



## COGNITION MOTIVATES ACTION: BHAGAVAD - GITA

Dr. G .Sarvani

**ABSTRACT** The researcher tries to identify difference in psychological aspects relating to “Action” based on modern psychology and that of “Action” based on Baghavad -Gita propounded by Shree Krishna.

(A): Modern psychology states that there are three components in every action, i.e. (a) goal, (b) its execution and (c) its evaluation.

(B): Baghavad -Gita on the other hand states that “Action” has one primary component called as (I) cognition

The component “(I) Cognition” mentioned above, is a three fold process, which includes (a) knowledge, (b) the object of knowledge and (c) the knower. These three components guide to motivate and transform an “action”. This Motivated action further affect to three sub classifications namely, “Instrument of action (also called as Senses)”, “Action itself (also called as Work)”, Doer (also called as performer)

In modern psychology there is no place attributed for a “doer” or actor, while in Baghavad -Gita a “doer” has a lot of significance in “Action”. A doer means an intellect, which explains difference between good or bad, but many times human mental impressions (samskaaras) dominates our actions. Therefore, there is a need to further examine and analyze components mentioned in modern psychology visa Vis Bagawad Gita.

**KEYWORDS:** Cognition, Action, Mental Impressions, Knowledge, The Object Of Knowledge, Knower.

Cognition can be described as a mental activity that goes on in the brain when a person is processing information and organizing it, understanding it and communicating the same to others. This process includes thinking and also memory. However, people think/ imagine, they are not only aware of information, but also are making decisions by comparing with other additional information and using it to solve problems. Thus thinking includes more than conscious efforts. When people think, they often have images, previous knowledge, additional information as well as words in their minds.

Thus, thinking is a polymorphous/multifaceted process. It includes organization of information, gathering knowledge, evaluating the same, manipulation of symbols, decision-making, judgment, comparison, reasoning etc. This process is called as the cognitive process. This cognitive process also takes into account various symbols, ideas, images, meanings etc which implicitly manipulate with a view to arrive at a solution to the problem. Thus, thinking can be defined as “ A higher order cover mental process of cognition characterized by the use of symbols as representation of objects and events, which is directed towards solution of the problem that initiates this higher order process of cognition.” Therefore, thought process is characterized by the use of symbols, which represent object s and events that aims at arriving at a solution to the problem. This cognitive symbolical process is initiated by a problem.

The German philosopher and psychologist Christoph Sigwart (1889) introduced this perspective prior to the heyday of will psychology. Although, his work did not stimulate any systematic research, it at least prevented German will psychologists from confounding problems of goal setting (which they referred to as problems of motivation) with goal striving (which they referred to as problems of willing or volition). Kurt Lewin (Lewin, Dembo, Festinger, & Sears, 1944) made a major distinction between goal striving and goal setting. "Goal striving" is behavior directed toward existing goals, and thus addresses questions of moving toward the chosen goal. "Goal setting," on the other hand, addresses the question of what goals a person will choose, and thus considers the expected value of the available choice of options. Moreover, Heckhausen and Kuhl (1985) employed a horizontal perspective when they reflected on the long way from a person's wishes to the execution of relevant actions. Although their primary focus was on the mental examinations that wishes must pass before winning access to a person's behavior, they made a strong distinction between pre and post intentional processes which they also referred to as motivational and volitional processes respectively.

The latter are of a strict vertical, hierarchical nature (Carver & Scheier, 1981); they assume that the individual, when executing a course of action, advances from a concern with abstract, super ordinate, higher-level goals to concrete, subordinate, lower-level goals. The temporal dimension of action is addressed solely with respect to the organization of single acts or action units within the course of action (von Cranach, 1982).

Norman's (1986) basic action theory of human action has three basic

stages. They are goal formation, execution and evaluation. Each stage divided into sub stages they are

- **Goal (establish goal)**
- **Formulation of stages of Execution**

1. Start at the top with a goal, the state that is to be achieved.
2. The goal is translated into an intention to do some action.
3. The intention must be translated into a set of internal commands, an action sequence that can be performed to satisfy the intention.
4. The action sequence is still a mutual event: nothing happens until it is executed, performed upon the world.

- **Evaluation**

1. Evaluation starts with our perception of the world
2. This perception must then be interpreted according to our expectations.
3. Then it is compared (evaluated) with respect to both our intentions and our goals.

**Bagavad - Gita view of cognition and action in human behavior**

One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is holy Bagavad-Gita, which consists 18 chapters. The researcher took 18<sup>th</sup> verse from 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter ( Moksha sanyasa yoga) from Bagavad Gita.

*Jnyaanam jneyam parijnyaataa trividhaa karmachodana l  
Karanam karma karteti trividhihi karmasagraha ll*

The meaning of verse is: Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower- these are the three factors that induce action. The instrument of action, the act itself, and the doer –these are the three constituents of action.

Shree Krishna discusses the three-fold factors that propel actions. These are jnyaanam (knowledge), jneyam (the object of knowledge) and parijnyaataa (the knower). Together, the three are called jnana triputi( triad of knowledge). Knowledge is a primary impetus for action; it provides understanding to the knower about the object of knowledge. This triad jointly induces action. For example, knowledge of the remuneration to be paid by the employer motivates employees to work; awareness of the importance of winning a medal in the Olympics motivates sportspersons to practice for years.

Similarly there is a second set named as karma Triputi (triad of action). It includes the kartaa (doer), karanam (the instrument of action), and karma (the act itself). This triad of work jointly constitutes the content of action. The doer utilizes the instruments of action to perform the action. Having analyzed the constituents of action, Shree Krishna now relates them to the three modes of material nature, to explain why people differ from each other in their motives and actions.

So then, what is the genesis, the birth of an action? How does an action commence? Our sense organs send a report to the mind of having seen, felt, touched, tasted or smelled something. This is the process of perception. Or, a thought about a prior perception arises in the mind.

Both these processes are the same for all people in this world. Two persons perceive a red apple in the same manner. In this case the red apple is termed as jneyam, an object which is known. "This is step one".

What happens next? Both of these persons see the same red apple, but one may love it, while another one hates it. The differences occur due to the differences in mental impression (samskaaras). People attach a certain meaning to objects, people and situations are based on mental impression (samskaaras). This individual vision of the world is termed as knowledge or jnyaanam. It looks at the object in question and generates a sense of attraction, repulsion or indifference. "This is step two".

Next, this notion of attraction, repulsion or indifference creates a modification in the intellect called the "doer" the kartaa. It is a phantom illusory entity which says "I want the red apple, go get it", or "I hate this red apple, throw it away". The doer issues these instructions to the karanam, the organs of action, which then do as they are told. The action of grasping the apple or throwing it away is carried out. It is important to very particularly note here that the doer only comes into existence when there is attraction or repulsion. So the doer, the organs of action and the object make up karma sangraha, the basis of action. "This is step three".

When finally, the object, the target of action is consumed by the senses, another modification of the mind called the "enjoyer", the bhoktaa, arises here. It creates the notion that "I have experienced this object, and it gave me joy/sorrow". This is the parijnyaata, the knower, mentioned above in the sloka(verse). Furthermore, a record of this experience, whether pleasurable or painful, is stored in the unconscious aspect of an individual personality, the causal body. This record, this mental impression (samskaaras), becomes the seed of the future action by creating thoughts of desire in the mind, prompting further actions and experiences. This process of enjoyment of an object is the "fourth step". So "these four steps" taken together describe the lifecycle of an action.

Knowledge, known and knower are motives of every action. So Knowledge, known and knower comes under cognition. Knowledge must precede and result in action if knowledge is to be productive and if action is to be wise. Therefore, the knower and the doer must be the same person: the one who knows must act, and the one who acts must know. When the knower has knowledge, the result is something that is known. When the doer or performer acts, as we know from the principle of karma, the result is also a cause of some kind – of other actions or freedom from other action.

Therefore, as there is no place for attributed for a "doer" or actor in modern psychology, while on otherhand in Bagavad-Gita a "doer" has a lot of significance in "Action". A doer means an intellect, which explains difference between good or bad, but many times human mental impressions (samskaaras) dominates our actions. Therefore, there is a need to further examine and analyze components mentioned in modern psychology visa Vis Bagavad-Gita.

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