

Anthropo-Centrism to Cosmo-Centrism: Extending Wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita to Strengthen Sustainability's Core

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Abstract

This paper seeks to extend the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita to overcome the philosophical limitations of the sustainability conceptualization. The modern concept of sustainability has often been criticized for being anthropocentric and non-inclusive. Its ignorance of existing philosophical traditions further poses limitations on wider scale adoption of the concept. The concept needs to evolve beyond its current anthropocentric view, rooted in Cartesian dualism and Kantian categorical imperatives, to embrace eastern cultural perspectives rooted in non-dualism of the Vedic traditions. The traditional wisdom across cultures will strengthen its philosophical foundations and make it inclusive. The Bhagavad Gita can potentially contribute to enhance the current conceptualization of sustainability at both philosophical and operational level. Using the Gadamerian (philosophical) hermeneutics as a method, the paper demonstrates, how the wisdom in the verses of the Bhagavad Gita's can address sustainability's limitations the paper demonstrates how the wisdom in the verses of the Bhagavad Gita can address sustainability's limitations. It demonstrates, how the wisdom can help overcome the myopic, anthropocentric view of sustainability and make it more inclusive, cross-culturally relevant, and pragmatic. By integrating the diverging Western and Eastern philosophical approaches, we demonstrate how the core of sustainability can be strengthened.



Keywords: *Bhagavad Gita; Cosmo-Centrism; Environmental Ethics; Philosophical Foundations; Sustainability; Sustainable Development; Vedic Philosophy*

INTRODUCTION

The modern concept of sustainability fundamentally deals with Man-Nature relationship. “It was born out of a conflict between two opposing needs – the need for continuous economic growth on the one hand, and the need to protect the environment and achieve intra-generational and inter-generational social equity, on the other. The reconciliation of the needs for economic growth with concerns for the environment is a very intricate and thorny process” (Bakari, 2014, p. 10). The reconciliation is possible only with a strong and inclusive philosophical foundation for building a strong sustainable society (Zeman, 1996).

The role of philosophy in sustainability is multifaceted, encompassing ethical, cultural, and practical dimensions. Environmental ethics provides a moral framework for sustainable practices, encouraging proactive environmental protection and education. However, many policies prioritize short-term economic gains over ecological health. Comprehensive frameworks that blend ethical principles with practical sustainability strategies are imperative for sustainability to succeed (Starlet, 2024). The concept of sustainability has faced criticism for its philosophical limitations and practical challenges. While initially conceived as a way to address environmental concerns within economic growth (Mollica, 2009), the term has become ambiguous and overused, potentially weakening its impact (Santillo, 2007). Critics argue that sustainability, as currently understood, falsely suggests the possibility of reconciling capitalism with ecological preservation (Vizeu et al., 2012).

The incorporation of sustainability into market mechanisms and an overreliance on technological solutions have diminished its

potential for meaningful political change (Capurso et al., 2020). Furthermore, the proliferation of diverse, often economically-focused definitions has limited the concept's credibility and practical application (Santillo, 2007). To reclaim the original intent of sustainable development articulated in the 1987 Brundtland Report as development meets present human needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, a stronger, more empirical interpretation is needed, focusing on root causes rather than consequences and encompassing political, public policy, and corporate decision-making (Santillo, 2007).

The ethical dimension of sustainability involves value judgments and criteria selection, making it an inherently subjective process (McIntyre et al., 2017). Western sustainability discourse, rooted in Enlightenment and modernity, is criticized for its human-nature dualism and materialistic focus (Savelyeva, 2017). As organizations grapple with sustainability challenges, the limitations of Western-centric approaches become apparent. Eastern philosophies, such as Noöspherism, Neo-Confucianism, and Vedic wisdom, offer alternative views and valuable insights for cross-cultural management emphasizing holism, inter-connectedness, and harmony with nature (Borah, 2012; Savelyeva, 2017).

These perspectives align with complexity theory and Complex Adaptive Systems, providing a bridge between Eastern and Western thought (Dellios, 2022). Indigenous knowledge systems contribute valuable insights, emphasizing reciprocity and caretaking in human-nature relationships (Mazzocchi, 2020). Indian spiritual and cultural traditions provide an ontological framework for addressing contemporary sustainability challenges, promoting ecological consciousness, and fostering compassion in the workplace (Kumar & Giri, 2020). Hindu ethics, based on the concept of dharma, can serve as a foundation for environmental sustainability, with Hindu

scriptures offering guidance for reducing human-caused environmental damage (Mallick, 2025).

While knowledge is essential for sustainable development, it implicitly will not be universally acceptable or trans-ideological in nature. This particularly gets more nuanced in the diametrically opposite philosophical foundations and consequent cultural traditions of the western and eastern paradigms. The Western reductionist inductive paradigm emanating from the Cartesian “Cogito ergo sum” extended to I exist (I Sense) therefore (I accept that) I am, runs counter to the eastern Vedic Holistic Deductive paradigm emanating from “*Aham Brahmasmi*” (I am the divine consciousness) implying “I am (consciousness exists) therefore (regardless of whether I can sense or not) I (accept that I) exist. Despite this, the ultimate goal of sustainability converges, and hence the need to scout for common grounds among the diverging perspectives at behavioural, relational, and philosophical levels. Further, the effort to develop radically new eco-philosophies may not be as compelling as re-conceptualizing and extending traditional philosophical disciplines to meet the emerging needs for sustainability (Zeman, 1996). This makes a strong case for integrating the Bhagavad Gita’s philosophy and wisdom into sustainability conceptualisation,

The Bhagavad Gita maintains its relevance in the modern world by offering invaluable insights for sustainability. It espouses the idea of universal interconnectedness of ecology, economy, and society, promoting deep ecology and co-existence (Pokhrel, 2023). It promotes sustainable food practices, including vegetarianism, eating in sync with the sun, and spiritualizing food through offerings, which are relevant for health and spiritual well-being (Ranjan & Dahiya, 2024). The Gita proposes principles such as duty-oriented action (Niskam Karma Yoga), knowledge (Gyan Yoga), and commitment to work (Bhakti Yoga), emphasizing moral character, labour as duty, and self-

reliance (Pandey, 2018). These concepts align with modern notions of sustainable living. The Gita also stresses the importance of *sthitpradnya* - a balanced attitude and equanimity in life, which contributes to sustainability (Pillai & G, 2018).

The wisdom from the Bhagavad Gita may provide an inclusive and holistic framework for addressing contemporary sustainability challenges across the sustainability dimensions of people, planet, and profit. It may help address the limitations of lack of strong philosophical and spiritual foundations for practicing sustainability for at least 15% of the world population who adore the Bhagavad Gita as a revered text. This paper seeks to extend the wisdom in the Bhagavad Gita to help overcome the limitations of the concept of sustainability and make the concept more inclusive and integrative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability and Frameworks for its Practice

The concept of sustainability has evolved significantly since its inception. Initially focused on ecological systems and resource limitations, the concept gained traction and prominence with the Brundtland Report in 1987, which defined "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, Chapter 2, §1). The Brundtland report, titled "Our Common Future," was instrumental in shifting the myopic environmental focus to encompass economic and social aspects in the sustainability concept (Hosen, 2021; Şen et al., 2018). The environmental dimension is often the focus of sustainability (Eslami et al., 2019). However, sustainability extends beyond environmental concerns, affecting quality of life and urban development (Silva et al., 2012).

Owing to its multidimensional nature, the concept has been extended to various fields, and has led to diverse interpretations and critiques (Klarin, 2018; Şen et al., 2018). Several researchers have criticized the concept for its limitations and advocated frameworks to overcome the limitations. Seghezze (2009) extended the conceptualization to a five-dimensional model incorporating 3 dimensions of Place (space representing x,y and z dimensions) with Permanence (time dimension), and Persons (human dimension). The complex interplay between the dimensions of sustainability can lead to cascading effects across environmental, economic, social, and political spheres (Quinn et al., 2015). Understanding these multifaceted relationships is crucial for developing sustainable strategies in various sectors (Eslami et al., 2019). This comprehensive approach to sustainability aims to address inequalities and promote more equitable, sustainable policies (Seghezze, 2009; Silva et al., 2012).

Hessami et al., (2015) applied systems thinking to evolve a framework for sustainability and included social, economic, technological, resource, and environmental aspects, to enable objective comparison and assessment of products and systems. Ostrom's (2009) general framework for analyzing the sustainability of social-ecological systems facilitates identification of key variables that influence self-organization efforts. The Four Spheres model propounded by O'Connor (2006) highlights the interdependencies between the economic, social, environmental, and political spheres. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) translates the concept into operational framework of 17 SDGs for achieving peace and prosperity, addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. The framework of SDGs currently constitutes a comprehensive global blueprint to pursue the path of sustainability (United Nations, 2017).

The sustainability frameworks collectively attempt to address challenges like resource depletion, environmental degradation, and socio-economic inequalities, promoting a holistic approach to sustainable development. They also guide policies and actions aimed at creating a sustainable future for all. However, to quote O'Connor (2006, p. 6): "Within a sustainability framework, any strategic assessment therefore needs to make reference to two sets of principles - 'systems integrity' and 'ethical integrity' ... we admit the complexities - both scientific and moral - of sustainability questions, at the same time as defining clear roles for science, human science, economics, and political process." He admits that the sustainability decisions involve complexities both scientific and moral and they are interconnected. While modern science may evolve to address the scientific complexities, we need to resort to philosophical principles to address the moral complexities.

The prevailing sustainability frameworks can also be classified using the analytical lens of the weak to strong sustainability continuum, primarily based on the substitutability of natural capital and man-made capital. This lens is anchored on core themes such as a) substitutability of natural capital, b) criticality of natural assets, and c) human centrality versus nature centrality. Table 1 captures the positions of the perspectives on the continuum based on previous studies (Bateman & Turner, 1993; Neumayer, 2010).

Table 1

Summary of Sustainability Frameworks

Dimension	Weak Sustainability	Moderate Sustainability	Strong Sustainability
Natural Capital Substitutability	High	Limited / Conditional	Very Low / None
View of Natural Assets	Instrumental	Partly Critical	Intrinsically Valuable
Ethical Focus	Anthropocentric	Intergenerational	Ecocentric

Dange et al.

Source: Authors analysis.

Most of the current frameworks, including TBL, ESG, SDGs occupy a position between weak and moderate sustainability (Bansal & Song, 2017; Kopnina et al., 2018; Purvis et al., 2019), and are often criticized for their anthropocentric bias (Kopnina et al., 2018), lacking both normative specification (Hickel, 2019) and cultural contextualization (Scoones, 2016). Boscardin & Bossert (2015) criticised the current Sustainable Development discourse for its anthropocentric focus and for overlooking the normative and ethical implications stemming from the Brundtland Report's definition, which they claimed has fostered “weak sustainability” practices centered on economic growth and resource marketization, reducing animals to commodities. They argued for extending Sustainable Development to include nonhuman animals, emphasizing insights from critical animal studies. Despite the apparent diversity of perspectives and frameworks related to sustainability, they share a deep-seated common philosophical tradition rooted in *Cartesian* dualism and *Kantian* categorical imperatives, which pitch man against nature, making it anthropocentric, non inclusive and non-normative.

Cartesian dualism attributed to French philosopher René Descartes, posits a fundamental separation between the mind (rational thought) and the body (the physical world). This dualistic view has influenced Western thought, leading to a perception of nature as a separate entity to be controlled and exploited for human benefit. This separation fosters an instrumental view of nature, where the environment is seen primarily as a resource for human use. Cartesian dualism also encourages a reductionist approach, which treats complex ecological systems as mere components instead of interconnected wholes. This results in policies that fail to consider the intricate relationships within ecosystems, undermining long-term sustainability. Wolf interrogated some other frameworks rooted in the

works of Norton, Solow, Rawls, Mill, and Sen, in the territory of environmental ethics and political philosophy related to intergenerational sustainability problems and found that each framework answers this question differently and imperfectly. Each of these frameworks has its own limitations as decision-making guides (Wolf, 2018).

Several authors have criticized the myopic human-centered approach to sustainability (Adelman, 2018; Boscardin & Bossert, 2015; Kopnina et al., 2018; Naudé, 2018) and pitched for incorporation of broader perspective to consider the other species of living beings and inanimate environment to protect the interest of the mute and absent stakeholder categories. This perspective is criticised as unsustainable. This has led researchers to suggest alternative perspectives, viz. biocentrism and ecocentrism. Biocentrism, unlike anthropocentrism, views humans as part of nature rather than its owners and identifies intrinsic value with all life forms (Ferreira & Cruz Bomfim, 2010). Ecocentrism extends this further, recognizing intrinsic value in entire ecosystems, including abiotic components (Washington et al., 2017).

Additionally, the rationalistic ethics of the current sustainability concept impose normative limitations that restrict prescriptive ecological actions due to the value-behavior gap inherent in the philosophical underpinnings. Further, the Western philosophical roots of sustainability exclude non-Western philosophical traditions that emphasize relationality, community, and interconnectedness. This exclusion can lead to sustainability frameworks that are not culturally inclusive. The limitations of Cartesian dualism and Kantian ethics highlight the need for sustainability frameworks that incorporate diverse cultural perspectives. Indigenous and non-Western philosophies often emphasize the interconnectedness of all life, the importance of stewardship, and the intrinsic value of nature, offering valuable insights for sustainable practices. One such view

emanates from Bhagvad Gita which may help in overcoming the current limitations of sustainability.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is part of the Indian epic Mahabharata, which is the longest epic poem in world literature containing over 100,000 shlokas (verses) It is revered as one of the most important spiritual and philosophical classics in the world. The Gita is written as a dialogue between the prince Arjuna and the lord Krishna, who serves as his charioteer. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, just before the start of a great war between two factions of a royal family – the *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas*. Arjuna, a warrior Pandava prince, faces a moral and emotional crisis as he prepares for the battle, where he will have to fight his own relatives, teachers, and friends. Overwhelmed by doubt and confusion, Arjuna questions the righteousness of the war and the morality of killing his kin. In response, Krishna imparts profound philosophical and spiritual teachings, guiding Arjuna through his crisis.

This text encapsulates the essence of the ancient (Vedic) Indian Philosophy. Krishna guides Arjuna not just on behavioural appropriateness but also deciphers the philosophical underpinnings for the appropriate behaviour. This discourse covers guidance on nature and purpose of life, duty, and the self, offering insights into the ultimate purpose of existence. The Gita addresses the man-nature relationship (i.e. the what and how of the behaviour) central to the sustainability conceptualization and also explains the relationship between humans and the divine (why for the behaviour) which gives the philosophical grounding to the advocated man-nature relationship.

The Bhagavad Gita's influence on all spheres of life including literature and philosophy is significant, and its wisdom and teachings have been recognized for their relevance in contemporary contexts.

This ancient scripture provides insights into human capital development, emphasizing self-knowledge as a crucial component (Muniapan & Satpathy, 2013). Scholars argue that the Bhagavad Gita's time-tested wisdom can be effectively applied to the modern context with intelligent reinterpretation (Muniapan & Satpathy, 2013; Nafde, 2021). In the corporate world, the Gita's teachings can be applied to foster rational decision-making, sustainable development, and stakeholder happiness (Dhamija et al., 2023).

The philosophy of the Gita encompasses various aspects of life, including the nature of duty, right understanding, meditation, and the relationship between God and the universe (Krishnananda, 2000). Several researchers have attempted to connect the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita to sustainability. Rao & Sujatha G. (2015) argue that the principles outlined in the Bhagavad Gita can serve as a spiritual foundation for sustainability and that global leaders, managers, and professionals can benefit from the concepts and models presented in the Bhagavad Gita for development of self, organization and the nations. The article provides a methodology for stable-mindedness which can help leaders make sustainability-aligned decisions.

Bhadeshiya et al. (2023) apply the concept of Sattva, one of the three guans, (qualities) described in the Bhagavad Gita to propose 'Satvik management model' and investigate its applicability to long-term corporate viability. "Satvik" reflects purity, harmony, balance, goodness, and ethical behavior. The model emphasizes principles such as ethical decision-making, selflessness, service orientation, and long-term sustainability rather than short-term profit motives. The core of Vedic (Indian) spirituality is presented in the Bhagavad Gita. In contrast to outside-in management practices, the study proposes an inside-out, or intrinsic perspective. It offers a philosophical and spiritual viewpoint on management theory and wisdom in facing and

resolving contemporary management issues for company sustainability in a volatile business climate.

Goel et al. (2025) developed a functional model for the effective implementation of ESG/CSR programs in firms drawing upon the Bhagavad Gita and its philosophical tenets of Jnana, Karma and Bhakti. Such studies contribute to the operationalization of philosophical perspectives of Bhagavad Gita and help strengthen the core of sustainability conceptualization. However, despite extensive research on sustainability from various religious perspectives (Chapple, 2003; Grim & Tucker, 2014; Khalid, 2002; Nelson, 1998), the Bhagavad Gita remains under-explored in this domain (Bhadeshiya et al., 2023; Muniapan & Dass, 2008).

Muniapan & Satpathy (2013)'s work employs hermeneutics to interpret the Bhagavad Gita's concepts of 'dharma' (duty) and 'Karma' (action) in relation to sustainability. They propose that adoption of sustainable practices and Global Social Responsibility (GSR) is facilitated by the inside-out approach propagated by the Bhagavad Gita through the development of individual leaders' self-conscience. The relevance of the Bhagavad Gita extends to management and leadership, where it can guide sustainable activities by fostering ethical behaviour and social responsibility among corporate leaders (Chatterjee, 2022). The Bhagavad Gita's emphasis on performing one's duty without attachment and its broader spiritual insights offer a robust framework for understanding and implementing sustainability in a corporate context.

As is apparent from the above review, the current conceptualization of sustainability is fraught with limitations which include non-inclusiveness, philosophical foundations for its practice, anthropocentric perspective posing constraints for its successful adoption. The extension of wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita may help overcome these limitations and make the concept more robust.

There have been several studies extending the wisdom in Bhagavad Gita to modern concepts of sustainability, e.g. agricultural and social practices (Sanford, 2013), social activism and change (Poddar, 2023), self-efficacy, goal performance and leadership effectiveness in corporate settings (Dhamija et al., 2023), personality measurement (Das, 2018), business management (Hee, 2007), energy justice (Herington et al., 2020; Malakar et al., 2019), spirituality (Dhiman, 2019), each enriching the sustainability conceptualization. However, there are limited studies that comprehensively identify the limitations of the current conceptualization and how the insights and wisdom from Bhagavad Gita can help overcome the limitations.

This paper looks at the Bhagavad Gita from the lens of sustainability and investigates how the wisdom in the Bhagavad Gita can help enrich by overcoming its limitations by seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. Which verses in the Bhagavad Gita provide behavioural guidance for sustainability practice?
2. Which verses in the Bhagavad Gita help extend the concept beyond anthropo-centrism to Bio-Centrism and to ecocentrism?
3. How does the Bhagavad Gita contribute to building a strong philosophical foundation for the practice of sustainability?

METHOD

Research Design

This paper applies hermeneutics, conceptual analysis, and comparative analysis in the integration of Bhagavad Gita teachings with modern sustainability challenges. Hermeneutics can be used in the analysis of the text to realize deeper meanings within the underlying historical, cultural, and philosophical context. The present writers explain the premise for appropriate interpretation of the Gita in this paper, to allow its teachings to be understood in their original

depth and intent. The conceptual analysis explains important concepts, such as dharma and karma, relating them to prevailing sustainability practices. For every Bhagavad Gita verse cited, we have given its contextual interpretation connecting the ancient to the modern, that forms the comparative framework. Comparative analysis forms help compare and connect the Gita's teachings with prevailing notions underlining both similarities and differences.

In the comparative analysis here, we evolve a 3-dimensional framework for analysis in the light of the limitations of modern concepts of sustainability and align the BG verses with the framework. Such a combination constitutes an eminently suitable philosophical research methodology. It ensures that the text's holistic worldview is preserved while drawing meaningful connections to contemporary sustainability issues. By incorporating these approaches into one framework, this methodology becomes well-rounded, enabling the enrichment of modern sustainability thought by the lens of timeless philosophical insight. Several scholars have resorted to these philosophical methods to extend the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita to modern concepts ([Ghimire, 2018](#); [Lavanya, 2021](#); [P. K. C. Low & Muniapan, 2011](#); [Satpathy & Muniapan, 2009](#); [Shreshtha Yadav et al., 2017](#)).

Framework for Analysis

To address the above questions, a framework evolved to classify the verses in the Bhagavad Gita to help ascertain their relevance to the modern context and research questions. It categorizes Bhagavad Gita verses that incorporate the Triple Bottom Line perspective (People, Planet, Profit), focus hierarchy (Anthropocentric, Bio-centric, Eco-centric), and guidance types (Transactional, Relational, Philosophical). The rationale for this categorization lies in aligning the ancient wisdom with contemporary challenges pointed out in the research gap. The model has evolved, keeping the following premises in view:

1. It should be aligned with the existing perspectives on sustainability.
2. It should help ascertain how the limitations attributed to modern conceptualization are overcome.
3. It should help identify how the wisdom in the BG helps at different levels- transactional (behavioural), relational (man-nature, man-society, cause-effect, etc.) and philosophical - the first two explaining the “whether and how” of sustainability and the third explaining “why” of sustainability.

The particulars of the dimensions and the inclusion criteria are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Analysis of Framework Dimensions and the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

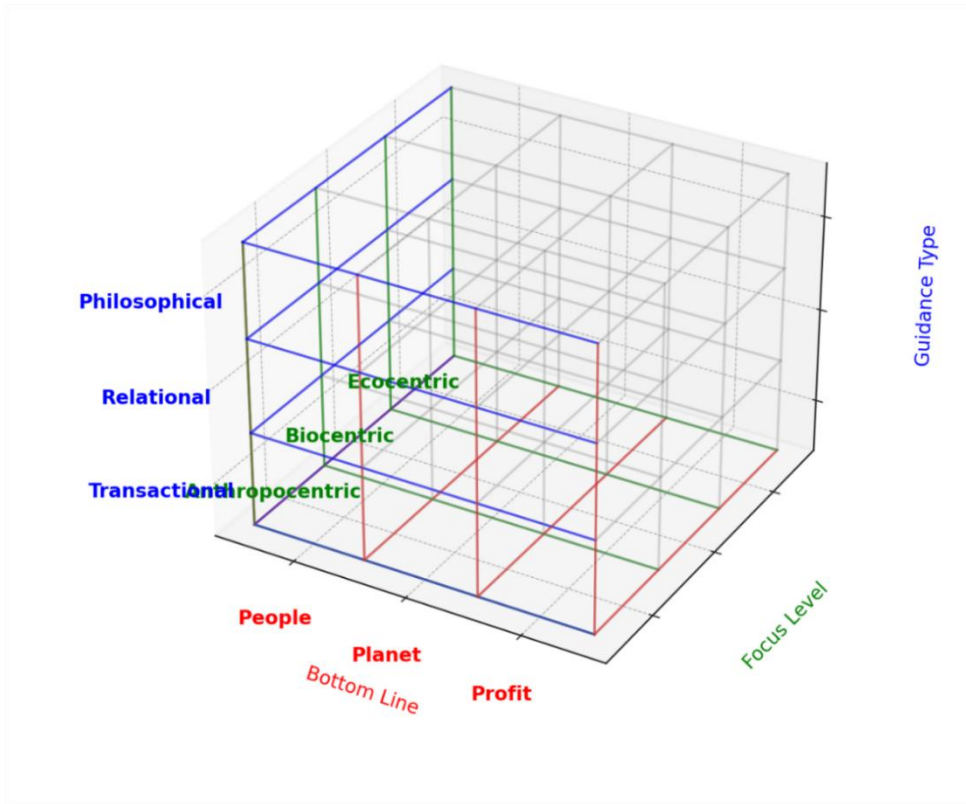
Dimension	Values	Verse Classification and Inclusion criteria
3 Bottom Line	People	Social welfare and human well-being.
	Planet	Environmental harmony and sustainability.
	Profit	Long-term prosperity and material success.
Focus Level	Anthropocentric	Human-centered focus.
	Bio-centric	Consideration for all living beings.
	Eco-centric	Concern for cosmic order and the universe.
Guidance Type	Transactional	Practical actions and daily duties.
	Relational	Focus on relationships (cause-effect, man-nature and divine-human).
	Philosophical	Deep spiritual and metaphysical insights.

Source: Authors’ analysis.

Figure 1 gives a 3*3*3 matrix with 27 cells. This study identified a verse from the Bhagavad Gita, which would appropriately populate the cells. [Prabhupada \(1989\)](#) was referred to for translations.

Figure 1

3D-Framework for Analysis



Source: Authors' analysis.

RESULTS

Based on the framework and premise defined above, the verses from the Bhagavad Gita were identified and categorized in the respective matrix. Since it was difficult to demonstrate the classification in the 3D model above the following table (Table 2) was used to present the classification followed by translation and contextual interpretation of each of the verses identified.

Table 2

Classification of Bhagavad Gita Verses based on the Analysis Framework

Dimension	People (1)			Planet (2)			Profit (3)		
Dimensions [First (1/2/3) _TBL/ Second (0.1/0.2/0.3)_ Focus Level/ Third(0.0.1/0.0.2/0.0.3)_ Type of Guidance]	Anthr opo-Centri c (0.1)	Bio-Cen tric (0.2)	Eco-Cen tric (Cos mo-Cen tric) (0.3)	Anthr opo-Centri c (0.1)	Bio-Cen tric (0.2)	Eco-Cen tric (Cos mo-Cen tric) (0.3)	Anthr opo-Centri c (0.1)	Bio-Cen tric (0.2)	Eco-Cen tric (Cos mo-Cen tric) (0.3)
Transactional (0.0.1)	(1.1.1) : BG 2.31	(1.2.1) : BG 3.13	(1.3.1)): BG 3.14	(2.1.1) : BG 3.16	(2.2.1)): BG 3.10	(2.3.1)): BG 3.15	(3.1.1) : BG 2.47	(3.2.1)): BG 5.29	(3.3.1)): BG 9.17
Relational (0.0.2)	(1.1.2) : BG 4.7	(1.2.2)): BG 5.18	(1.3.2)): BG 11.9-13	(2.1.2) : BG 4.11	(2.2.2)): BG 13.2	(2.3.2)): BG 9.19	(3.1.2) : BG 9.27	(3.2.2)): BG 3.11	(3.3.2)): BG 9.23
Philosophical (0.0.3)	(1.1.3) : BG 2.13	(1.2.3)): BG 10.2	(1.3.3)): BG 11.32	(2.1.3) : BG 4.24	(2.2.3)): BG 7.7	(2.3.3)): BG 7.5	(3.1.3) : BG 2.49	(3.2.3)): BG 9.26	(3.3.3)): BG 13.17

Source: Authors' analysis. Note: * Figures in bracket indicate the cell no. of the framework.

Detailed Description and Interpretation of the Verses

Cell No: 1.1.1

Cell Descriptor: People _ Anthropocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 2.31

Verse in Devanagari Script:

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते॥

Translation in English:

“Considering your specific duty as a ksatriya, you should know that there is no better engagement for you than fighting on religious principles; and so there is no need for hesitation.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse focuses on the transactional responsibility of performing one's duties within the social framework. Arjuna is reminded that fulfilling his role as a warrior ensures societal order.

Sustainability aspect:

Performing one's role within a societal structure helps maintain the long-term equilibrium, akin to fulfilling social responsibilities for societal and environmental sustainability.

Cell No: 1.1.2

Cell Descriptor: People _ Anthropocentric _ Relational

Verse No: BG 4.7

Verse in Devanagari Script:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥

Translation in English:

“Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O Arjuna, at that time I manifest myself on Earth.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna reassures Arjuna that whenever righteousness declines, he incarnates to restore balance. This highlights the relational aspect of divine intervention to maintain order.

Sustainability aspect:

In a broader sense, this reflects how ethical leadership and higher principles step in to restore balance when societal or environmental systems are disrupted.

Cell No: 1.1.3

Cell Descriptor: People _ Anthropocentric _ Philosophical

Verse No: BG 2.13

Verse in Devanagari Script:

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धिरस्तत्र न मुह्यति॥

Translation in English:

“Just as the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from childhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna teaches Arjuna the eternal nature of the soul, which is subject to the cycle of birth and death till it is liberated. This philosophical understanding of continuity reflects long-term thinking.

Sustainability aspect:

The verse encourages one to look beyond immediate material gain and consider the long-term implications of our actions, just as sustainable practices consider future generations.

Cell No: 1.2.1

Cell Descriptor: People _ Biocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 3.13

Verse in Devanagari Script:

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात्॥

Translation in English:

“The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food that is first offered for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse emphasizes the transactional relationship between humans and nature, where sharing nature’s bounty (through sacrifice) purifies one’s actions.

Sustainability aspect:

It aligns with sustainable resource use, where consuming ethically and sharing resources ensures that all beings benefit.

Cell No: 1.2.2

Cell Descriptor: People _ Biocentric _ Relational Sustainability aspect:

Verse No: BG 5.18

Verse in Devanagari Script:

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि।

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः॥

Translation in English:

“The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle Brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater (outcaste).”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna explains that a wise person sees all beings equally, regardless of their form. This reflects a biocentric, relational perspective where all life forms are respected.

Sustainability aspect:

This promotes respect for biodiversity and equality, fostering an ethic of care for all life.

Cell No: 1.2.3

Cell Descriptor: People _ Biocentric _ Philosophical

Verse No: BG 10.20

Verse in Devanagari Script:

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च॥

Translation in English:

“I am the Self, O Gudakesha, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all beings.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna declares himself as the universal soul present in all beings, emphasizing unity.

Sustainability aspect:

This deep philosophical view highlights the interconnectedness of all life, reinforcing the need for harmonious relationships between humans and nature.

Cell No: 1.3.1

Cell Descriptor: People _ Ecocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 3.14

Verse in Devanagari Script:

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसंभवः ।

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥

Translation in English:

“All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rain. Rains are produced by the performance of yajna (sacrifice), and yajna is born of prescribed duties.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse highlights the cyclical relationship between humans, nature, and the cosmos. Sustainability aspect: It promotes the idea that responsible human actions sustain environmental cycles, aligning with ecocentric, transactional sustainability practices.

Cell No: 1.3.2

Cell Descriptor: People _ Ecocentric _ Relational

Verse No: BG 11.9-13

Verse in Devanagari Script:

सञ्जय उवाच ।

एवं उक्त्वा ततो राजन् महायोगेश्वरो हरिः ।

दर्शयामास पार्थाय परमं रूपमैश्वरम् ॥

अनेकवक्त्रनयनमनेकाद्भुतदर्शनम् ।

अनेकदिव्याभरणं दिव्यानेकोद्यतायुधम् ॥

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम् ।

सर्वाश्चर्यमयं देवमनन्तं विश्वतोमुखम् ॥

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।

यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥

तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा ।

अपश्यद्देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा ॥

Translation in English:

“Sanjaya said: O King, having spoken thus, the Supreme Lord of all mystic power, the Personality of Godhead, displayed His universal form to Arjuna. In that universal form, Arjuna saw unlimited faces, arms, mouths, and eyes. It was adorned with many celestial ornaments and held many divine weapons. The form was decorated with celestial garlands and garments, and many divine fragrances were smeared over its body. It was wondrous, brilliant, and all-expanding. If hundreds of thousands of suns were to rise at once in the sky, their radiance might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person. At that moment, Arjuna could see the entire universe, divided into many parts, but all situated in one place in the body of Lord Krishna.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Arjuna sees Krishna’s universal form, which encompasses the entire cosmos, signifying the interconnectedness of all life and creation.

Sustainability aspect:

This relational view of humans as part of a greater cosmic whole encourages harmony with the environment and respect for all life, highlighting the ecocentric principle of interconnectedness.

Cell No: 1.3.3

Cell Descriptor: People _ Ecocentric _ Philosophical

Verse No: BG 11.32

Verse in Devanagari Script:

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो लोकान्समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः।

ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः॥

Translation in English:

“I am time, the great destroyer of the world, and I have come here to engage all people. With the exception of you [the Pandavas], all the soldiers here on both sides will be slain.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna reveals himself as time (kala), which ultimately governs creation and destruction.

Sustainability aspect:

This verse reflects the cosmic forces of creation and destruction that guide the universe, encouraging long-term thinking and philosophical acceptance of natural cycles, including sustainability efforts that span across generations.

Cell No: 2.1.1

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Anthropocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 3.16

Verse in Devanagari Script:

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति॥

Translation in English:

“My dear Arjuna, one who does not follow the human cycle of sacrifice established in the Vedas, lives a life of sin, indulging only in sense gratification, and lives in vain.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna explains the importance of human actions that maintain the cosmic and environmental cycle (yajna).

Sustainability aspect:

This reflects a transactional responsibility for humans to maintain harmony in nature. Failing to do so leads to imbalance and environmental degradation, echoing the need for sustainable actions in human behavior.

Cell No: 2.1.2

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Anthropocentric _ Relational)

Verse No: BG 4.11

Verse in Devanagari Script:

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तास्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥

Translation in English:

“As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pritha.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse reflects the relational aspect of human interaction with Krishna, where people’s devotion is reciprocated.

Sustainability aspect:

In the context of sustainability, it highlights that the way humans treat the planet (by living in alignment with natural laws) will determine how nature supports them, reinforcing a relational connection between humans and the planet.

Cell No: 2.1.3

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Anthropocentric _ Philosophical

Verse No: BG 4.24

Verse in Devanagari Script:

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना॥

Translation in English:

“A person who is fully absorbed in Brahman consciousness sees the act of offering, the oblation, and the fire as Brahman. Such a person is sure to attain Brahman.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna explains that all acts of sacrifice and material activity are part of Brahman (the ultimate reality).

Sustainability Aspect:

This philosophical view sees all actions as interconnected with the divine, promoting an understanding of the sacredness of nature and ecological balance.

Cell No: 2.2.1

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Biocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 3.10

Verse in Devanagari Script:

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्॥

Translation in English:

“In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Vishnu, and blessed them by saying: 'Be thou happy by this yajna [sacrifice], because its performance will bestow upon you all desirable things.’”

Contextual Interpretation:

The verse implies that humans were not created above or apart from nature but alongside and in relationship with it. Creation itself is relational and co-dependent, not hierarchical. It emphasizes the transactional relationship where sacrifices made by humans contribute to the well-being of all beings.

Sustainability Aspect:

It highlights those human actions of sacrifice (yajna) that are essential for sustaining the environment, echoing practices of resource conservation and renewal in environmental ethics.

Cell No: 2.2.2

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Biocentric _ Relational

Verse No: BG 13.28

Verse in Devanagari Script:

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम्।
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति॥

Translation in English:

“He sees truly who sees the Supreme Lord as equally present in all creatures, the imperishable amidst the perishable.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse reflects the relational aspect of Krishna’s presence in all living beings, promoting equality.

Sustainability Aspect:

natural order or Rta); Karma (action) and Yajna (reciprocal cycle). It places every human action within a cosmic causal network that originates in and returns to the fundamental ordering principle of existence promoting sustainability through actions aligned with divine principles.

Sustainability Aspect:

It highlights how all human activities, especially those related to nature, have deeper cosmic significance, making it a fit for the transactional nature of eco-centric sustainability.

Cell No: 2.3.2

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Ecocentric _ Relational

Verse No: BG 9.19

Verse in Devanagari Script:

तपाम्यहमहं वर्षं निगृह्णाम्युत्सृजामि च।

अमृतं चैव मृत्युश्च सदसच्चाहमर्जुन॥

Translation in English:

“O Arjuna, I control heat, the rain and the drought. I am immortality, and I am also death personified. Both being and nonbeing are in Me.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna describes his control over natural forces like rain and heat, emphasizing his relational connection with the cosmos.

Sustainability Aspect:

This highlights the relational aspect of humans' dependence on the natural elements, reinforcing respect for nature's cycles as crucial to sustainability.

Cell No: 2.3.3

Cell Descriptor: Planet _ Ecocentric _ Philosophical

Verse No: BG 7.5

Verse in Devanagari Script:

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम्।

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत्॥

Translation in English:

“Besides this inferior nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is a superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are sustaining this material world.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna explains the distinction between material and spiritual energies.

Sustainability Aspect:

This philosophical understanding calls for balance between material and spiritual needs, encouraging sustainability that respects both physical resources and their spiritual significance.

Cell No: 3.1.1

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Anthropocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 2.47

Verse in Devanagari Script:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Translation in English:

“You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna advises Arjuna to perform his duty without attachment to the results. Sustainability aspect:

This transactional principle guides responsible action, emphasizing that long-term benefits come from fulfilling one's duties without focusing solely on immediate material gain, echoing ethical profit-making practices.

Cell No: 3.1.2

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Anthropocentric _ Relational

Verse No: BG 9.27

Verse in Devanagari Script:

यत्करोषि यदश्रासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्॥

Translation in English:

“Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform – do that, O son of Kunti, as an offering to Me.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna encourages Arjuna to offer everything he does to him.

Sustainability Aspect:

Aligning one's actions with higher ethical principles ensures that material profit is achieved ethically and in harmony with spiritual or environmental values.

Cell No: 3.1.3

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Anthropocentric _ Philosophical

Verse No: BG 2.49

Verse in Devanagari Script:

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः॥

Translation in English:

“O Dhananjaya, rid yourself of all fruitive activities by applying devotional service, and with your mind fixed in this consciousness, abandon all attachment to results.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna encourages detachment from the fruits of action.

Sustainability Aspect:

Philosophically, this encourages ethical business practices that do not focus on selfish material profit but on creating long-term value aligned with spiritual and societal welfare.

Cell No: 3.2.1

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Biocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 5.29

Verse in Devanagari Script:

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम्।

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति।।

Translation in English:

“The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries.”

Contextual Interpretation:

The verse positions the divine as equally friendly toward and invested in all living beings without hierarchy, implying that all transactions should be driven with this principle in mind.

Sustainability Aspect:

This has a significant implication that if the divine principle underlying existence is equally present in and friendly toward all beings, then actions that systematically harm other living beings are not merely ecologically damaging but are acting against the fundamental orientation of the cosmos.

Cell No: 3.2.2

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Biocentric _ Relational

Verse: BG 3.11

Verse in Devanagari Script:

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः।

परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ।।

Translation in English:

“The demigods, being pleased by sacrifices, will also please you, and thus, by cooperation between humans and demigods, prosperity will reign for all.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse highlights the mutual relationship between humans and nature (represented by the demigods).

Sustainability Aspect:

It shows how maintaining a respectful, reciprocal relationship with nature (through ethical actions and sacrifices) leads to shared prosperity, aligning with the relational aspect of biocentric profit-making.

Cell No: 3.2.3

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Biocentric _ Philosophical)

Verse: BG 9.26

Verse in Devanagari Script:

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति।

तदहं भक्त्युपहतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः॥

Translation in English:

“If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I will accept it.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse emphasizes that simple, sustainable offerings given with devotion are accepted by Krishna.

Sustainability Aspect:

It philosophically ties material gain (like food or resources) to ethical and humble practices that respect nature, aligning with the principle of sustainable resource use and spiritual ethics.

Cell No: 3.3.1

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Ecocentric _ Transactional

Verse No: BG 9.17

Verse in Devanagari Script:

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः।

वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च॥

Translation in English:

“I am the father of this universe, the mother, the support, and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge, the purifier, and the syllable Om. I am also the Rig, the Sama, and the Yajur Vedas.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna declares himself as the source of all creation, nurturing and supporting life.

Sustainability Aspect:

Material and spiritual success are interlinked with cosmic forces. Acting in alignment with nature ensures prosperity, reflecting the transactional nature of ethical, sustainable profit-making.

Cell No: 3.3.2

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Ecocentric _ Relational

Verse No: BG 9.23

Verse in Devanagari Script:

येऽप्यन्यदेवता भक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ॥

Translation in English:

“Even those who are devotees of other gods, and who worship them with faith, actually worship Me alone, O son of Kunti, but in an improper way.”

Contextual Interpretation:

Krishna explains that all offerings ultimately reach him, whether made directly or indirectly.

Sustainability Aspect:

This shows the relational unity in material and spiritual pursuits. Ethical profit, regardless of its form, ultimately aligns with the greater cosmic order when achieved through sustainable practices.

Cell No: 3.3.3

Cell Descriptor: Profit _ Ecocentric _ Philosophical

Verse: BG 13.17

Verse in Devanagari Script:

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।

भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रासिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ॥

Translation in English:

“Although the Supersoul appears to be divided, He is never divided. He is situated as one. Although He is the maintainer of every living entity, it is to be understood that He devours and develops all.”

Contextual Interpretation:

This verse asserts the fundamental non-separateness of all existence even as it appears differentiated. The apparent boundaries between species, between organisms and their environments, between living and non-living systems are real at the phenomenal level but not at the fundamental level.

Sustainability Aspect:

This verse maps directly onto the three fundamental ecological functions of production, decomposition, and regeneration that constitute the self-sustaining character of ecosystems. It describes a self-organizing, self-sustaining, self-renewing whole implying that extraction from any part of this undivided whole necessarily affects the whole. There are no genuinely isolated transactions. Every action is an intervention in an undivided system; philosophical wisdom requires appreciation of the systemic embeddedness.

DISCUSSION

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the timeless philosophical and spiritual treatises that provide deep insights helping overcome the limitations of sustainability concept primarily attributable to the shortcomings of its philosophical traditions. The Cartesian and Kantian philosophical underpinnings limit it too weak to moderate part of the weak - strong sustainability continuum. These shortcomings viz. non-inclusivity, technological bias, anthropocentrism, and lack of substantial philosophical grounds can be tackled by the Bhagavad Gita by providing guidance at behavioural (Transactional), relational

and philosophical level to make sustainability stronger and widely acceptable.

Behavioural Guidance for Sustainability Practice

The main critique of contemporary sustainability is that it is eminently technological and reductionist, framing solutions such as those on technological innovations or market mechanisms. The modern notion of sustainability owes its current form and practice to the modern scientific thought process, inter alia, Cartesian dualism. It separates mind from matter and leads to the fragmented, mechanistic worldview that views nature as something that should be dominated. Furthermore, Kant's categorical imperative, even though providing a rational foundation for ethics, is nonetheless limited to human activities and does not extend moral responsibilities toward nature.

Therefore, in contrast, Bhagavad Gita's preoccupation with selfless action (karma yoga) provides a more general and practical model for sustainability. Verses such as BG 2.47 ("You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action.") remind people to act without attachment toward the results of such actions—that one should work for sustainable development, not necessarily in anticipation of immediate rewards, but out of concern for a larger good. This spirit of detached responsibility can help people rise above the transactional thinking characterised by 'what's in it for me in the immediate short run' that manifests sustainability practices today. Further, BG 3.9 ("Work done as a sacrifice for Vishnu has to be performed, otherwise work causes bondage in this material world.") supports the idea that every activity, including environmental ones, should be undertaken as a form of service or sacrifice to a higher purpose. This introduces a sacred dimension to action beyond the mechanistic worldview and puts sustainability in concert with moral and spiritual responsibility.

Beyond Anthropocentrism, Extended Ecology

Modern sustainability rooted in Western philosophical traditions, is often anthropocentric with excessive focus on human well-being and economic prosperity. This one-sided view led to fragmented approaches that did not account for the interdependence of all life forms with each other and with nature. The utilitarian approach of thinkers like John Stuart Mill, which stresses the greatest good for the greatest number, often excludes non-human species from ethical considerations and thus helps to reinforce the chasm between humans and nature. These approaches, rooted in the ideas of Descartes and Kant, have led to an anthropocentric view that separates humans from nature and treats it as an object for exploitation (Jarwar et al., 2024; Naudé, 2018). This perspective has limitations in addressing modern sustainability challenges, as it often fails to consider non-Western cultural contributions and the intrinsic value of nature (Jarwar et al., 2024).

On this backdrop, the Bhagavad Gita goes beyond anthropocentrism when it comes to realizing the interrelationship between all beings. BG 5.18 (“The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.”) encourages a biocentric view wherein all forms of life are accorded the same respect, hence encouraging humanity toward valuing other species. This represents a radical departure from anthropocentrism and aligns with more contemporary conceptions of environmental justice in which the well-being of all life forms is taken into consideration.

Further, the Gita also expands to an eco-centric/Cosmo-centric perspective, as in BG 9.19 (“I give heat, and I withhold and send forth the rain. I am immortality and I am death personified. Both being and non-being are in Me.”), in which Krishna identifies himself with the forces of nature. This shows a cosmic interdependence – in which the

natural world is not separate from, but part of the divine. In placing the human within a larger cosmic order, the Gita stretches the notion of sustainability away from a notion of human concern to one of universal inter-connectedness so aptly captured in the concept of Rta (the cosmic order).

Building a Strong Philosophical Foundation for Sustainability

One of the major critiques of modern sustainability is that it lacks a coherent philosophical grounding. Much of Western thought, based on Kantian ethics and Cartesian dualism, has been oriented toward the rational, utilitarian, and instrumental dimensions of ethics in which deeper metaphysical concerns are often put aside. These frameworks tend to position nature as an external object to be managed, rather than as a living system with intrinsic value. In contrast, the Bhagavad Gita posits a more holistic metaphysical grounding, in which human action, spiritual responsibility, and universal inter-relatedness are kept inextricably woven together. Certain stanzas, for example, BG 7.5 (“Besides this inferior nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is a superior energy of Mine, which consists of all living entities who are struggling with material nature and sustaining the universe.”), reflect a dualistic yet integrative perspective on the material and spiritual worlds.

In this, Krishna realizes that the universe is maintained by an interaction of material (*prakriti*) and spiritual (*purusha*) energies, thereby transcending the reductionism of Cartesian dualism. This integration of material and spiritual realities gives a strong philosophical basis to understand sustainability as a practice pertaining to the outer environment as much as to the inner self. The Gita teaching on *yajna* (sacrifice) in BG 3.10 (“In the beginning, the Creator, having created humanity together with sacrifices, said: ‘By this sacrifice, you shall prosper, and may it be the fulfiller of all your desires.’”) frames human actions of sacrifice (*yajna*) as a sacred

offering that are essential for sustaining the environment, echoing practices of resource conservation and renewal. Here, *prajā* (all beings) and *yajña* (the reciprocal process) are presented as co-created and co-dependent. *Yajña* thus represents not a ritual performed by humans upon nature but a cosmic process of generation and regeneration.

The concept of sacrifice here is much deeper than the Western concepts of duty – as in Kantian imperatives because it embodies both the spirito-ethical dimensions of an action. Sustainability thus ceases to be a moral duty; instead, it turns out to be a sacred obligation innately linked with the spiritual evolution of individuals and society.

CONCLUSION

The Bhagavad Gita goes beyond the restrictions of modern concepts of sustainability and offers a more inclusive bio-centric and cosmo-centric perspective of the world deeply grounded in a holistic philosophy. It surpasses the anthropocentric bias of Western thought, recognizing the intrinsic value of all life and stressing interdependence between the human, natural worlds, and the cosmos. The Gita does this by advocating for selfless action, universal equality, and the recognition of the divine presence in all of nature, systematically laying the foundation for practicing sustainability in an integrated material, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of life. This being the case, one might argue that Cartesian dualism and Kantian imperatives relativize a Pragmatic-Transcendental approach to sustainability where human acts are performed in concert not only with material ends but with the greater good of life. Sustainability becomes general in the assessment of ethical guidelines based upon the organon of the universe in which sustainability is not an action but rather an attitude toward living matching care for the planet, all life, and spirit. The integration of Bhagavad Gita's principles with

contemporary sustainability frameworks demonstrates the value of cross-cultural management approaches. This synthesis not only enriches sustainability both in concept and practice by overcoming its limitations of anthropocentricity, non-normativity and non-inclusivity but also provides multinational organizations with practical tools for bridging Eastern and Western management paradigms while addressing global sustainability challenges.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Data curation: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Formal analysis: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Funding acquisition: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Investigation: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Methodology: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Project administration: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Resources: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Software: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Supervision: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Validation: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Visualization: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Writing – original draft: P.D., P.C., & K.R.; Writing – review & editing: P.D., P.C., & K.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before participants filled out the questionnaire for this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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