightened awareness that transcends personal borders by encouraging people to engage in an introspective exploration of their true nature.

Shloka 6.5 advocates for finding a tranquil space for self-reflection and introspection, stressing the importance of self-awareness in personal empowerment, which provides an impetus for societal change. The instruction to "raise oneself by himself "emphasisesan internal process of self-

discovery and personal development by undertaking individual accountability and the internal journey of self-discovery. Empowerment, it suggests, arises from recognising one's potential rather than external forces. The verse highlights the self as both a friend and a possible enemy, warns against self-degradation, highlighting the role of self-awareness in facing personal and societal challenges, including issues like sexual violence and gender equality. By fostering self-awareness and realising their inner strength, individuals can become catalysts for positive change in their communities. This shloka positions self-realisation as an active force driving transformation throughout society.

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ||6.5||

"Let a man lift himself by himself. Let him not degrade himself; for the self alone is the friend of the self, and the self alone is the enemy of the self"

Shloka 18.11 emphasises that people who follow the path of self-realisationare liberated from the constraints of ego-driven acts, thereby summarising a crucial teaching on the transcendence of ego. The Bhagavad Gita frequently portrays the ego as the source of attachment, desire and the main cause of pain and conflict. This shloka states that those who achieve self-realisationtranscend the power of the three Gun as, which represent the modes of nature. Ego transcendence for the well-being of society is significant because in a social setting, ego takes the form of prejudices, biases, and a polarised sense of self. Individuals contribute to a collective awareness free from distinguishing ideas of "us"and "them"by rising beyond egoic forces. Applicable to the issues of sexual violence, exploitation, and gender egalitarianism, it implies that self-realisationis a transforming force that challenges deeply rooted social standards that ego-based divisions drive. People are more able to confront and undermine the systems that uphold gender-based inequalities when they are able to rise beyond their egoic forces and discrimination.

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः |
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ||18.11||

"The knowers of the scriptures who perform sacrifices, make gifts and practice austerity without attachment, and without any desire for the result, are said to rise above the influence of the three gunas (modes of nature). They are free from ego and desire, and they are unaffected by joy and sorrow"

Shloka 9.29 highlights universal love and justice, representing the divine's unbiased acceptance of all living beings, which emphasisesthe importance of fairness and equality for the society, encouraging inclusivity while disregarding prejudice and violence. This is in alignment with SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 16, which endorses peace and justice, aligns with the shloka's teaching of unbiased love, and justice, which is reflected in the equal treatment of all beings by the divine. The connection between devotees and the divine through love suggests transformative power in emotional and spiritual well-being, aligning with SDG 3's emphasis on holistic well-being, including spiritual fulfilment and mental health.

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्तिन प्रियः |
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम्||9.29||

"I am equally disposed to all living beings; I am neither inimical nor partial to anyone. But the devotees who worship Me with love reside in Me and I reside in them"

Shlokas 3.20 and 3.21 emphasise the important role that leaders have in influencing a society's ideals and conduct, especially those who possess transformative abilities. It suggests that the behaviours and standards set by outstanding leaders function as a beacon, affecting the community's general way of thinking and acting. Beyond simple administrative duties, transformative leadership entails inspiring and encouraging others to make great changes. These leaders drive social change via their values and deeds, demonstrating traits like empathy, vision, and moral behaviour.

Encouragement for ethical behavior: According to the shloka, a great person-especially a leader-should be an excellent example of moral behaviour and justice. This establishes a moral precedent that people will probably follow. By upholding the highest ethical standards,

transformative leaders serve as agents of positive social change. Their choices and deeds have a ripple effect that affects the society's overall consciousness, cultivating a climate of fairness and integrity. Advocates for gender equality, transformed by the teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, are more likely to be transformative leaders. By challenging prevailing gender stereotypes and biases, their efforts promote an inclusive environment where all individuals are treated equitably. For example, holistic development can be promoted in educational institutions through transformative leadership that is basedon these teachings by establishing the ideals of self-realisation, empathy, and ethical responsibility in individuals.

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः |
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि||3.20||
यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः |
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ||3.21||

"By performing their prescribed duties, King Janak and others attained perfection. You should also perform your duties to set an example for the good of the world. Whatever actions great persons perform, common people follow. Whatever standards they set, all the world pursues"

By applying this principle to contemporary problems such as sexual abuse and exploitation, the framework aims to influence individual well-being, interpersonal relationships and social structures.

Individual empowerment: Promoting a sense of empowerment by encouraging individuals to take a step towards the path of self-discovery and personal growth, individuals who feel empowered are more inclined to challenge social norms that support injustice and inequality and to impact society's transformation positively.

Ethical leadership: By promoting moral decision-making and dedication to the collective well- being, ethical leaders encourage others to adopt ideals of justice, empathy, and compassion by acting as catalysts for societal change.

Social harmony: The idea that a society of self-realisedindividuals is more likely to exhibit tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity, who have overcome their ego-driven prejudices and promote an inclusive and cohesive social fabric, which results in social harmony.

Collective responsibility for sustainable development: The idea draws attention to the connections between societal peace, environmental sustainability, and human well-being. Individuals who are driven by self-awareness are more likely to live sustainable lives, which promotes collective responsibility for the well-being of the planet and future generations.

Interconnectedness and holistic sustainable development

The interconnectedness principle of Srimad Bhagavad Gita highlights how all living things are interdependent and closely linked to one another. When it comes to sustainable development, the principle supports a coherent strategy that takes into account the delicate balance between the social, economic, and environmental aspects. A holistic viewpoint recognises that improvements in one field shouldn't be at the price of other fields in order to maintain a stable balance for the future generation.

Shloka 3.14, for example, highlights the interconnectedness of various elements in the natural order and the human role in sustaining it. Interconnectedness through cosmic order can be described by rain and food production, which is highlighted by all living beings' reliance on food grains for survival which are produced by rain; the role of yajna (sacrifice), which highlights that rain is a result of offering sacrifices, selfless actions, and giving back to nature. Interconnectedness and holistic, sustainable development in action can be described by the cycle of dependency, which highlights that all living beings depend on food, food depends on rains, rains depend on yajna, and yajna depends on prescribed duties, which are fulfilled by human responsibility of maintaining the balance of nature through righteous actions, selfless service and recognising their duties as a

human being. This leads to a cosmic harmony involving the welfare and well-being of all living beings and the unity of existence, suggesting the ways in which all elements of the cosmos are interwoven and interdependent.

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः |

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ||3.14||

"All living beings subsist on food, and food is produced by rains. Rains come from the performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice is produced by the performance of prescribed duties"

Shlokas 5.18 and 9.29 elucidate the principle of social inclusion and gender equality with respect to SDG1, 5, 10 and 16.The Shloka's emphasis on equality and impartiality is congruent with the core principles of an egalitarian worldview and social inclusion, which is the process of ensuring that every person has equal access to resources, opportunities, and benefits regardless of their background. A society where everyone feels valued and has the opportunity to both contribute to and gain from the development process is fostered by this inclusivity. The shlokas also reflect interconnectedness, which ranges to economic domains supporting the equitable distribution of resources and reducing socioeconomic inequalities by promoting ethical, economic practices that prioritise the welfare of everyone.

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि|

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ||5.18||

"The truly learned, with the eyes of divine knowledge, see with equal vision a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater"

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः |

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ||9.29||

"I am equally disposed to all living beings; I am neither inimical nor partial to anyone. But the devotees who worship Me with love reside in Me and I reside in them"

Practical steps that address the challenges of social inclusion and gender equality can be devised to build a more inclusive, equitable, and interconnected society by acknowledging the connection of social, economic, and environmental factors. These applications advance the larger concept of sustainable development.

Promoting inclusive policies: Policies that support gender equality and social inclusion can be created and implemented by organisations, and governments. which will guarantee that opportunities are equally accessible to everyone, regardless of gender or social background. These can include policies for employment, healthcare, and education.

Cultivating mindsets of equality: A world view of equality and interconnectedness may be fostered through media sources, community groups, and educational institutions. Connectivity of people with an emphasis on the importance of diversity can be done through the planning of initiatives promoting empathy, understanding and tolerance through public awareness campaigns and educational programs, which will result in people developing a collective consciousness that recognises and respects diversity.

Corporate social responsibility initiatives: Organisations may integrate the concepts of interconnection and holistic sustainable development into their CSR programs with an emphasis on promoting gender equality, workplace diversity, fair compensation, equal opportunity, and an inclusive workforce.

Conclusion

Srimad Bhagavad Gita imparts crucial teachings which can be implemented for modern issues like gender inequality and social exclusion and to promote sustainable development. Inter connectedness, self- realisation, ethical decision-making, and the dharma principle can serve as frameworks for holistic and sustainable growth for the well- being of society. A paradigm shift in social aspects is necessary for developing inter connectedness, such as humility and unbiased vision, to encourage inclusion and bridge social gaps by prioritising diversity, equality, and justice. The spiritual values of the Bhagvad Gita can be

facilitated in societal change by undertaking corporate responsibility, developing inclusive policies and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation. Success can be fully measured not only quantitatively but also in terms of growth in society's well-being and resilience level. Srimad Bhagavad Gita serves as a guide for moral and peaceful coexistence in the pursuit of sustainable development goals, encouraging an ecosystem that values equality, diversity, and interconnection. Finally, Srimad Bhagavad Gita asks us to adopt a vision in which sustainable development becomes a way of life rather than a distant goal.

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