

RHETORICAL AGENCY IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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ABSTRACT

This M.A. thesis presents a rhetorical analysis of the Indian philosophical and religious text, *The Bhagavad Gita*. Utilizing Kenneth Burke's *Pentad* of act, scene, agent, agency and purpose as a primary interpretive lens for uncovering universal human motivations, this rhetorical critique conceptualizes the idea of *rhetorical agency* as a model for action in the *Gita's* dialogical progression between Krishna and Arjuna. Rhetorical agency in the *Gita* differs from a traditional understanding of agency in that the former amalgamates *competing yet co-existing pragmatic and consummatory agencies* that Arjuna may utilize to act in the here and now but also relinquish the control on the fruits of his act, to ultimately transcend all human action by breaking the cycle of birth and death. In that sense, by virtue of rhetorical agency, the *Gita* may be considered in Burke's words *Equipment for Living*, because it provides a template for life across the universe.

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While graduate work is daunting in its own right, an international student such as me faces certain other challenges too. Not everyone can wish their obstacles away, unless they meet the likes of Ann Burnett and Mark Meister who are incredible mentors, compassionate human beings and above all a supportive family far away from home. Back home, I wholly cherish the love and support of my parents Annpurna and Vinod Nautiyal, who have shared my passion for academia in its actualities over FaceTime, despite being thousands of miles away and celebrated my micro-moments of hope and despair in this awe-inspiring graduate journey. Finally, I am forever indebted to my maternal grandparents Lilawati and Kulanand Purohit for constantly stressing the value of unremitting efforts in life and urging me to live upto my name.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Fargo's meditative and snowy silence that has contributed the most to a self-reflexive rhetorical analysis of *The Bhagavad Gita*.

PREFACE

Just like every other person that at some point in their lives questions their purpose and existence in life with the eternal, 'Who am I?', my graduate education in speech communication provided that pointed driving force with which to answer this question and a quest to challenge my own limits of knowing and being. As a rhetorician I make sense of my surroundings through a discursive consciousness with philosophical leanings in the unthought known. For this reason, I decided to decipher the philosophical gravitas of the *Gita* by closely analyzing its always-tenuous yet transcendental discourse on the haves and have-nots of life. Ultimately, I was drawn to the *Gita*, so that I could discover my own life's transcendental truths in a bid to be a better, calmer and more compassionate human being who is at least initiated toward pragmatic yet consummatory daily actions in an ephemeral life span.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. A Primer to *The Bhagavad Gita*

“It is uncleavable, it cannot be burnt, it can be neither wetted or dried. It is eternal, omnipresent, changing and immovable. It is everlasting. It is called unmanifest, unthinkable and immutable; therefore, knowing it as such, thou shouldst not grieve” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 39).

The aforementioned words refer to the human soul and form the part of a dialogue in *The Bhagavad Gita*¹—an Indian philosophical and religious text—between Lord Krishna (an avatar of Lord Vishnu in Hindu philosophy) and Arjuna (son of King Pandu, ace archer and one of the Pandavas) on the battlefield of Kurukshetra toward the end of one of the greatest Indian epics, *Mahabharata* (Edgerton, 1944). Saint Vyasa is known to have authored the *Gita* between “the fifth century B. C. and second century B. C.” Deutsch, 1968, p. 4).² Through the dialogue, Krishna tries to communicate the quintessence of the soul to Arjuna, who has lost his will to fight against his own family members and teachers among the Kauravas. Not wanting to kill his own family members for the sake of winning the battle, Arjuna is ambivalent about his actions on the battlefield. This is why Krishna implores Arjuna to focus on his actions (karma) in the face of one’s duty (dharma) as even when the flesh perishes, the soul remains intact. Besides, Krishna emphasizes the fact that since Arjuna is a Kshatriya (warrior), “there exists no greater good for a Kshatriya than a battle required by duty” as such battles are direct pathways to heaven (Deutsch, 1939, p. 40).

¹ Upon its introduction, I use *The Bhagavad Gita* and the *Gita* interchangeably in the analysis.

² The text’s authorship and time period remain debatable, a feature that is discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Since, the *Gita* is chiefly predicated on a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, the emergence of key philosophies and themes in the *Gita* then results from a dialogical progression. The progression allows for the interlocutors involved in the dialogue to develop common ethical responsibilities and a shared understanding on these philosophies and themes. Consequently, spiritual individual growth and deeper consciousness become possible owing to the dialogue. Arnett, Arneson and Bill (2006) consider dialogue “as the communicative exchange of embedded agents standing their own ground while being open to the other’s standpoint,” a result of which is discursive formations that revolve around a shared “communicative event” (p. 79). However, the communicative exchange between Krishna and Arjuna is not just limited to a shared understanding of events, as it also requires Arjuna to realize the importance of making tough choices amidst tougher exigencies. The importance of choosing to act regardless of outcomes is one of the principle philosophies in the *Gita* that then impregnates the dialogue ethically, equally for Krishna and Arjuna. Through his philosophical standpoint Krishna gradually shapes Arjuna’s understanding on life and human action, reviving his spirit to fight against his kin. Arjuna’s resulting understanding of his actions and obligations as a warrior on the battlefield have a direct bearing on the transcendental nature of life that Krishna wants him to understand. This common ethical responsibility of instructorship and learning between Krishna and Arjuna as “embedded communicative agent(s)” on the battleground allows the dialogue to assume an “ongoing” conversation about life’s battleground, of which present day human beings also partake” (Arnett et al., 2006, p. 79). This ongoing nature of the dialogue explains why the *Gita* may be considered in Kenneth Burke’s words, equipment for living. With the *Gita* as equipment for living, the dialogue translates into overcoming the innumerable struggles stemming from the daily choices that we fight within ourselves (Easwaran, 1997).

Dialogue is also central to Plato's explication of the value of rhetoric, as Ingram (2007) discusses in Plato's use of "rhetoric of indirection" strategy in works such as *Gorgias*. This particular strategy obviates the need for an absolute explanation of phenomena or "a clear set of propositions to be applied dogmatically" (Ingram, 2007, p. 294). Instead, Platonic dialogues encourage situations where the readers experience an impasse in the text, to work their way through the same. Just as has been discussed in the *Gita's* context pertaining to the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, Plato's rhetorical indirection urges readers to understand this text with their unique sensibilities and derive a personal understanding of truth.

Thus, the dialogical format of the *Gita* asks us to think of the text not just as a historical, literary, or mythical document, but also as equipment for living: an exhortation to learn something about our own lives from the lives of the text's protagonists. The text's outlook toward agency and action in the interactions between Krishna and Arjuna, of how we as humans ought to relate to the world around us and the outcomes we can or cannot control, will be the focus of my work. The *Gita* offers a unique understanding of agency that I later model as a particular kind of pragmatic yet consummatory rhetorical agency. Rhetorical agency has significant implications for understanding how competing yet co-existing cultural philosophies of pragmatism and mysticism align in the text, which ultimately shape pragmatic human action with a transcendental purpose. Now that there is an understanding of the dialogical premise on which the *Gita* is predicated, it is imperative to locate this interaction between Krishna and Arjuna in the scholarly conversation about the *Gita*, for an understanding of the different lenses and worldviews with which the text has been approached.

1.2. Extant Approaches to Understanding *The Bhagavad Gita*

Thompson (2009) admits that the *Gita* has invited an abundance of academic research. In the ethical realm, the *Gita* is considered a “redacted text,” that whose authorship is of a certain period, but has been edited by people in different eras, in that the text left in the wake of modifications has a strong ethical bent, despite a “range of moral philosophies” represented through its disparate sections (Johnson, 2007, p. 656). Through a redacted text such as the *Gita*, Johnson (2007) shows the interplay between human emotions and befitting action in the face of ethical conundrums, case in point Arjuna whose problem is more about the person he should be as opposed to what he should do. Johnson (2007) capitalizes upon the complete repertoire of knowledge that a redacted text such as the *Gita* carries, to understand the same through three approaches to “moral reasoning” including “Ethic of Autonomy, Ethic of Community and Ethic of Divinity” (p. 657).

Johnson’s (2007) ethical explication of the *Gita* casts the text as an exemplar of what Arnett, et al. (2006) call “universal-humanitarian communication ethics” (p. 74). Since, Arnett et al.’s (2006) concept is steeped in “passionate commitment to the growth of a human being within what can be called humanizing topoi that lead one to reason on the behalf of good,” one can begin to understand why Krishna urges Arjuna to follow a path that the former as a warrior ought to follow (p. 74). Therefore, in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, a “universal presupposes value-laden terms about a “good life” that can be rationally made available, ever connected to an a priori conception of the good, the beautiful and the responsible” (Arnett et al., 2006, p. 75). Ultimately, consistent with the *Gita*’s teachings, the solution to ethical divides such as Arjuna’s lies in an individual’s commitment to action and “emotional detachment from the consequences” of the same (Johnson, 2007, p. 656). The concept of action with regard to the

agent is essential to understanding the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. However, theorists differ on their approaches to action as conceptualized in the *Gita*. Mackenzie (2001) for instance, avers that an “agent-centered” view of action in the *Gita* is tantamount to fallacious reasoning. In the dialogical interaction between Krishna and Arjuna, the former urges the latter to subsume himself in the divine. As a result of Krishna’s suggestion, Mackenzie (2001) asserts that “the agent is essentially dependent on the divine” (p. 144). This is because, a supreme power inhabits the human soul and an agent-centered view of action thus amounts to “an arrogant and egoistic error arising from our own ignorance of the true nature of the Self and the Absolute” (Mackenzie, 2001, p. 144). Teschner (1992) corroborates Mackenzie’s (2001) view through the idea that through the practice of Karma Yoga, a concept that Krishna espouses in the *Gita*, actions do not have their provenance in the agent, nor does the agent have any “self-conscious agency,” as “action is caused by material nature acting upon material nature” (II).

Dass’s (2004) discussion on Karma Yoga offers a finer understanding of what Mackenzie (2001) and Teschner (1992) imply through their discussion in the *Gita*, as mentioned previously. Dass (2004) suggests that Karma Yoga stands for resolving one’s daily crises by foregoing “inaction” and “by shifting our perspectives on our actions” (p. 105). In other words, actions are of paramount and pragmatic consequence to the *Gita*. However, the conceptual linchpin that drives one’s actions is the moral and ethical law of karma (Dass, 2004). This implies that insofar as action is considered, agents have the agency to play the cards that they are dealt or fall prey to inaction through folding their cards without trying. However, what agents do not have control over and should not worry about, according to the *Gita*’s tenets is the upshot of their actions, as the latter is not under one’s control. On a comparable note, Teschner (1992) expounds the role of action through Karma Yoga in the *Gita* as “non-teleological,” and unintentional which

contributes to the “transformation in the consciousness of the self” (p. 61). Furthermore, the concept of action is not based on an abstract meta-narrative, but grounded in an individual’s “engaging in action with a trained attitude” (Teschner, 1992, p. 62). These explications also magnify what Mackenzie (2001) means by a lack of agent-centered action in the *Gita*. While Dass (2004) bases the *Gita*’s understanding on karma’s role in individual actions, Yadlapati (2011) takes issue with the “karmic worldview” by pointing out that “karma is guilty of onto-theology and presents a problematic religious ethics” (p. 183). This statement implies that the doctrine of karma totalizes the infinite into worldly rigmaroles susceptible to human chicanery. Additionally, Yadlapati (2011) opposes the karmic worldview by stating that ethical actions’ relation to karma is not ordained by some higher power, but is very much a result of the worldly communicative exchanges within which ethical actions are carried out. In that sense, the agents involved in the ethical encounter are obligated to respond to the other, an aspect which Yadlapati (2011) utilizes to explicate a possible alternative to understanding the karmic importance in life.

The purpose of synthesizing previous literature on the different interpretive approaches to the *Gita* is to situate the present work in the scholarly conversation that the *Gita* has engendered. Having done so, I argue in this thesis that the understanding of agency we find in the *Gita* is a kind of rhetorical agency distinct from the conceptualizations offered by the extant literature.³

³ It is evident that the *Gita* invites multiple viewpoints owing to its own sense of mysticism and unresolved inconsistencies in the way the role of agent, action and agency is defined. While the lack of absolute meanings allows the researcher interpretative latitude, the process can be challenging in establishing a firm argument on a text whose meaning of the absolute is relative. Such an experience can amount to learning and self-awareness from the *Gita in-situ*, as one performs actions without dwelling upon the outcomes of the endeavor. Self-awareness then invites a reflexive attitude toward research, which Gouldner (1970) encourages of social scientists and is of great consequence to this endeavor as well.

To make this argument, in the second chapter I outline intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to the text and its context based on Campbell and Burkholder's (1996) model of rhetorical criticism. The intrinsic explication of text allows for a descriptive identification of key thematic elements in the text such as purpose, persona, audience, tone, structure, supporting materials and other strategies. The extrinsic explanation in the second chapter lays out a socio-historical and cultural context of the text. While the second chapter is the descriptive foundation of the thesis, the third chapter pertains to the methodological foundation, which in this thesis is Burke's (1954) pentad, the five elements that it entails and the ratios revealing the dominating human motivation that the elemental interplay effects. With the analytical approach in hand, in chapter four or the argument section I identify the pentadic elements and existing ratios in the *Gita's* dialogical progression while also accounting for the constitutive changes in the ratios as the dialogue proceeds. Although such a shift is counter-intuitive to Burke's conceptualization of the ratios in which one element dominates others in a text, a rhetorical analysis of the *Gita's* mystical yet progressive learning technique demonstrates a more nuanced version of the pentad. The pentadic extension or shift is at the core of the conceptualization of a particular kind of rhetorical agency that manifests in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna and helps establish a pragmatic yet consummatory understanding of agency in the text. Finally, chapter five is the assimilative site for this work in which I summarize its rhetorical ambit and discuss critical implications with regard to self-reflexivity in the *Gita*, possible limitations and avenues for future scholarship.

Thus, at the heart of my thesis is an analysis of the language that engenders and shapes the dialogical interaction between Krishna and Arjuna and provides an understanding of symbolic action both within the *Gita* and its role as equipment for living. Through an understanding of the lexical choices of the interlocutors in the dialogue, I enunciate the role of

rhetorical agency in the *Gita* as an interplay between the situated *here and now* of the interaction and a conceptual mystical future inaccessible to individual control or agency. Such an approach helps differentiate from and yet integrate the thesis with previous scholarly work on the *Gita*. Therefore, consistent with the preview, in chapter two I initiate the rhetorical analysis of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2. APPROACHES TO THE TEXT AND CONTEXT

In a rhetorical analysis, understanding the rhetorical significance of any text requires first an intrinsic and extrinsic explanation of the text, which collects the rhetorical materials of a text and so serves as a resource for the analysis. The intrinsic explication of the text lends itself to “descriptive statements” based exclusively on the “content of the discourse itself,” while the extrinsic part helps establish the historical context of the text (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 20). Consistent with rhetorical analysis, I conduct a preliminary intrinsic analysis to determine which particular aspects of the text would be crucial to the detailed analysis of the text in the subsequent chapters.

2.1. Intrinsic Explication

The Bhagavad Gita is a revered and archaic Hindu “magnificent philosophical-religious poem” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 189). Considered a “synthetic combination” on life’s myriad themes like the “illusory nature of the experienced world, the unity of the Self and issues of duty (dharma),” the *Gita* perpetuates the value of action as a means to “fulfillment and realization” (Stroud, 2005, p. 152; Deutsch, 1968, p. 189). The literal translation of the *Gita* is “Song of the Lord” and is venerated in the Hindu religion as being a “revelation” or “shruti” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 3). Lord Krishna reveals *The Gita* to Arjuna, one of the sons of King Pandu and one of the protagonists in the battle of Kurukshetra between “two factions of a warring family, the Kurus (Kauravas) and the Pandavas” in the “great Hindu epic,” the *Mahabharata*, in the form of a “long dialog(ue)” (Edgerton, 1944, p. 105; Stroud, 2005, p. 152). Owing to its mystical and spiritual body of work, a certainty on the *Gita*’s authorship remains tenuous. However, since it takes place toward the end of the *Mahabharata*, the epic whose author is Saint Vyasa, one may

attribute the *Gita*'s creation to him during a period "between the fifth century B. C. and the second century B. C. (Deutsch, 1968, p. 4). In the battle of Kurukshetra, Krishna is Arjuna's charioteer in his human avatar. However "according to the *Gita* itself, he is in truth a manifestation of the Supreme Deity in a human form" which is why the text is considered as the song of the lord (Edgerton, 1944, p. 105). The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna stems from the dire circumstances in which ace-archer and warrior, Arjuna learns that he has to fight against his own family members in order to win the battle of Kurukshetra (Edgerton, 1944). At the prospect of shedding his own kin's blood, Arjuna plumbs into depths of despair and inaction. Thus, in order to rouse Arjuna from his morose stupor, Lord Krishna creates a dialogical and dialectical narrative for Arjuna, in which the former asserts the vitality of action (karma) and duty (dharma) for human beings, while at all times stressing the immortality of the human soul. Johnson (2007) qualifies this thought further by suggesting that *the Gita* concerns itself more with Arjuna's potential for self-actualization as opposed to his mere readiness to fight.

The *Gita* has had a profound influence not only on the past, but also on modern Indian culture. Akin to Krishna's exhortation of Arjuna, Mahatma Gandhi in colonial India derived inspiration from the *Gita* to mobilize the Indian masses to fight the British with a philosophy of non-violent civil disobedience foregrounded in the "self-realization of the knowledge of self" (Aktürk, 2008, p. 128). Interestingly, while *the Gita* has served political leaders like Gandhi to effect momentous national and historical outcomes, the text's call to self-actualization is just as viable in the minutiae of everyday life. The choices that we make with regard to acting in the here and now while foregoing the control on the outcomes that our actions effect are the actualities that are important to *the Gita* as a blueprint for acting and being. Similarly, even though *the Gita* is a foundational text in the Hindu religion, the text still does not limit its

accessibility to its readers by virtue of religion since it offers not a religious tether but a philosophical one, that then inspires individual choices of action and agency based on the latter. Thus, the *Gita's* discourse on the simple ways of acting and being in everyday life, offers a sustainable platform for initiated modern and global youth seeking a pragmatic yet transcendental outlook on life.

After establishing a brief textual premise for the *Gita*, I will now offer an intrinsic explanation of the content. Based on the tenets of descriptive analysis by Campbell and Burkholder (1996), I aim to understand the “purpose, persona, audience, tone, structure, supporting materials and other strategies” of the discursive formations in the *Gita* that establish its rhetorical validity among philosophical and religious texts in the world (p. 20).

2.1.1. Purpose

According to Campbell and Burkholder (1996), the purpose of a text is its focal point or “thesis, of the discourse and the responses desired by the source from those who receive the message” (p. 20). While this step requires a focus on the structural organization of the text to comprehend the underlying themes, yet equally important is to ascertain whether the text concludes explicitly or implicitly, as in an implicit conclusion one has to also focus on the “tone of the discourse” (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 21). To this end, Moffitt (2001) avers that the *Gita's* purpose lies in its “practical” guidance for people wanting to comprehend the “Transcendental” (p. 316). Similarly, Easwaran (1997) suggests that the *Gita* focuses on the human understanding of life beyond the corporeal being and appreciation of the divinity of our core selves. Thus, in Easwaran’s (1997) vocabulary, the *Gita* is not a “book of commandments,” for spirituality, but a treatise on “the good life” (p. 15-16). Based on the previously stated

assertions about the *Gita*'s purpose, whether the *Gita* stands for a finite conclusion or is open to the audience's interpretation carries significant implications for the analysis. In this regard, Stroud (2005) in his analysis of the *Gita*, posits a different "ontological orientation" or the space, which constitutes the speaker's place, norms and values about different topical circumstances (p. 146). The orientation is actually a tempering of the traditional, result oriented and masculine, persuasive approach to rhetoric coupled with feminist oriented invitational appeals allowing for individual freedom and "self-determination" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 145). Stroud's (2005) assertion that the *Gita* while emphasizing the need for worldly action also encourages detachment from the result implies an implicit conclusion, which as Easwaran (1997) points out, relates to the choices humans make in life.

2.1.2. Persona

Having delineated the *Gita*'s purpose, an analysis of the persona or "roles that a rhetor takes on for strategic purposes" in the text is of import (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 21). However, before doing so, it is also important to understand who accounts for as the rhetor in the *Gita*. As discussed previously, Krishna reveals the *Gita* to Arjuna through a long dialogue, while acting as Arjuna's charioteer in a human avatar at the time of the battle of Kurukshetra. Krishna is the one who revives Arjuna's dampened spirit to act on his duties as a warrior, through a dialogue that "focuses on this thematic persuasion covering the nature of the world and how one should act to achieve enlightenment" (Stroud, 2003, p. 56). Therefore, Krishna can be considered the interlocutor or the primary rhetor in the *Gita*. According to Campbell and Burkholder (1996), it is a text's choice of words or language that manifests the rhetor's persona. When Krishna teaches Arjuna that "not by abstention from actions does a man gain freedom, and not by mere renunciation does he attain perfection," Krishna takes on the persona of a spiritual guru that also

corresponds with Campbell and Burkholder's (1996) notion of personas ranging from teachers, prophets or commanders (Deutsch, 1968, p. 47). Furthermore, Krishna imparts wisdom or "a supreme secret" to Arjuna on account of his being Krishna's "devotee and friend" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 53). This grand disclosure from Krishna is also tantamount to building his "ethos or credibility" for the audience reading the *Gita* (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 21). In the discourse between Krishna and Arjuna, the former mentions that he has graced the earth whenever the world has descended into moral anarchy and "rising up of unrighteousness" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 54). So, while the dialogue serves as a platform for Arjuna to grasp the enormity of inaction in the face of duty, it also acts as a vehicle for "self-expression" for Krishna (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 21). Self-expression then stands to reveal the guiding philosophies, values and virtues that the rhetors consider vital to their persona. Ultimately, through the rhetor's or in this case, Krishna's choice of language and philosophy, the audience comes to appreciate the underlying message in the *Gita*.

2.1.3. Audience

Krishna is the prime rhetor in the *Gita* who originates the dialogue between Arjuna and himself. Arjuna engages in the dialogue by asking questions and comprises the text's "immediate audience" (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 22). Moreover, according to Campbell and Burkholder (1996), the "empirical" audience includes everyone that is exposed to the message, while "mediated" audience, a subset of the empirical, is that which can access the message at a later time (p. 21-22). So, in the immediate context of *The Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna is Krishna's empirical audience, while different people that access the *Gita* for either scholarly pursuits like this endeavor or even daily spiritual inquiry constitute the mediated audience. Another distinguishing aspect of the audience for the rhetor is those members who can transform the

rhetor's words into actions or what Campbell and Burkholder (1996) consider "agents of change" (p. 22). Furthermore, since the rhetors believe that their words can "empower" the audience to bring about the actions that the rhetors desire, the audience by virtue of this expectation assumes "the second persona," the rhetor being the first persona as discussed previously (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 23). Close to the concept of second persona, which can constitute both empirical and mediated audiences, is "second dialectic," a concept of Platonic dialogs central to which is dialectical engagement of the mediated audience (Ingram, 2007, p. 294). Through a second dialectic, the mediated audience engages with the author/rhetor and effects the readers' singular meta-understanding of the textual propositions and assertions.

In the *Gita's* context, Arjuna's role in the Gita can be compared to that of an agent of change. Krishna, in sharing his worldly and spiritual wisdom with Arjuna, hopes to revive Arjuna's sunken spirit to take up his duty as a warrior, fight his own "kinsmen" and focus only on his actions (Deutsch, 1968, p. 17). Thus, when Krishna conveys to Arjuna that "wise men do not mourn for the dead or the living," and that "there exists no greater good for a Kshatriya (warrior) than a battle required by duty," Krishna empowers Arjuna to act on these encouraging words (Deutsch, 1968, p. 38-40). Through Krishna's rhetorical appeals, Arjuna should be able to overcome his worldly grief and mediate the change that Krishna expects from the battle of Kurukshetra, i.e. the Pandavas winning the battle against Kauravas to bring home justice. Ultimately, Arjuna's role in the dialogue between Krishna and himself obtains as a second persona in the "rhetorical act" that is *The Bhagavad Gita* (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 23).

2.1.4. Tone

Now that I have delineated the *Gita*'s purpose, persona, key rhetors and the audience, the analysis behooves an understanding of the "language elements" that reveal the rhetor or Krishna's "attitude toward the audiences and the subject matter," textual connotations and establish the *Gita*'s "tone" (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 23). Edgerton (1944) considers the *Gita* to be "frankly mystical and emotional" as it "values "the emotions and the concrete above the rational and the abstract because they are easier" as opposed to more rational choices prevalent in the western societies (p. 193-194). This suggests that the *Gita* can appear as a bricolage to its audiences and "meet(s) the ordinary man on his own ground," thereby implying people's liberty to interpret the text's messages and attain means to "salvation" based on their worldviews (Edgerton, 1944, p. 194).

2.1.5. Structure

If a text's tone describes the rhetor's linguistic style for a desired impact on the audience, its structure brings to the fore the organization of the discourse, through which the text's overarching theme may be gleaned (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996). To that end, Edgerton's (1944) emphasis on the *Gita*'s emotional and mystical tone stems from its departure from a logical progression. Conversely, Deutsch (1968) suggests that the *Gita* follows the "progressive teaching technique" which essentially implies that the text's messages have a learning curve, starting with concepts at par with the student's aptitude, gradually aiming for deeper appreciation of knowledge and eventually directing "the self to higher levels of insight and understanding" (p. 21).

With regard to discursive organization, Campbell and Burkholder (1996) describe “the narrative-dramatic” and “problem-solution” structures (p. 24). In view of the *Gita*’s didactic messages, Krishna paints a narrative for Arjuna, sharing with him details of the soul’s immortality, the criticality of action in the face of duty and the attributes of wise men among others. This feature is well aligned with Campbell and Burkholder’s (1996) notion of the narrative-dramatic structure which emerges from “an organic view of reality and vicarious sharing of integrally related experiences,” which in the *Gita*’s case is Arjuna’s journey from inaction and depression to being enlightened through Krishna’s words and experiences as an incarnation of a higher power (p. 24). Additionally, the problem-solution structure is also applicable to how the *Gita* is structured. The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna reveals this structure as Krishna helps alleviate Arjuna’s problem of confusion between his role as a warrior and that as a blood relative to many people on the opposing side. The solution manifests in the *Gita* through Arjuna’s progressive learning, as he comes to appreciate the deeper truths of life, death, karma and nirvana (salvation).

2.1.6. Supporting Materials

In the process of an intrinsic analysis of *The Bhagavad Gita* through different aspects like its purpose, audience, persona etc., the final dimension involves an understanding of the “supporting materials” like the discursive uses of “illustrations, statistics, analogies and quotations” that aids the text’s comprehensibility and renders the main themes note-worthy (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 25). To that end, in the extensive dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, the former resorts to many analogies to reiterate the *Gita*’s various themes. For instance, in order to explain the immortality of the soul to Arjuna, Krishna compares old bodies with “worn-out clothes,” similar to the human need for wearing new clothes when the old are

torn and tattered and how the soul “takes on others that are new” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 39). Now that all the steps in the intrinsic explication of the *Gita* are complete, as per Campbell and Burkholder’s (1996) vocabulary of rhetorical criticism, I will next establish the socio-historical context of the *Gita* through an *extrinsic exploration*.

2.2. Extrinsic Explication

Why is a “historical-contextual” analysis of the *Gita* of consequence, to this thesis (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 49)? Based on the discussion of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the *Gita* represents a rhetorical act. According to Campbell and Burkholder (1996) “rhetorical acts do not come into existence or work to influence in isolation” (p. 49). Therefore, this logic suggests that the *Gita* like other rhetorical acts operates in a socio-historical milieu, which further shapes the rhetorical sensibilities of the rhetors involved in dialogue. Furthermore, as I have established previously, the dialogue in the *Gita* is rhetorical because it has a pragmatic aim to resolve Arjuna’s dilemma between action and inaction, duty as a warrior and attachment to family members in the opposing faction among others (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996). Yet, the *Gita* is also transcendental in its reasons for pragmatic action, because of which the text’s rhetorical appeal requires a more nuanced explanation, as the argument section will subsequently discuss. Nonetheless, since Krishna’s immediate audience is Arjuna, both parties are crucial to attaining a solution to the problem at hand. However, how is this stage of rhetorical criticism different from the intrinsic stage?

As discussed previously, Krishna reveals the *Gita* to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where it is incumbent upon Arjuna to fight the Kauravas. Therefore, the external climate or the context that shapes the *Gita*, is the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas,

amid which Krishna or the text's first persona presents his "vision of reality" to Arjuna (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 49). Krishna's vision of reality informs the *Gita's* immediate audience, that is Arjuna. From the point of view of mediated audiences on the other hand, Deutsch (1968) adds that since the *Gita* delivers its message "in a vivid existential setting, it gives the reader a sense of vital participation in a spiritual quest" (p. 189). However, how can one be sure that Krishna's vision of reality presented in the *Gita* upholds the truth or the virtues it states? Therefore, aspects such as "historical-cultural context, the rhetor, the audiences exposed to the act, and the persuasive forces, including other rhetoric, operating in that scene" help critically evaluate the rhetorical dialectic between the rhetor and both the immediate and mediated audiences (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 50). These factors which might interfere with the rhetor's intended message also constitute what Campbell and Burkholder (1996) refer to as the "rhetorical problem" (p. 50).

2.2.1. Historical-Cultural Context

This component of the extrinsic explication accounts for the situations and context leading up to an event, which then transpire a rhetor's intervention through different rhetorical messages (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 51). As discussed formerly, the *Gita* forms a part of the epic Mahabharata and takes place as a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna "on the morning of one of the fiercest battles fought in India" (Miller, 1998, p. 55). The war takes place between two factions of a royal family, represented by the Kauravas and the Pandavas on account of injustices meted out to the latter by the former, including the latter's usurpation of territorial rights of certain villages. Ace-warrior Arjuna, who represents the Pandavas, on learning that winning the battle amounts to slaying the Kauravas, that both kin and teachers represent, becomes dispirited and renounces his bow (Deutsch, 1968). Krishna as Arjuna's

charioteer is also his guide during the war and it becomes incumbent on him to revive the warrior in Arjuna, who experiences an ethical divide between his duty as a warrior, his attachment to family members on the enemy's side and an impending "fratricide" at his hands (Sartwell, 1993, p. 95). The deliverance of the *Gita* to realign Arjuna's will with that of a warrior also represents Arjuna's "costs of responding to the rhetor's appeal," that is Krishna (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 52). In a nutshell, this situation forms the historical context of the *Gita* and also informs its "cultural milieu and climate of opinion" (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 51).

2.2.2 Rhetor/Author

This particular aspect of the rhetor/author in the *Gita* from an extrinsic perspective is slightly more difficult to analyze. While the intrinsic explication of the *Gita*, helps in establishing Krishna as the main rhetor in the dialogue between Arjuna and himself, Krishna is not said to have written the *Gita*. Duetsch (1968) mentions that Saint Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*, is also credited as the *Gita*'s author, since the *Gita* takes place toward the end of the epic, while at the same time hinting at authorial anonymity due to a spiritual quintessence (p. 3). Campbell and Burkholder (1996) recommend that an extrinsic explication involve information about the rhetor/author since a rhetor's worldview or belief systems shape the audience's psyche in a unique way. However, such an approach seems challenging in the face of a spiritual guide like the *Gita* in which Krishna, the prime rhetor "proclaims himself as a god who assumes a bodily form whenever there is a predominance of adharma or unrighteousness in the world, in order that dharma or righteousness may be re-established" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 18). How does one challenge or refute the credibility of a spiritual superpower? To this end, Deutsch's (1968) explanation is helpful in that Krishna's dialogic appeal to Arjuna is in essence Arjuna's inner recognition of his baser depravities. This further implies that this self-awareness then bears "a call or an inner

demand to reinstate one's higher self as the vital center of one's being" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 20). This metaphysical logic allows the audience some reflexivity in analyzing Krishna's rhetorical messages, in that the reader is also her or his own personal rhetor.

2.2.3. Audience

In this day and age of technology, it is relatively easier to ascertain the different media through which rhetors can reach and impact their audiences. However, in the *Gita's* context, this evaluation becomes a little difficult. As discussed previously, Krishna's immediate audience is Arjuna, who is also a part of the dialogic conversation, through his questions about an agent's actions in the face of the divide between duty and fear of mortality. However, owing to the mystical nature of this spiritual text, it is difficult to conduct "demographic research on age, occupation, political affiliation, cultural experience and expectations, education, interests, economic status and social class" of the *Gita's* mediated readership without some conjecture (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 54). In light of the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to the text and the context, I now undertake a detailed discussion on the methodological approaches to analyzing the *Gita*.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

3.1. The Pentad and Justifications For a Pentadic Analysis

Based on the intrinsic and extrinsic explanation of the text as well as the premise, which introduces and situates the analysis in the scholarly conversation about *The Bhagavad Gita*, I will now reiterate the theoretical focus of the research. In this analysis, I utilize Burke's (1954) *Pentad* (act, scene, agent, agency, purpose) that allows me to understand the role of rhetorical agency in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. For Burke (1954), the pentad represents a universal conceptual approach for discerning human motivations. He contends that human behavior and interaction should be approached as a drama, consisting of a dynamic interplay between five core elements—the pentad. Dramatism thus “treats language and thought primarily as modes of action,” a feature common to human existence (Burke, 1954, p. xvi). The universality of the pentad is critical to my work and justifies the use of a Western lens to closely analyze an Eastern philosophical text such as the *Gita*. Lending credence to the justification, Burke himself suggests that “theological, metaphysical, and juridical doctrines” are “best illustrations” for his grammar of motives steering the pentad (p. xii). By identifying the key pentadic elements and their subtle shifts through the dialogical progression between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Gita*, it is possible to translate the philosophical and rhetorical motives of the *Gita* as “equipment for living” into implications for human action and communication.

Together the pentadic elements represent what Burke considers “basic forms of thoughts” conducive to understanding human motives and “are equally present in systematically elaborate metaphysical structures, in legal judgments, in poetry and fiction, in political and scientific works, in news and in bits of gossip offered at random” (p. x). While an *act* broadly

represents the nature of an individual's doing, the *scene* may be considered a lifeworld that may have its origins in theology, nature or historical events and in whose presence *agents* with or without agency perform their designated acts. For *agents*, Burke offers several other qualifiers in terms of “co-agents” that aid the hero or agent against the “counter-agent” or the nemesis in a dramatic setting (p. xiv). Agents tap into their *agencies* or the means by which they then accomplish goals at hand. An important point of consideration here is the definitional fluidity that Burke assigns to agency. If in a place, war may be considered an agency owing to its instrumental nature or a scenic element for the agent fighting the war, in the other it may represent an overarching purpose of “proclaiming a cult of war” (p. xiv). The final pentadic element, *purpose*, reveals the underlying ‘*why*’ upon which the other four elements interact and sometimes overlap with each other. In fact, in the traditional Burkean sense, purpose has a mystical or metaphysical construction, which makes its palpability suspect. Therefore, to discern purpose is to seek it “implicit[ly] in the concepts of act and agent” and also agency as means to an act (p. 289).

3.2. The Pentadic Function in Human Motivation: Ratios

As I suggested earlier, the five elements of the pentad work in conjunction to identify universal human motivations. Burke suggests that to identify *motivation* in a rhetorical act—and thus, the *attitudes* it asks interlocutors to take toward each other and the world around them—requires identifying pentadic elements that are more dominant than others. The relative weight of a dramatic element over others exhorts us to take certain attitudes, which then translate into symbolic action. For Burke, the pentadic elements manifest in ten ratios, “scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose” (p. 15). Ratios that favor the scene remove the agent from the locus of

action and attribute the causes of an act to the former. Ling (1970), for example famously revealed in his analysis of Kennedy's July 25th address to the Massachusetts community how Kennedy successfully absolved himself of all the responsibility related to the accident with Miss Kopchene, by successfully presenting himself as a victim of the scene whose political future then depended on the discretionary powers of the people in his address. Conversely, for ratios that privilege the act or agency, the locus of controlled action is the agent driving the act and the scene, then is a mere facilitator. Purpose as an enveloping element, lends itself more to being a transcendental constituent, as my analysis will subsequently reveal. In fact, purpose is what ultimately shapes the distinction between the traditional understanding of agency and *rhetorical agency* that forms the core of the *Gita's* dialogical progression. Consequently, Burke argues that each pentadic element exemplifies a broad philosophical attitude toward life: act concomitant with realism, scene with materialism, agent with idealism, agency with pragmatism and purpose with mysticism. (p. 128).

3.3. Intersubjectivity and Pentadic Analysis

Contributing to the purpose of this pentadic analysis is the concept of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is instrumental in deciphering the significance of dialogical interactions. Positioning it as a core requirement of communicative action, Habermas (1987) defines intersubjectivity as a shared space of meanings through which individuals communicate with each other and arrive at a mutual understanding of various social phenomena through “consensual interpretive patterns,” a process also instrumental at reproducing individuals’ lifeworlds (p. 298). In a similar vein, Drozek (2010) approaches the concept from the perspective of “intersubjective motivation,” a concept that stands for an individual’s “ability to be motivated by subjectivity of another” (p. 541). Drozek (2010) qualifies his notion of intersubjective

motivation further by suggesting that an individual's subjectivities can have a bearing on the "quality" of another individual's "subjective processes and states" (p. 541). In the *Gita's* context, the dialogical progression between Krishna and Arjuna exemplifies intersubjective motivation, as Krishna, using his divinity and universal wisdom motivates Arjuna to resolve his inner struggles of fighting against his family and focus solely on his actions as a warrior, so that he may achieve his highest purpose of transcending mortality.

With the pentad and intersubjective motivation as the methodological cornerstones, the thesis' methodological process is as follows. In a preliminary reading of the text, I identify the central pentadic elements in the *Gita*, such as the imminent war as the scene, Arjuna as the agent, Krishna as initially the co-agent and later the divine scene himself among others. Agency and purpose have a more intricate way of developing in the *Gita*, which justifies a more in-depth discussion on their developmental trajectory in chapter four. Although, the text comprises eighteen chapters, I do not utilize all chapters as evidence, on account of discursive saturation of pentadic themes in the text.

The second step in the thesis involves a close textual analysis to gather evidence for how the identified pentadic elements are arranged in ratios. For instance, areas where Krishna emphasizes the importance of human actions in the face of challenging choices, or Arjuna's need to relinquish the outcomes of those choices, are loosely grouped under agency, with a note to address this contradictory presentation of agency in the argument section. Similarly, other areas in the text reveal Arjuna's intense focus on war, the attachment to his family members who he needs to fight in the war, and his consequential inability to focus, together constitute an emphasis on scene in the *Gita*. However, since the *Gita* is a dialogical progression of its teachings both for Arjuna and as general equipment for living, it becomes imperative to not only analyze primary

ratios, but also discover changes in the dominance of the these ratios, owing to their dynamic dialogic interplay. For example, the way in which Arjuna approaches the idea of war at the beginning of the *Gita* as opposed to how his focus shifts to understanding his own inner being toward the end is indicative of agency now privileging an otherwise dominant scene. By noting similar shifts in the dynamism of the pentadic elements across the text, I conceptualize the role of rhetorical agency in the *Gita*'s dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4. ARGUMENT

My discussion of *The Bhagavad Gita* in chapters I and II has illuminated its rhetorical character by virtue of its dialogical progression between Krishna and Arjuna on the battleground of Kurukshetra, at the onset of a war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas in the Indian epic *Mahabharata* (Deutsch, 1968; Edgerton, 1944). Arjuna, representing the Pandavas is torn between his duty to fight as a warrior and his attachment to the family members and teachers among the opposing Kauravas, whom he must slay in order to win the war and avenge the Pandavas' sullied honor (Deutsch, 1968). The circumstances amidst which Arjuna finds himself render his own self, actions and spirit despondent and decidedly uncertain, which is when Krishna acts as the former's counsel. In order for Arjuna to realize that he has a higher role in the cosmic existence than a mere mortal, Krishna shares with Arjuna dialogically, the transcendental wisdom of the universe that subsumes every being.

In the *Gita's* context, the dialogue focuses on Arjuna's immediate choices between pragmatic actions as a warrior and uncontrollable contingent outcomes. In the larger scheme of life, the dialogue pertains to the daily wars human beings fight internally and the choices they make to resolve their internal crises. In that sense, the dialogue exemplifies what Burke (1957) in his *Counter Statement* calls "equipment for living" or texts that not only delight or record, but also in true Dramatistic fashion, ask us to use our insights in our own lives. Through the analysis in this chapter, I argue that the *Gita's* message for living includes a call to understanding agency in a very particular way. Against the available literature on the topic, I argue that the agency modeled in the *Gita* is a particular kind of rhetorical agency that is simultaneously *pragmatic and consummatory*, which differentiates it from a more traditional rhetorical understanding of agency.

A primary identification of the pentadic elements in the next section results in discerning the *Gita's* rhetorical motivations through the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. At this juncture, it is important to specify what accounts for the preliminary pentad in the *Gita*, which then leads to a discussion on a *pentadic shift* that accounts for the emergence of a competing agency-purpose ratio foregrounded in philosophies of pragmatism and mysticism. These competing ratios are a key feature in this text, and represent a departure from most Burkean analyses, which find either a single dominant ratio, or ratios that change sequentially. I argue here that the *simultaneous* and dynamically changing presence of competing ratios represents a dual-philosophic turn that carries implications for how the *Gita* models rhetorical agency. At the beginning of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Gita*, the *act* constitutes Arjuna's sunken disposition and inability to fight at the prospect of a war with his own family and teachers. Consequently, the *scene* is the imminent battle of Kurukshetra where Arjuna stands as a despondent *agent* on his chariot. Krishna is Arjuna's charioteer and friend who in the *co-agent's* capacity, wants the former to resolve his physiological and psychological crises. Arjuna's *agency* lies in his formidable skills of archery, which at the moment are suppressed due to a forlorn spirit. Arjuna is unable to attain his *purpose* despite being a formidable archer and Pandavas' best hope because he is divided between his duties as a warrior and the earthly attachment that he feels for his family and teachers among the opposing Kauravas.

The identification of these pentadic elements at the *Gita's* dialogical inception reveals that the *scene of an imminent war* dominates Arjuna the agent's view of his surroundings and privileges the *scene-agent* ratio. The scene consequently renders Arjuna spiritless and defeated. The scene would probably continue to dominate the *Gita's* context, were it not for Krishna's dialogical intervention in the co-agent's capacity (and later as the divine scene himself) to exhort

Arjuna out of his present misery. Determined to educate Arjuna to appreciate his own role as a mortal human being yet obligated to his warrior duties, Krishna embarks on a dialogical journey with Arjuna to experience transcendental truths on life, death and the human need to ultimately break away from this cycle. It is in fact this dialogue-as-enlightenment that then prompts the *pentadic shift*, allowing for agency to emerge as a key pentadic element and agency-purpose as a competing ratio to scene-agent. But, first it is fundamental to justify why a shift of thoughts and actions is important to the argument. The shift in a broad sense is consistent with the progressive learning technique that the *Gita* utilizes in its teachings and by whose virtue, a student graduates from one level of consciousness to another, with a particular level's expectations concordant with the student's aptitude (Deutsch, 1968). A more inchoate consciousness is extrinsically focused which is why an individual's locus of control lies outside of themselves, as Arjuna's initial preoccupation with war and his despondency indicates. However, as the student's grasp on the scope of human action and attached consequences deepens through progressive learning, her or his locus of control becomes more intrinsic, which explains why Arjuna's participation in the dialogue with Krishna becomes more involved, self-reflexive and geared toward understanding life's deeper truths.

The general shift of characters' thoughts and actions in the *Gita* can be explained better in rhetorical terms by aligning it with the movement of pentadic elements, as they work in conjunction to reveal the underlying human motivations toward a symbolic action. Even though a traditional Burkean pentadic analysis foregrounds the dominance of one element over the others, the progressively dialogical emergence of newer over older elements in the *Gita* allows for the movement of competing ratios, thereby accounting for what I call the pentadic shift in 4.1.

4.1. What is the Pentadic Shift?

By recapitulating the discussion on the overlapping and interactive nature of the pentadic elements, I will now discuss the idea behind the pentadic shift. The *pentadic shift* accounts for constitutive changes in the existing ratios dominating the initial dialogue in the *Gita* through which one element takes precedence over the other—for example, agency-purpose (characterizing the pragmatic yet consummatory view of rhetorical agency) takes over scene-agent (characterizing Arjuna’s sole focus on the war and despondency). On an underlying level, the pentadic shift and emergence of a competing agency-purpose ratio is a philosophical shift in Arjuna’s view from materialism to pragmatism and mysticism, thereby uncovering the full rhetorical appeal of a message (called the dual-philosophic turn and discussed in detail in 4.1.3.). The progressively dialogical character of the *Gita* further facilitates the pentadic shift owing to the incremental realizations about action, inaction, life, death and its ultimate transcendence that Arjuna develops in the process. Consequently, the *Gita*’s rhetorical motivations may be assessed with greater verity once I address the dynamic shift in the initial pentadic elements.

The initial scene dominating the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna is the imminent war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The scene also contains the fallen warrior Arjuna—the submissive agent whose duty is to fight against his own family members to avenge the injustices meted out to the Pandavas by the familial opponents. In this sense and as Burke (1954) suggests, Arjuna’s act as an agent or its lack thereof is commensurate with the scenic climate of war—a climate in which the scene-agent ratio is prominent. Krishna’s divine emergence and promising Arjuna a complete revelation of the former’s highest spiritual Self to motivate Arjuna in the initial scene, results in the pentadic shift in 4.1.1.

4.1.1. Pentadic Shift to Agency-Purpose Ratio Through Scenic Displacement

The fact that the *Gita* is predicated on metaphysical knowledge about acting and being gives rise to another emerging and ultimately dominant scenic force that disrupts the prominence of the *initial* scene-agent ratio and highlights the agency-purpose ratio. This scenic force essentially turns into a *supernatural constant* upon which the agency-purpose ratio then gains prominence. Krishna's emergence into a supernatural constant is concomitant with the progressive learning technique that allows for the pentadic shift of scene-agent to agency-purpose ratios mentioned before. Therefore, at the start of Arjuna's progressive learning, Krishna assumes his mortal self. As Arjuna's friend, or what Burke considers a co-agent that aids the hero in surmounting obstacles, he acts as the former's charioteer. However, as the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna progresses, Krishna prepares the latter to see light of reason about mortality, action, inaction and salvation, finally revealing his divine knowledge to Arjuna. Thus, the war scene shifts to Krishna assuming a scenic or divine persona in which the agent Arjuna then shares a "synecdochic relation" with the former's universal manifestation of being (p. 7).

Burke also provides a rationale for Krishna's scenic presence in that "polytheistic divinities, besides their personalistic aspects, often represent undecidedly geometric, or scenic, kinds of motivation" which explains Arjuna's identification with Krishna's scenic persona (p. 43). To extend the argument further, "the Creation, as the ground or scene of human acts, provides the basic conditions utilized by human agents in the motions by which they act" (p. 69). Krishna thus motivates Arjuna to believe that the entire universe along with Arjuna is subsumed in Krishna, the highest form of one's Self and, "purely by being the kind of agent that is one with this kind of scene, the child [Arjuna] is "divine"" (p. 8). Consequently, it is imperative that

Arjuna learn of the divinity that inheres human existence and being, on account of a *synecdochic consubstantiality* with a higher power.

4.1.2. Emergence of a Key Pentadic Element as Agency-Purpose Ratio

The subtle shift through which Krishna’s divine avatar becomes the dominant yet scenic backdrop over the hitherto prominent scene of war effects the necessary conditions for the emergence of the agency-purpose ratio that then informs a particular kind of pragmatic yet consummatory rhetorical agency in the *Gita*. The emerging ratio is relevant not just on the literal battleground of the *Mahabharata*, but also life’s contingent battleground that involves making choices about actions and inactions in the micro-moments, thereby reiterating the *Gita*’s position as equipment for living. What furthers explain the emergence of the agency-purpose ratio through scenic displacement is that “one may deflect attention from scenic matters by situating the motives of an act in the agent (as were one to account for wars purely on the basis of a warlike instinct)” (p. 17). Krishna’s divine intervention achieves the very same purpose of refocusing Arjuna’s motive to act apropos to a warrior’s as opposed to dwelling on potential fratricide on his hands. In correspondence with Krishna’s revitalizing efforts, Burke opines that “once Agency has been brought to the fore...scenic materials become means which the organism employs in the process of growth and adaptation” which explains why the divine scenic backdrop in the *Gita* allows for the agency-purpose ratio to emerge (p. 287). By awakening Arjuna through his scenic presence, Krishna intersubjectively motivates Arjuna to act consistently with his “nature as an agent”—a lesser mortal whose purpose is to act without attachment to earthly outcomes (p. 19). Consequently, Krishna’s dialogue with Arjuna inspires in the latter, “an ultimate source of motives” through “a scene having motivational properties in its own right” (Burke, 1954, p. 69). With the emergence of the agency-purpose ratio, the pentadic

shift is complete and as follows. As part of Arjuna's graduating consciousness in the progressive learning technique and as a result of the pentadic shift, the formerly dominant scene-agent ratio gives way to the agency-purpose ratio that then allows for a pragmatic and consummatory rhetorical agency to emerge as a dominant element.

Rhetorical agency is not dominant in the traditional Burkean sense since it is as instrumental as it is transcendental and by whose means agents act insofar as to transcend life and death permanently. Nonetheless, the constitutive change in the ratios effects Arjuna's reawakened will to fight regardless of its bearing on life or death—the new act. Krishna relinquishes his former role as Arjuna's co-agent and assumes a divine supernatural scenic constant to motivate the Arjuna the agent's act. Owing to the pentadic shift, Arjuna can now access a newly formulated rhetorical agency that allows him to focus on his pragmatic archery skills and consummatory wisdom of life's contingency and uncontrollable outcomes. Consequently, Arjuna finds his purpose by means of synechdochic consubstantiality with a higher Self that inspires him to break the cycle of birth and death and perform his warrior actions in the here and now. The pentadic shift in the *Gita* through which the scene-agent ratio gives way to the agency-purpose ratio carries implications both for the deeper philosophical grounds in the *Gita* that the pentadic shift represents (as I mentioned briefly in 4.1.), and for the type of rhetorical agency I argue is modeled in the *Gita*. In the next section, I first discuss the dialogical progression in the *Gita* as a philosophical shift from materialism to pragmatism and mysticism.

4.1.3. The Dual-Philosophic Turn

For Burke, the philosophy that privileges the scene is materialism. In the *Gita's* context, the opening dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna is grounded in materialism, as Arjuna's *locus of inaction* is the war at hand. However, as Krishna gradually assumes the supernatural scenic constancy, I argue that the dialogue takes a *dual-philosophic turn* by foregrounding itself strongly in both pragmatism that privileges agency and mysticism that upholds purpose, providing the germinal grounds for *rhetorical agency*. Burke suggests that agency's "function" is "essentially mediatory" lending itself to both believing in and verifying "an act by an act" and deifying "an act-less scenic statement" by attributing the act to the scene (p. 283). While the pragmatic view of agency is essential for human action to function in the here and now of life, the *Gita* also prepares human beings to transcend the here and now by aspiring for their highest purpose in life—that of breaking the cycle of birth and death. A mystical purpose helps explain the transcendental aspect of life along with the dichotomous view of agency—performing an act by virtue of being human, but simultaneously submitting the outcomes of the act to an overarching divine scene (the act-less scenic statement). The voluntary submission of outcomes to the divine whole explains why "the element of unity per se is treated as the essence of mysticism"—a recurring characteristic of the *Gita's* discourse on life (Burke, 1954, p. 287).

All human actions are instrumental insofar as they help inspire individuals to attain their highest Self that is "unity of the individual with some cosmic or universal purpose," and essentially the galvanized form that Krishna represents (Burke, 1954, p. 288). As one may infer then, pragmatism and mysticism are dialectical in nature in that the former is rhetorically instrumental and the latter consummatory. Yet, the *Gita's* discourse negotiates these philosophical dialectics to convey its larger truths on the epistemic uncertainty surrounding life

and the human agency within—thereby justifying a rhetorical analysis of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. In the subsequent sections of the argument, I will discuss the implications of the dual-philosophic turn on the *Gita*'s view of human agency, citing evidence from a number of chapters. The chapters under discussion represent a continuum of Krishna's thoughts influencing Arjuna's beliefs about the human purpose and existence, thus effecting the previously discussed *scenic displacement* and *the dual-philosophic turn*.

4.2. Understanding Human Agency From the *Gita*'s Viewpoint

Chapter III represents the instances in the *Gita* where Arjuna hears from Krishna, the importance of action and agency preceding inaction in human life. However, sometimes there is a marked inconsistency in the way Krishna defines agency, at least from the traditional rhetorical perspective. Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand how and why the *Gita*'s approach to agency seems inconsistent. This understanding has a significant implication in defining the idea of *rhetorical agency* in 4.2.3.

4.2.1. The Yoga of Action: Chapter III

With the following statements, Krishna steps into his persona as Arjuna's counsel from being just a friend and charioteer. Krishna highlights two facets about action and agency:

“Not by abstention from actions does a man gain freedom, and not by mere renunciation does he attain perfection.

No one can remain, even for a moment, without performing some action. Everyone is made to act helplessly by the gunas born out of prakriti (Deutsch, 1968, p. 47-48).”

a) Human action has a vital role in the *Gita*, as Krishna suggests that without action, one cannot conceive of either freedom (implying salvation) or self-actualization.

b) There is evidence of *inconsistency* as regards agency or the power to control one's action in the *Gita*. In one place, Krishna asserts that "everyone is made to act helplessly" on account of the vices (gunas) in the human nature (prakriti), which implies lack of human agency, but quickly contradicts this view in the next section.

4.2.2. Explanation of The *Gita*'s Inconsistent Approach to Agency

The statements below present a seeming divide between the *Gita*'s notions of agency, thus meriting an explanation:

"He who controls his organs of action, but dwells in his mind on the objects of the senses; that man is deluded and is called a hypocrite.

But he who controls the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, and without attachment, engages the organs of action in karma yoga, he excels" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 48).

Here, *control by mind* implies human agency. So, what accounts for Krishna's conflicting views on agency? The mystical nature and structural inconsistencies of the *Gita*, as introduced earlier, and which the previous literature has also pointed out, might explain why Krishna's rhetoric is self-contradictory. Most rhetorical exchanges are "instrumental-a means to an end-rather than consummatory-an end in itself,"; consummatory rhetoric finds its "philosophical or ideological equivalent...in mysticism, in which action, such as contemplation is done for its own sake" (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 96). Additionally, given the climate of war surrounding the dialogue between Krishna, the wise counsel and Arjuna, the sunken spirited warrior, Burke's (1954) views on mysticism explain the circumstances well in that "mystical philosophies appear as a general social manifestation in times of great skepticism or confusion about the human nature" (p. 288). Therefore, based on the *Gita*'s mystical underpinnings, one can understand why action and agency in the text may have more of a self-actualizing purpose as opposed to dealing

with immediacy and effect—something to which conventional rhetoric generally pertains.

Ultimately, the *Gita*'s contradistinctions regarding the traditional understanding of agency allow for introducing the concept of *rhetorical agency*.

4.2.3. Defining Rhetorical Agency

The rhetorical appeal of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna lies in its *pragmatic yet consummatory* purpose as equipment for living, thus explicating the contradictory presentation of human agency. *Rhetorical agency* in the *Gita* then, implies that an individual needs to act pragmatically without investing in the material outcomes of that action—without attachment and by maintaining equanimity toward action and inaction. The following statements from Chapter III evince the dialectically reinforcing aspects of human action and agency:

“This world is in bondage to karma, unless karma is performed for the sake of sacrifice. For the sake of that, O son of Kunti, perform thy action free from attachment.

He [individual] has no interest in action done in this world, nor any inaction not done. He is not dependent on all these creatures for any object (of his).

Therefore, always perform the work that has to be done without attachment, for man attains the Supreme by performing work without attachment” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 48-49).

An amalgam of pragmatism and mysticism—what I call the *dual-philosophic turn* in 4.1.4.—underpins the aforementioned statements, resolves this convoluted view of agency, and further defines rhetorical agency. The pragmatic aspect lends itself to action in the here and now, while the mystical aspect encourages human detachment from the fruits of those actions in a bid to attain one's highest purpose in life. In the initial phase of the dialogue, Arjuna needs to understand the role of pragmatic action as a mortal being, so that he may begin to grasp the existential being that Krishna wants him to transcend eventually. The mystical philosophy

privileging a consummatory purpose of action free from attachment to its results manifests itself more gradually consistent with the Gita's scheme of the progressive teaching technique. In sum, *rhetorical agency* is that which encourages pragmatic human action in the present, but also endorses human detachment from the contingent results of the actions as a way to liberate oneself from the cycle of birth and death and unite the self with the highest Self. It is the dialectical and epistemic juncture of *competing yet co-existing agencies* that differentiates rhetorical agency from a traditional understanding of the concept.

4.3. The Gradual Manifestation and Scope of Rhetorical Agency

Since rhetorical agency differs from the conventional instrumental nature of agency, its manifestation in the *Gita* does not crystallize in a singular moment. One needs to keep up the actions and reactions in life's crucible of contingencies, without focusing on the product crystallizing at the end. The fact that rhetorical agency may or may not crystallize *in situ*, renders its constitution even more epistemic and rhetorically intricate. However, one has to be initiated in some direction to even begin grasping the manifestation and scope of rhetorical agency in the *Gita* as equipment for living, as I explicate in the following sections.

4.3.1. By Scenic Displacement

As I discussed in chapter 1 and 4.1.2. in chapter 4, Krishna proposes to reveal his persona of a spiritual avatar of a supreme deity to enlighten Arjuna's confused spirit. By assuming a *supernatural scenic constancy*, Krishna gradually displaces the setting's original focus of the war scene to the divine, based on which rhetorical agency then becomes the *driving pentadic element* in educating Arjuna. However, as I discussed in 4.1.2., it is the prominence of the *agency-purpose ratio* that further nuances rhetorical agency in the dialogical progression, while also

explaining the dual-philosophic turn. A transcendental purpose of attaining one's highest Self assumes the backdrop for pragmatic agency driving Arjuna's further acts in the here and now. To further bolster the case for pragmatic agency, regardless of the scenic displacement, Krishna underscores the vitality of action on planet earth, in that his own divine actions keep the world moving in order, the absence of which would result in chaos and anarchy:

“If I did not perform action, these worlds would be destroyed, and I should be the author of confusion and would destroy these people. As the ignorant act with attachment to their work, O Bharata, so the wise should act (but) without attachment, desiring to maintain the order of the world” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 50).

Recalling the notion of intersubjective motivation in communicative exchanges, the aforementioned statements also evince how Krishna's divine action validates and motivates the need for Arjuna's human action to sustain worldly order and peace. In sum, 4.3.1. explicates the emergence of a particular kind of rhetorical agency as the *driving pentadic element* through scenic displacement, followed by the nature of its action and purpose.

4.3.2. By Pragmatic Action With a Consummatory Purpose

Consistent with the *Gita's* definitional inconsistency of agency, Krishna gives an appearance that the *Gita* indeed vouches for agency-less action. However, I argue here that the *Gita's* message expounds a *lack of human agency* (controlling means) on the outcomes of efforts as opposed to the efforts themselves, once again creating grounds for rhetorical agency. Nonetheless, how is rhetorical agency pragmatic yet consummatory? Arjuna has the agency to act practically in a manner that is consistent with his warrior spirit, yet it is only an earthly and mortal attachment to his family that has caused his inaction. However, he should not worry about the outcomes of the war against his own kinsmen and the mortality of life, since the soul is

immortal. For these reasons, Arjuna needs to submit the results of his actions to the divine—the scene that now pervades the dialogue. The act of surrendering the results of his actions is what defines the consummatory aspect of rhetorical agency, as the following evidence also suggests:

“All actions are performed by the gunas of prakriti alone. But he who is deluded by egoism thinks, “I am the doer.” Surrendering all actions to Me, with thy consciousness (fixed) on the supreme Self, being free from desire and selfishness, fight freed from they sorrow. Thus having known that which is greater than the reason, steadying the self by the self, slay the enemy, O mighty-armed one (that has) the form of desire, and that is so hard to approach” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 50-53).

The egoism that Krishna denounces above does not stem from an agency that informs human action, but from the *illusion of control* that human beings think that they have on the outcomes of their actions. Furthermore, even the *act of surrendering* to the divine amounts to symbolic action and only a wise person who has the agency to act wisely would surrender her or his actions and their consequences to the divine [My emphasis]. If the *Gita*'s message is to one's higher consciousness, then attaining that higher consciousness requires deep cognition and contemplation—both acts requiring the agency to do so. Similarly, the idea of *steadying the self by the self* implies that if one has the inner power and control to balance the inner self and perform an action as a “fitting response” to the situation—which here is Arjuna's reawakened will to fight his own family members, then the agency in this context is inherently rhetorical (Bitzer, 1992, p. 10). Based on such assertions, the communicative exchange between Arjuna and Krishna lends itself to rhetorical agency that is grounded in pragmatic action with a consummatory purpose of detachment from the action's results—an aspect that previous literature has overlooked. Having distinguished rhetorical agency from its traditional definition and established its scope, section 4.4. will enumerate the schematics within which rhetorically agency works.

4.4. The Schematics of Rhetorical Agency

In the following sections from Chapters IV and V, I establish a contextual understanding of how rhetorical agency functions through knowledge and wisdom of active renunciation. While the sections are exclusively pertinent to Krishna's efforts to redeem Arjuna from his morose stupor, the ambit of rhetorical agency has a generalizable quality, well applicable to daily life, thereby reiterating the *Gita*'s role as equipment for living.

4.4.1. The Yoga of Knowledge: Chapter IV

Here, Krishna restates the privileging of action over the results of action. This further implies that an awakened agent need only focus on her or his agency to perform the action uninhibited:

“Actions do not stain Me; for I have no longing for their fruits. He who knows Me thus is not bound by actions. He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men; he does all actions harmoniously. Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of action, always content and independent, he does nothing though he is engaged in action” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 56).

Likewise, to perceive inaction in action implies a *will to act* detached from the outcome of the act, but acting nonetheless. The same is true for an agent perceiving action in inaction. Only by virtue of *rhetorical agency* can an agent decide to perform the actions with a pragmatic view while abandoning the desire to control the outcomes through a consummatory view of the act. Informing the schematics of rhetorical agency are also the yogic knowledge attributes such as mind's control on the senses, contentment, sacrificial action, etc. that further determine the agent's willingness to act devoid of any attachment to the outcomes:

“Having no desires, with his mind and self controlled, abandoning all possessions, performing action with the body alone, he commits no sin. He who is content with what comes by chance, who has passed beyond the pairs (of opposites), who is free from jealousy and is indifferent to success and failure, even when he is acting he is not bound.

Actions do not bind him who has renounced actions in yoga, who has cast away doubt by knowledge, who possesses himself, O winner of wealth.

“The action of a man who is rid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is firmly established in knowledge, who performs action as a sacrifice, is completely dissolved” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 57-58).

As the aforementioned evidence from Chapter III in the *Gita* suggests, the pragmatic human realm involves the volition to control one’s baser vices like jealousy or lack of self-control. Here, individuals have the agency to act without acting as victims to the situation. Similarly, those who have the faculty to cultivate indifference to success or failure, acknowledge the inability to escape earthly action or its contingent outcomes. However, why does the *Gita* emphasize these statements in multiplicities? A possible explanation is that underlying the immense focus on acting in the present regardless of the outcomes is an overarching purpose of mystical freedom from the repetitive actions of birth and death. The route to attaining such a freedom is rooted in pragmatic action while its possibility remains uncertain and consummatory, thus explaining *one* aspect of the schematics of rhetorical agency in the *Gita*. By association, the qualifiers for an individual who believes in action, are also rooted in the individual’s agency to be free from attachment to the outcomes and a will to pursue knowledge not as a means to an end but that, which redeems one’s state of being. When one’s mind is deep in knowledge, then actions and their outcomes experience a liberated dissolution—an ideal case of renunciation. Practicing renunciation also involves actively relinquishing the illusion of control on one’s outcomes in life—a signifying feature of the *dual-philosophic turn* whose pragmatic and

mystical philosophies rhetorical agency represents. Ultimately, renunciation informs the *other aspect of the schematics of rhetorical agency*.

4.4.2. The Yoga of The Renunciation of Action: Chapter V

Renunciation of action is a case of meta-action, in which the act of not performing a work—that is the act of constantly reminding oneself that they are doing nothing while still acting, not thinking and worrying about the results of actions, amount to actions of greater significance in alignment with Krishna’s message to Arjuna in the *Gita*:

“The disciplined one who knows the truth thinks, “I am doing nothing at all.” In seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, walking, sleeping, breathing,

In speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, he maintains that only the senses are active among the objects of the senses” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 61).

As much as the *Gita* discusses daily actions in life such as speaking, giving, hearing, touching, etc., it also provides a perspective toward living life—an action in itself. The action of living life involves cognizance of the following. Only the senses governing one’s daily choices such as walking, sleeping or tasting are real, while the objects on which they manifest (path, bed or food) are illusory and ephemeral, thereby requiring an active renunciation of action through inaction and vice-versa. For one to adopt this tricky and challenging perspective is also a choice that reflects human agency or a desire to be disciplined or control one’s senses to master the self.

Nonetheless, for all these choices, the *Gita* does not offer master solutions to securing outcomes concomitant with one’s plans. The tenuousness on which the *Gita* propagates *pragmatic yet transcendental action-qua-action and inaction* further qualifies the schematics of rhetorical agency. One aspect of rhetorical agency then, is about taking control of human actions

and doing the things one has to, as a human being. The other aspect involves constantly reminding oneself that they are not bound by their actions in that they are performing actions while acknowledging their detachment from the same. This is an interesting dichotomy that is *inherently rhetorical* because the knowledge arising out of one's actions is uncertain or contingent in terms of the outcomes over which one has no control or knowledge of what an action may yield. How does one begin to practice action-qua-action and inaction then? Krishna suggests the following path to Arjuna:

“Yogins perform action only with the body, the mind, the intellect or the senses, without attachment, for self-purification. The disciplined man, having abandoned the fruit of action, obtains enduring peace; the undisciplined man, impelled by desire, is attached to the fruit and is bound. The sovereign Self does not create agency (for the people) of the world, nor actions, nor the conjunction of actions with their fruit. But nature itself operates there” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 61-63).

Training oneself to relinquish the mind's control on the outcomes by dispensing with the aforementioned desire, anger and the anxiety associated with not knowing the results is rhetorical agency grounded in a mystical purpose that manifests in the *Gita* and differs from the traditional notion of Burkean agency. Rhetorical agency drives action-qua-action and action-qua-inaction. Similarly, while assuming the sovereign Self might be an individual's goal, the former does not govern the agency to guide the latter onto the path. In fact, the *Gita's* calls an individual's attention to self-actualizing *action-qua-action and inaction through rhetorical agency* in which case the eventual destination for the soul is a place where action and inaction converge upon the renunciation of the mental calculations of outcomes. Essentially, then, one has to voluntarily seek this path toward the sovereign Self by *self-addressing* human nature. The self-address to human nature is what constitutes the following discussion on the performative aspect of rhetorical agency.

4.5. The Performative Aspect of Rhetorical Agency

While the previous section on the schematics of rhetorical agency allows for understanding its functions in human life, in the following sections I delineate rhetorical agency's performative side through meditation and sovereign albeit mysterious knowledge of creation. By discussing the performative side with Arjuna, Krishna aims to imbibe in the latter a *practicing consciousness* that appreciates the role of attachment-free action both on the battlefield and in life.

4.5.1. The Yoga of Meditation: Chapter VI

The lifting up of the self by the self is a form of meditation that features again in this chapter of the *Gita*, which lends credence to the text's theme of self-dependence, despite the structural inconsistencies regarding agency noted in other places in the text. Consistent with the progressive learning technique addressed earlier in the critique, this section explains how the *Gita* first stresses the notion of self-dependence, the self's ability to construct or destroy itself and then gradually suggests ways to achieve the state, based on the student's learning curve, who in the present context is Arjuna:

“One should lift up the self by the self, one should not let the Self be degraded; for the Self alone is the friend of the self and the Self alone is the enemy of the self” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 65-66).

Krishna now brings in concrete examples for Arjuna to grasp the value of self-control and meditation through yoga, intake of food and practices of sleep:

“For one who is moderate in food and amusement, restrained in the performance of his actions, whose sleep and waking are regulated, yoga destroys all pain” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 65-67).

Similarly, by emphasizing the human *free will* in marking oneself as a friend or foe above, control over one's actions through *moderation* in food, sleep and waking again becomes an undergirding force in Krishna's dialogue with Arjuna. This control is a quintessential tool to temper one's resilience to relinquish the attachment to outcomes, a feature consistently characteristic of the consummatory aspect of rhetorical agency I discussed previously. Krishna's dialogue with Arjuna also reveals the human need for looking inside to find meaning on the outside. Through this intense introspection, an individual can thus attain one's purpose of being in the self and be united with a cosmic force (highest Self) that pervades the universe, highlighting both the pragmatic and mystical philosophies of the *dual-philosophic turn* that *rhetorical agency* represents in the *Gita*. As one can glean from my discussion so far, maneuvering one's actions through rhetorical agency is fraught with challenges and contradictions. How may one discipline oneself so much without ever knowing what such measures in austerity might yield? How does one know where pragmatism begins and mysticism ends? This is the rub that the *Gita* does not resolve, which then explicates the dialectics of performing rhetorical agency.

4.5.2. The Dialectics of Performing Rhetorical Agency

The *competing yet co-existing pragmatic and consummatory agencies* informing rhetorical agency, as I have delineated thus far, are comparable with centripetal and centrifugal forces—the former pulls elements inside, while the latter pulls away elements—that impact an individual dialectically. The centripetal agency here is the pragmatic agency, which persuades an *initiated* human being to introspect and helps find “the Self, by the self” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 68). The centrifugal or consummatory agency that advises against attachment to outcomes of actions and encourages action through inaction (vice-versa), essentially pulls human desires away from

the fruits of daily actions. However, *the* consummatory agency remains dormant until individuals channel this agency with the yoga of meditation. Nonetheless, the presence of these harmoniously converging yet diverging agencies inheres a rhetorical quality that drives the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna and explains why the *Gita* deals with life's daily struggles as equipment for living. The dialogue is not so much a message from Krishna to Arjuna, but applies universally to humanity that strives for a peaceful co-existence. In the dialogical progression, as Arjuna begins to graduate from one level of consciousness to another, he begins to question Krishna on how one might attain a state of absolute control over the mind. His bewilderment is pragmatic yet focused on kindling the consummatory agency:

Arjuna—"I see no firm foundation for this yoga which is declared by Thee to be (characterized by) equality, O Madhusudana [Krishna], because of (man's) restlessness.

"For the mind is indeed restless, O Krishna; it is impetuous, strong and hard. I think the controlling of it is as difficult as controlling the wind (Deutsch, 1968, p. 69).

Based on the above statements, Arjuna's pragmatic side is visibly functioning—he has started thinking in the here and now, a feature essential to channelizing the consummatory agency. When Krishna advocates the role of self-control through '*practice and dispassion*,' Arjuna still remains perplexed and poses the following questions:

"He who is uncontrolled but possesses faith and whose mind wanders away from yoga, not having attained perfection in yoga, which way does he go, O Krishna?

Though oughtest to dispel completely this doubt of mine, O Krishna, for no remover of this doubt other than Thee, is to be found" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 70).

An observation that merits a discussion here with regard to Arjuna's questions is that while the questions may continue to puzzle Arjuna about the nature of action and individual agency in the face of challenging choices, one can notice a subtle shift in his outlook toward the original climate of war in which the *Gita* takes place indicating the eminence of the agency-purpose ratio now. While in the previous chapters, Arjuna was fixated on the horrid outcomes of fighting against his own family members, now with Krishna's counsel, he is focused on his inner being and how he might dispel the lure of earthly attachments. Right at this juncture, the *scenic displacement and the dual-philosophic turn grounded in pragmatism and mysticism* discussed earlier are in effect. Arjuna's questions depict an *emergent rhetorical agency driving the dialectical agencies of pragmatic action and consummatory purpose*, allowing him to understand self-control and pulling him away from dwelling upon the outcomes of war with his own kin. He is slowly finding his center.

In response to Arjuna's consternation, Krishna allays Arjuna's fears about the mind's wandering and imperfections in the practice of yoga by highlighting the *incremental yet transcendental* nature of yogic practices that span the many lives that individuals may live on earth. In that sense, even if one strays off the meditative path to finding the Self by the self in one birth, they assume the "mental characteristics associated with [their] previous existence" in their present time (Deutsch, 1968, p. 71). Consequently, yoga's incrementally transcendent attributes allow an individual to be vulnerable and susceptible to human frailties, yet continuing to seek a higher purpose unlimited by multiple lives. The *Gita* thus, professes the notion of action through inaction and vice-versa in lived actualities through which to prepare human beings for the "highest goal" of "Indestructible," after whose attainment, one *breaks the painful cycle of birth and death* (Deutsch, 1968, p. 80).

The Indestructible then is essentially the process of finding the *Self by the self* through a control on one's mind and the actions that one effects without dwelling upon the results of those actions. The Indestructible also depicts a rhetorically fluid state of epistemic uncertainty; Human beings have to live out their lived actualities without any cognizance of whether or not they shall attain the Indestructible. Yet, they must constantly strive to break free from rebirth, with rhetorical agency in the here and now to perform and temper one's actions and simultaneously abandon the desire to control the outcomes. If meditative action is one aspect of performing rhetorical agency, sovereign knowledge is what bolsters the performative endeavor of breaking the cycle of birth and death.

4.5.3. The Yoga of Sovereign Knowledge and Mystery: Chapter IX

Krishna slowly begins to reveal why he asks Arjuna to practice unwavering action and mind control with complete detachment to outcomes. Underlying these requests are Krishna's attempts to show Arjuna the mechanisms of creation of the planet and its inhabitants—always in action yet indifferent to the outcomes. Krishna himself as the divine creator is unattached to his actions and unbound by their actions:

“And these actions do not bind Me, O Dhananjaya [Arjuna]; I am seated as one who is indifferent, unattached to these actions” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 83).

The aforementioned statement lends credence to the fact that for a human to act without acting and vice-versa is in essence an inner call to self-actualization, through which a lesser mortal may attain their highest purpose, just like the act of creation. Needless to mention that one cannot be forced by anyone to follow the path that Krishna describes for Arjuna. One must have the agency to do and undo all that it takes to be all that they can be, yet always mindful of their

actions' results' contingency, thus impregnating the process with a rhetorical quality. Having initiated Arjuna to reflecting on the need for self-control through meditative practices steeped in wisdom and knowledge, Krishna decides to manifest his universal spirit to Arjuna as an exercise in rhetorical agency. The universal spirit is not a culmination of being, but just a revelation within one self as the revelational aspect of rhetorical agency shows.

4.6. The Revelational Aspect of Rhetorical Agency

Chapters X and XI in the *Gita* discuss the revelational aspect of rhetorical agency. I argue here that rhetorical agency is not revealed through something momentous, but in regular lived actualities, where individuals find themselves remaining serene, happy, at peace and hopeful despite ordinary (and sometimes extraordinary) woes of life's mortality, successes, fears and losses. Rhetorical agency is realized in one's need to act while acknowledging the very ephemerality of the need or the act—actions lending themselves to both pragmatism and mysticism.

While chapters X and XI symbolize Arjuna's sense of wonder, awe and fear at understanding Krishna's true scope of universality and knowledge, in essence these feelings are an inner realization of the depths of dormant universality and knowledge that we carry within. Again, the concept of this inner realization in the *Gita* is vague because the human spectrum of self-reflection is so vast. Yet, rhetorical agency is not concerned with the certitude of a realization that helps us understand our highest Self, a feature that both the yoga of manifestations and vision of the universal form discuss.

4.6.1. The Yoga of Manifestations: Chapter X

The Yoga of Manifestations marks a definite shift in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna and one notices how Arjuna slowly relinquishes his somber spirit, questions and marvels at the universal majesty of Krishna, who promises to manifest his true scope of being. The shift is also representative of the *dual-philosophic turn at its fruition* through which Arjuna can comprehend the magnitude of acting as a way of transcending having to act at all and the cyclicity of birth and death—the ultimate yet transcendental goal of rhetorical agency.

Arjuna—“Thou shouldst tell me of Thy complete divine manifestations, by which Thou pervades these worlds and dost abide (in them).

How may I know Thee, O Yogin, by meditating always? In what states of being art Thou O Blessed Lord, to be thought by me?

Tell me again in complete detail, O Janardana [Krishna], of Thy power and manifestation. Satiety comes not to me, hearing Thy nectarlike words” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 90).

Arjuna is more participative in the dialogue and one can contend that Krishna, by means of intersubjective motivation discussed earlier, has been able to guide Arjuna to focus on his actions in the here and now. In the *Gita's* context, the dialogue suggests that Arjuna actually sees Krishna's divine avatar. To *translate* the same in the context of lived actualities, means that Arjuna is finally learning to make choices directed at knowing his inner being through pragmatic agency, while the consummatory agency slowly pulls him away from the worries of the family feud at hand. His questions become more reflective which indicates his ability to channel his mental processes toward a state of liberation. Arjuna's determination to concentrate on yogic meditation along with a desire to visualize Krishna's universal scope of a divine and liberated being lend credence to the two agencies working in conjunction here—one working toward

current actions and the other against the desire to control the outcomes, once again creating a rhetorical flux in which actions and their outcomes conflate as Arjuna embarks on the path of self-actualization. Krishna responds to Arjuna's questions with the following:

Krishna—"I am the Self seated in the hearts of all beings, O Gudakesha [Arjuna]; I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 90).

Krishna's response is one of the ways in which he defines his universal being and pertinent to the Arjuna's path to *action oriented self-discovery* through indifference to the results of the journey. This does not imply that attaining the highest goal of organic unity with the Self is not important. Instead, the journey to self-discovery takes precedence over what the destination might look like, as one begins to marvel on the here and now of their existence and finds their highest purpose of being or what Krishna calls the Self, within their hearts. The individual choices that emanate from the path to self-discovery imbue life with an epistemic uncertainty. What negotiates this epistemic flux is an individual's sanction on rhetorical agency that simultaneously and dialectically encourages actions and inhibits attachment to their results. Rhetorical agency lies at the heart of the yoga of manifestations, from where individuals progress toward realizing their own cosmic universality within their microcosms, as the yoga of the vision of the universal form discusses.

4.6.2. The Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form: Chapter XI

Having risen completely from his sunken demeanor, Arjuna now requests Krishna to reveal his divinity. The dialogue vividly describes the many divine, omnipresent and omniscient forms that Krishna shows Arjuna insofar as "if a light of a thousand suns were to spring forth simultaneously in the sky, it would be like the light of that great Being" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 95).

One can correlate Krishna's state of divine revelation with Arjuna's inner realization of the essence that is humanity as mentioned in 4.6. Even though the dialogue suggests that Krishna lends Arjuna his divine vision to witness the spectacle of the former's universal form, in essence the vision is Arjuna's awakening to the multiplicities of his own existence in which he witnesses "no end nor middle nor beginning" of Krishna and by that token himself (Deutsch, 1968, p. 96). In this *epiphanic state*, Arjuna also encounters human mortality when the vision shows Krishna's divine form subsuming the former's family members and teachers on the Kauravas' side. Arjuna is scared and to alleviate his fears, Krishna responds:

Krishna—"Time am I, the world destroyer, matured, come forth to subdue the worlds here. Even without thee, all the warriors arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be. Therefore stand up and win fame. Conquering thy enemies, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By Me they have already been slain. Be thou the mere instrument, O Savyasavin [Arjuna]" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 101).

Having shown Arjuna the ephemerality of his foes' lives, Krishna persuades Arjuna to fight as a mere agent of change focusing on his warrior actions at all times. Since the mortal lives of his enemies are not in Arjuna's control, but at the creation's disposal, Arjuna should fight as the following statements indicate:

"Slay thou Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna, and the other warrior-heroes too, who have already been slain by Me. Be not distressed, fight! Thou shalt conquer thy enemies in battle" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 101).

Conversely, the magnitude of Krishna's spectacle also overwhelms Arjuna who through Krishna's universality experiences the scope of his own being, the highest form of existence, for which a human can aspire. Therefore, Arjuna now requests Krishna to reveal his more benign Self. Upon Arjuna's request Krishna regains his "gracious form," thus allowing the former to

“become composed of mind and restored to [his] normal stature” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 101).

Krishna’s purpose in revealing his cosmic Self to Arjuna does not render earthly vessels any less significant. However, grandiloquent the notion of cosmic Self sounds, Krishna suggests that its aspiration emanates in the human being and culminates in the non-being, with the hope of ultimately overcoming the cycle of birth and death. Infact as I discuss in section 4. 7. on the active site of rhetorical agency below, human existence has the complete potential to cultivate rhetorical agency with an overarching purpose of eventually transcending human existence.

4.7. The Active Site of Rhetorical Agency

Having garnered an understanding of rhetorical agency’s pragmatic yet consummatory attributes, the context of action, renunciation and knowledge within which it functions, the meditative practices and sovereign knowledge that constitute its performativity, the dialectics of performativity that render rhetorical agency complex, and its revelatory implications both for Arjuna and others, the discussion can now focus on the active sites where rhetorical agency may be cultivated. Chapters XIII and XIV in the Gita highlight the active sites in the human body, the knowledge required to temper the body through self-discipline, the universal physiological and psychological forces shaping the performativity of rhetorical agency.

4.7.1. The Yoga of the Distinction Between the Field and the Knower of the Field: Chapter XIII

Reiterating the temperament of a true seeker in the previous chapters, Krishna now describes the provenance of different feelings, emotions, actions and inactions in what he calls the field or the human body and the seeker who seeks the “knowledge of the field,” knower (Deutsch, 1968, p. 107). The field “together with its modifications” is essentially is an active site

upon which human beings experience “desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the organism, intelligence and firmness” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 101). By cultivating the following attributes, human beings may transcend the field’s earthly limitations and channelize rhetorical agency’s pragmatic focus on present actions and consummatory pull away from the action’s outcomes:

“Absence of pride and deceit, non-violence, patience, uprightness, service of a teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control; Indifference to the objects of sense, lack of ego and a perception of evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain; Non-attachment, absence of clinging to son, wife, home and the like; a constant equal-mindedness to desirable and undesirable occurrences” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 108).

The aforementioned attributes constitute the knowledge of the field, which is just as important for Arjuna’s self-awakening as it is for an individual perusing the *Gita* because this knowledge is the route to shaping one’s agencies into a particular action or for that matter, inaction through renunciation of certain human feelings and emotions. What, however, causes human beings to act and experience the fruits of those actions? The *Gita* attributes the causes of human actions and their results to certain universal forces that mediate the field.

4.7.2. The Field and Its Negotiation of the Universal Forces

According to Deutsch (1968), *Prakriti* is the universal force from which human consciousness emanates. *Purusha*, then is the exact same human consciousness, by virtue of which individuals experience “pleasure and pain” in their daily lives and make choices by means of *rhetorical agency* discussed previously (Deutsch, 1968, p. 110). Each individual’s scope of their consciousness is disparate and unique, which discriminates the *gunas* (both physiological and psychological qualities and afflictions of the human existence) across individuals (Deutsch, 1968). *Gunas* are essentially the outcomes or fruits of actions, from which the *Gita* encourages detachment of human action. The following note on *prakriti* and its corresponding actions

however, indicate another inconsistency in how the *Gita* understands human agency. A subsequent interpretation of the view offers a resolution of the said inconsistency:

“He who sees that actions are performed only by prakriti and likewise that the self is not the doer, he truly sees. When he perceives the various states of being abiding in the One and extending from it, then he attains Brahman [the highest form of being]” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 111).

When reading the above mentioned statements on *prakriti*, a preliminary reaction could suggest that it is not the enlightened individual self that performs any actions, but the forces of nature amidst which she or he exists. However, there is more that needs to be discussed here with regard to the performance of human actions. Individuals must, at all times possess the pragmatic aspect of rhetorical agency to convince themselves that their actions are a function of *prakriti*. Only then can they truly ‘see’ the value of renouncing actions that encourage attachment to results. Only then, can they channelize the consummatory aspect of rhetorical agency to pull themselves away from the desire to control the outcomes of human actions. This dialectical interplay of the two agencies informing rhetorical agency constitutes human choices in daily life, that either encourages individuals to attain their highest self little by little or succumb to the mundane trivialities in life’s passing. Having resolved the apparent inconsistency regarding human action and prakriti, and the consequential gunas or the physiological and psychological fruits of actions that individuals either try to control or relinquish, I now focus in detail on the psychological aspects of the gunas influencing rhetorical agency.

4.7.3. The Yoga of the Distinction of the Three Gunas: Chapter XIV

In chapter XIV, Krishna delineates the psychological traits of the gunas (outcomes) that ultimately contribute to individuals' rhetorical agency focused on pragmatic actions and purposeful detachment from outcomes or the lack thereof. The three gunas are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* whose characteristics are as follows:

“Sattva attaches one to happiness, rajas to action, O Bharata [Arjuna], and tamas, obscuring, wisdom, attaches one to carelessness.

Greed, activity, the undertaking of actions, restlessness and longing, these are produced when rajas has increased, O best of the Bharatas” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 113).

Here, one might again contend an inconsistency in how the *Gita* defines actions and the corresponding alignment of one's agency to act. However, the notion of *sattva* attaching one to happiness and *rajas* that to action implies that the former pursues *knowledge-oriented* action that brings joy in the process regardless of the outcomes. The latter or *rajas* on the other hand is the exact same *outcome-oriented* action against which the *Gita* advises as *rajas* emanates from the desire and greed to control the results of actions [My emphasis]. Krishna qualifies *tamas*, the third guna further through the following psychological traits and the impacts of increase *sattvic* knowledge:

“Darkness, inactivity, negligence and delusion, these are produced when tamas has increased, O joy of the Kurus [Arjuna].

When *sattva* has increased and the embodied one dies, he then attains the pure worlds of those who know the highest” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 113-114).

When a seeker aims at developing *sattvic* (knowledge-oriented) depth, her or his rhetorical agency aligns with acting in the here and now in the pursuit of the highest Self while constantly veering away from the lure of ascertaining what the end of the pursuit looks like. It is also imperative for individuals to understand that “the fruit of action well done, they say is *sattvic* and pure; while the fruit of *rajas* is pain, and the fruit of *tamas* is ignorance” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 114). Ultimately, regardless of the gunas’ psychological conditioning of the human psyche and consequent actions, one needs the pragmatic agency to acknowledge the gunas’ effects on life, yet negotiate the contingent realm of life and relinquish the outcomes of the tasks one undertakes daily through the consummatory agency. If one can perform this delicate dance of controlling and letting go of the micro-moments of human existence, “the embodied soul transcends these three gunas, whose origin is in the body” and “is freed from birth, death, old age and pain, and attains immortality” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 114-115). Using the psychological descriptives of the three gunas, Krishna distinguishes between divine and demoniac dispositions to induce Arjuna’s identification with the former.

4.7.4. The Yoga of the Distinction Between the Divine and Demoniac Endowments:

Chapter XVI

Now that Arjuna’s awakening to realize his highest purpose as a human being and warrior is in progress, Krishna tries to further influence his rhetorical agency to act without fear, by enunciating the characteristics of a divine nature. Krishna’s enumeration has a two-pronged purpose. The first one lends itself to reinforcing the role of Arjuna’s rhetorical agency in assuming the following ideal attributes required of “agents of change” both in the social and spiritual realms (Campbell & Burkholder, 1996, p. 22):

“Fearlessness, purity of being, steadfastness in the yoga of wisdom, charity, self-control, sacrifice, study of the Veda, austerity, uprightness; Non-violence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peace, absence of guile, compassion towards beings, absence of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness; Majesty, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of malice and excessive pride—these are the endowments of one who is born with the divine nature, O Bharata [Arjuna].

By creating an ideal placeholder for which Arjuna may aspire, Krishna achieves his second purpose of veering the former away from the “demoniac” path that ultimately feeds off an attachment to earthly outcomes and limits one’s ability to attain their highest goal of breaking the repetitive cycle of life and death (Deutsch, 1968, p. 121). The demoniac attributes are:

“Hypocrisy, arrogance, excessive pride and anger, harshness and also ignorance—these are the endowments of one who is born with the demoniac nature, O Partha [Arjuna]” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 121-122).

In Krishna’s description of demoniac natures, an observation that needs further explanation is that individuals with demoniac attributes also have the pragmatic agency to choose their paths akin to the divine natures. However, the discriminating agency between demoniac and divine natures is consummatory whose absence in the former, encourages an attachment toward “innumerable cares which end only with death, making the enjoyment of desires their [demoniac beings’] highest aim, convinced that this is all” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 122). While Krishna at one point also attributes a demoniac nature to being placed over and over again in “demoniac wombs,” I will address the implications of shifting demoniac culpability to the mother and divineness to the individual in the final chapter of my work (Deutsch, 1968, p. 123).

With a detailed explanation of rhetorical agency’s active sites in the human body, upon which human consciousness acts, Arjuna learns to discriminate between the physiological and psychological impacts of the gunas that also shape divine and demoniac natures. The knowledge

further prepares Arjuna to utilize rhetorical agency and actively play his part as a warrior in a bid to ultimately transcend his human obligation to perpetrate familial carnage. Cultivating such a mental make up amounts to freedom in and from the here and now, at which juncture rhetorical agency comes full circle, as I discuss in the final section of the argument.

4.8. Coming Full Circle With Rhetorical Agency

Completing the circle of rhetorical agency does not imply an epiphanic crystallization in a singular moment as I have argued previously as well. On the contrary, rhetorical agency is in the realization to act now, so that one may never have to act again—by breaking the cycle of birth and death. Similar to a circle’s continuity in discontinuity, rhetorical agency’s inward pragmatic and outward consummatory agencies are always at work—in an initiated individual given to self-reflection. Since, individuals negotiate the perpetuating circle of rhetorical agency distinctly in their lived actualities, there is no normative centrality to the circle. Yet, just as Arjuna strives for freedom by renunciation of outcome-oriented thinking, other individuals too may follow his lead and may discover their own transcendental truths of life in the process.

4.8.1. The Yoga of Freedom by Renunciation: Chapter XVIII

Armed with a knowledge of *sattvic* behavior, divine and demoniac natures, Arjuna is in the final stages of his dialogue with Krishna and by that token his highest self that is slowly manifesting in the form of deep wisdom. Even at this stage, I argue nonetheless that rhetorical agency renders Arjuna’s highest Self always emergent, fluid and in motion. In this final chapter, Krishna qualifies the ideas of renunciation and abandonment further, for Arjuna to finally perform his duties as a fearless warrior with an imperishable and unbound soul. Arjuna’s consciousness has matured to fully comprehend the *dual-philosophic turn* that pragmatic action

on the battleground and consummatory detachment to the fruits of the action in the spiritual realm undergird. In these moments of ever emerging consciousness as the following statements signify, Arjuna's actions truly exemplify rhetorical agency:

“Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity ought not to be abandoned, rather they should be performed; for sacrifice, gift and austerity are purifiers of the wise.

These actions ought to be performed, abandoning attachment and fruits, O Partha [Arjuna]; this is My decided and highest judgment.

He who abandons an action because it is painful or from fear of physical pain performs a rajasic kind of abandonment: he does not obtain the fruit of abandonment” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 131).

The culmination of Krishna's ideas about action and abandonment is that one cannot abandon the former in the face of a duty that needs to be performed. Therefore, in order to constantly act, one needs to possess the pragmatic agency of self-direction. However, one also needs to practice abandonment of the outcomes of that action in concordance with *sattvic* behavior, thereby activating the consummatory agency discussed previously [My emphasis]. One must also be self-directing so as to not abandon an act just because it appears exacting or painful. By abstaining from such actions, an individual cannot activate the consummatory agency that detaches humans from the fruits of actions and disallows an individual from attaining her or his highest purpose of being.

Limited by a textual reality, chapter XVIII marks the final chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita*. Even though the dialogical progression between Krishna and Arjuna finds a culmination in this chapter, the knowledge and wisdom Arjuna gleans from the communicative exchange finds eternal continuity in textual discontinuity. Rhetorical agency facilitates Arjuna's heightened yet emergent state of consciousness and knowledge through pragmatic actions befitting a warrior

and indifference to the outcomes of the war, apropos to a yogi. The *Gita*, thus professes a practicing consciousness, armed with which individuals can dare to lose an earthly battle, yet win a transcendental war of freedom from birth and death in their limited lifespans. While in this rhetorical analysis I focus on a dramatistic understanding of rhetorical agency in the *Gita*, other areas in the *Gita*'s discourse call for attention and may have critical implications for future scholarship not just in the academy but also praxis. In the implications section that follows, I address some of these critical implications after summarizing the nature of the present rhetorical activity.

CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Summarizing the Rhetorical Ambit of the Analysis

In this thesis, I argued for a rhetorical understanding of *The Bhagavad Gita*, an Indian philosophical and religious dialogical text whose authorship lies “between the fifth century B. C. and the second century B. C.” and takes place toward the beginning of the war in the great Indian epic *Mahabharata* (Deutsch, 1968, p. 4). At the heart of the dialogical text are Arjuna, the ace warrior representing one of the prominent families in *Mahabharata*, Pandavas, and Krishna who is Arjuna’s friend and charioteer in the war at hand. Arjuna is in a state of absolute despair at learning that he has to fight against the other prominent family in the epic (Kauravas) that also constitutes his cousins and teachers. Having to make tough choices between action and inaction, Arjuna loses his will to fight. At this critical juncture, Krishna addresses Arjuna through a compelling dialogical progression on the ephemerality of life, human action, inaction and the ultimate freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

This dialogical premise then forms the inception of my work, in which I first situated my research in the extant scholarship about *The Bhagavad Gita*. Existing research on the *Gita* offers a contradictory explanation of the different choices of actions that Krishna and Arjuna make in the text. There is also some debate on the way the characters utilize their agencies to perform actions. To resolve the extant contradictions as gaps that I identified in the existing scholarship, I adopted a language-oriented rhetorical approach to discern the underlying motivations of Krishna and Arjuna’s symbolic actions in the *Gita*. The text’s dialogical nature is concomitant with Plato’s explanation of dialogues inhering a rhetorical quality, further bolstering my research’s approach.

Burke's (1954) dramatic *Pentad* containing the elements of act, scene, agent, agency and purpose manifesting in ten ratios steers my methodological focus, as the pentad unmasks universal human motivations to act or its lack thereof. In spite of being a Western analytical lens, the pentad's universality justifies its application to an Eastern text such as the *Gita*, since the pentad taps into the common dramatic grounds of life and the actions of the agents within regardless of cultural differences.

Even though the *Gita* is also a metaphysical text aside from its dialogical nature, the pentad affords flexibility in understanding the textual underpinnings as Burke actually co-relates the pentadic element of purpose with metaphysics. However, my challenge lies in appropriating the Burkean notion of agency to the kind of agency that emerges in the *Gita's* dialogical progression. Thus, I take up the challenge as a way to conceptualize a more nuanced form of agency in the *Gita* as a particular kind of rhetorical agency. Through a thorough analysis of the *Gita's* dialogical progression in the argument chapter, I argue that *competing yet co-existing agencies* characterize rhetorical agency. These agencies are pragmatic yet consummatory in nature and represent the *dual-philosophic turn* that encompasses both pragmatic and mystic philosophies that Burke mentions in relation to the pentadic elements. By advocating the practice of rhetorical agency in the *Gita*, Krishna exhorts Arjuna to focus on pragmatic actions in the here and now of the battlefield, while relinquishing the outcomes of those actions in a bid to ultimately sever the cyclicity of birth and death. The recapitulation of the research's rhetorical ambit presents me an opportunity to align my work with implications for the text as equipment for living, scope for self-reflexivity within the text, its critical limitations and avenues for future scholarship as I discuss below.

5.2. Overall Implications of *The Bhagavad Gita*

The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogical progression of thoughts between Krishna and Arjuna amidst a war scene on the overarching facets of mortal human action and choices amidst life's ephemerality and soul's immortality. The war narrative however, is easily relatable to the ordinary human life that is fraught with daily struggles and choices that amount to either war or peace in one's microcosm. For these reasons, the *Gita* may be considered equipment for the art of living. The dialogical format provides a fertile ground on which the concept of rhetorical agency—that which allows for pragmatic human action in the here and now while endorsing a consummatory purpose of detachment from the results of human action—germinates. Since, the *Gita*'s reading is spiritually experiential for an individual, the same experience has important implications when considering the *Gita*'s study as an academic endeavor in which a subjective individual and an objective researcher may merge. Sections 5.2.1. and 5.2.2. highlight similar observations and raise relevant questions about a critic's obligations in reading the *Gita*.

5.2.1. The Value of Self-Reflexivity in Understanding the *Gita*

As a researcher working with a highly philosophical and ancient rhetorical text such as the *Gita*, it is immensely gratifying for me to theorize about the rhetorical significance of human agency in the text. However, the text's philosophy as equipment for living influences the same social "actualities" of which I as the researcher too am an integral part—implying that the process of writing this rhetorical critique is not exclusive to an abstract and objective theoretical space, but pertains to a more subjective social (Smith, 2005, p. 10). Furthermore, an intermezzo position through which the I negotiate this purely academic yet personal endeavor, acknowledges the role of social constructionism, even in ancient philosophical texts, whose impact is observed

in covert power structures that create “interlocking” systems of “subordination and domination” (Collins, 2013, p. 214). Therefore, by adopting a self-reflexive approach, I have tried to identify the oppressor within “with an eye toward unsettling the very same academic power relations” that I may inadvertently reinforce (Collins, 2013, p. xiii). A self-reflexive approach also affords me an opportunity to assess the *Gita* as a noble philosophical quest, yet susceptible to the debilitating ideologies of social construction such as patriarchy or othering of various groups of people.

5.2.2. Possible Instances of Othering in the *Gita*: Critical Limitations

Despite all its virtuous messages, the *Gita* is not above its disregard for people “born of sinful wombs, women, Vaishyas, and even Shudras” (typically lower order castes in the Hindu caste system) who if they “take refuge” in their highest self might attain their highest purpose in life (Deutsch, 1968, p. 86). Reflexively assessing this comment as a woman researcher, I question if the *Gita* undermines its own teachings by marginalizing and othering people based on gender and socio-economic caste. Although, Krishna refers to Arjuna’s lineage by calling him the son of Kunti, one still needs to question the symbolic significance that the *Gita* places on women in general.

The *Gita* also attributes a demoniac nature over and over again to “demoniac wombs,” which makes me question why the text apportions demoniac culpability to the mother and divineness to the individual (Deutsch, 1968, p. 123). In fact, does the *Gita* not practice essentialist segregation, when it locates evil in the source of one’s birth and not one’s actions—ironically considering how crucial human action is to the *Gita*’s underlying premise? These are some of the questions whose implications may be explored in further readings of *The Bhagavad*

Gita. Another area of critical inquiry is the fine line between true rhetorical agency and an ideologically motivated appearance of such agency. While rhetorical agency's conceptual linchpin of pragmatic yet consummatory action is noble, religious and ideological fundamentalists may misconstrue the concept's nobility to appropriate similar tactics and create agents of change that transcend their own lives for the sake of human devastation. Future scholarship then needs to examine the subtlety of language that transforms rhetorical agency into what Marx (1844) considers false consciousness, and discuss the rhetorical characteristics that create and define each distinctly.

5.3. Some Avenues for Future Scholarship

In addition to the instances of othering mentioned above, the findings of my work insofar as conceptualizing a pragmatic yet consummatory understanding of rhetorical agency may be helpful to other areas of scholarship outside the text. Researchers may investigate similar notions of agency in Western texts to find points of ideological convergence in the East and the West—creating more avenues for collaboration in an increasingly multicultural world. This view of rhetorical agency may be more broadly useful to our orientation and attitude toward life in modern high-pressure institutions as well. For example, students in high pressure institutions of higher education such as graduate schools and schools of law or medicine in the United States are, due to the intense work ethic and culture at such institutions, forever pragmatically focused but also highly stressed, which causes burn out. By re-orienting attitudes of action and agency in such high-pressure institutions to the dual pragmatic/consummatory aspects of rhetorical agency, interaction in such institutions may create richer environments in psychological resilience and leaner ones in stress.

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