

EXPLORING THE CONSTRUCTS OF DERRIDA'S RELIGIOSITY IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE GITA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT: *The questions on religion and God have always been perplexing and they have remained as issues in academia. This has become more burning issue since Derrida's introduction of deconstruction to academia in 1960s as both Derrida's personality and deconstruction remained controversial regarding these issues. So in this paper I have reviewed the studies on Derrida and deconstruction in relation to religion and God with the purpose to find out the constructs to identify Derrida's religiosity and its similarities with the teachings of the Gita. Then I have employed these constructs to explore the teachings of the Gita as a comparative study and identified that the constructs of Derrida's religiosity go in the line with the teachings of the Gita. Thus both of them suggest the deconstructive understanding of religion and God; they identify religion as the pursuit of the truth and justice and God as the undeconstructible, a sacred reality; they are comprehensive and inclusive of all as they are guided by a quasi-transcendental logic and deconstructive belief. Thus, this study has made a significant foundation for the study of postmodern spirituality and its enhancement for promoting interspirituality and sustainable peace in the world.*

KEYWORDS: Deconstruction, Derrida, Derrida's Religiosity, God, interspirituality, Postmodern Spirituality, Religion, Teachings of the Gita

INTRODUCTION

Jacques Derrida, a radical postmodernist thinker, was born in 1930 into a Jewish family in El-Biar, Algeria; he suffered a lot in his childhood days as during the Second World War, the Algerian Jews had their citizenship revoked, and they were treated as an outsider everywhere. This developed a feeling of uncertainty and lack of identity in him from the very beginning (Habib 649; Ahluwalia 81). Despite these difficulties and uncertainties, Derrida developed interest in philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. So he joined at various higher institutions in Paris and became a teacher of philosophy. He wanted to disseminate his critical ideas, so he started teaching at Harvard and Yale Universities and gained high popularity in the academic circle.

Derrida's academic journey from Algeria to France to America consists of many topsy-turvy experiences which have been compared with his development of deconstruction. To this,

Ahluwalia mentions how deconstruction is influenced by colonial and postcolonial Africa in terms of his experience of exclusion, being sent home on his first day of school, radical instability of his own identity, a formative moment, colonial and diasporic experiences, and a double cultural displacement—Sephardic, and anti-Semitism (88-89). He further explains the relation between Derrida's background and his themes in deconstruction: "Derrida's Algerian origin and his Jewish background are testimony to the importance of his identity, to his feelings of non-belonging and otherness. It is here that the personal becomes political and inevitably part of Derrida's overall project. The issues of the other, the excluded, the margin, boundaries are all personal in his case" (84). Despite all these hardships in life, Derrida developed a very influential personality that people in his contact were captivated by "his sparkling intelligence, his philosophical originality, and his generosity with students . . . his gentleness, compassion, seriousness, and wit" (Wood 38). David Wood further mentions that Derrida was really "a delightful interlocutor, a good listener and never self-important" (38).

Derrida's conception and practice of deconstruction gave new waves of critical thinking in different sectors of discourse. This began after his presentation entitled "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," given at a symposium at John Hopkins University in 1966. After this presentation Derrida had more influence on literary studies in the universities of America, which resulted in the establishment of a school of 'deconstructive criticism'. This school of thought was founded on the inspiration from Derrida and became a major force in the 1970s and 80s in the literary criticism (Lodge and Wood 106).

Along with his popularity there were also criticisms against him. Michael Roland F. Hernandez comments that Derrida was caricatured as a prophet of doom by his opponents because he was seen "as the unfortunate heir to Nietzschean nihilism, Marxist economic reductionism, and Freud's destructive libidinal tendencies" (107). Similarly, deconstruction was understood negatively as "a form of critical analysis which aims at tearing apart everything it finds on its way" (Higgs 171). That is to say, they find the meaning of deconstruction synonymous with destruction and "characterise deconstruction as a form of textualisation with hyper-relativistic and nihilistic implications and go on to claim that it is ethically void, politically impotent, and utterly dangerous" (171). But John D. Caputo gave affirmative meaning to deconstruction and argued that it brings out the real nature of texts and their meaning rather than assigning meanings to them (Caputo qtd. in Higgs 170). Philip Higgs also explicated the affirmative meaning of deconstruction and stated, "Deconstruction is an effort to crack open the nut, to go beyond the boundary, to disrupt the presence and allow the other as difference to come about" (170). Derrida and deconstruction were more severely criticized than they were supported. His sworn critics were Smith, Ballard, Quine, Sokal, Bricmont, Marcus, Berkeley, Chomsky, and Foucault. They called him and his works with different defaming titles: childish, irresponsible and ideologically dangerous, anti-intellectual rot, gibberish and ethically void (Hagen). With such criticism, deconstruction has been, by some critics, understood against religion and Derrida as an atheist.

Despite all these controversies on Derrida and deconstruction, they were having wider influences on comparative studies like deconstruction and the following: feminism (Elam), architecture

(Wigley), ethics (Critchley), and theology (Hart [Lane 78]). Similarly, there were/are many researches, seminars and conferences on Derrida and his works which are committed to promote his thoughts and practices. Of all the controversies on Derrida and Deconstruction, the most hotly-debated one is the relation between deconstruction and religion—Derrida's religiosity. Thus, this paper aims to review the studies on Derrida's religiosity, deduce key constructs from his religiosity, compare them with the teachings of the Gita, and justify that Derrida's religiosity and the teachings of the Gita are in the same line and Derrida is a theist. For this I have reviewed the studies concerning Derrida's views on religion and its relation to deconstruction, deduced some constructs from them to identify Derrida's religiosity, and they are used to make comparison with the teachings of the Gita. By this, this study has come up with the findings that Derrida's religiosity and teachings of the Gita have more similarities and they can contribute more to the study of interspirituality and postmodern spirituality.

Studies on Derrida's Religiosity: A Review

A very thorny issue regarding the discussion on Derrida is about religion and God. Apparently, for some critics deconstruction and religion cannot go hand in hand because the former eschews the center and presence but the latter is founded on the center and presence. On top of it Derrida himself declared that he *was* an atheist despite the fact that he had had religious background from his childhood. However, some critics claim that Derrida in his later career *is* religious. In this regard, Higgs maintains, “Over the past few years there has been a growing recognition of this horizon, which has led some commentators, such as, Baker (1995), and Critchley (1999a.1999b), [Biesta (2001)] to speak about the “ethical turn” of deconstruction” (171). That is deconstruction has been applied to study religious texts and issues. Mawazo Kavula Sikirivwa writes of its discussion in relation to religion in present time after Caputo and notes that deconstruction is considered as “a blessing for religion, its positive salvation, keeping it open to constant reinvention, encouraging religion to reread ancient texts in new ways, to reinvent ancient traditions in new contexts” (Caputo qtd. in Sikirivwa 68-69). This suggests that deconstruction studies religious texts from different perspectives; it critiques them and seeks for the new meanings inherent in the text which have the potentials for offering wellbeing to people. It does so from the relativist and postmodernist perspective and regards the religious texts as “a non-theological form” (Canale qtd. in Sikirivwa 45). Similarly, there came a book, *Derrida and Religion: Other Testament*, edited by Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart which contains some articles by Derrideans who explored Derrida’s different works, events and discussed them in relation to religion and God. This all paved the viable way for deconstruction to discuss religion as its concern.

On Derrida's religiosity Richard Kearney's work has an outstanding value. He published an article entitled “Deconstruction, God, and the Possible” included in the book, *Derrida and Religion: Other Testament*, in which he argues from the deconstructive ground that God can be defined not as the “absolute priority of actuality over possibility” which is practiced by onto-theologians but by “absolute priority of possibility over actuality” (305). Kearney further argues that Derrida’s reading of the *possible* gestures towards “a new eschatological understanding of ‘the possible God,’” and that we can see Derrida discussing the concept of “the impossible-possible” which is linked to the origin of faith.” However, this faith in question is “a deconstructive belief in the

undecidable and unpredictable character of incoming’’ (304). Kearney’s discussion justifies that Derrida’s faith is different from onto-theologians’; his is the deconstructive faith, the faith that is undecidable. Similarly, his understanding of God is the impossible-possible or the incoming, not that of any absolute actuality. In the same vein, John D. Caputo commends: “I am identifying deconstruction as a kind of passion or prayer for the impossible, or as an affirmation of the ‘undeconstructible’. The first time I find mention of something ‘undeconstructible’ is in a 1989 essay titled "The Force of Law." This essay is the best place to start with the more overtly religion-friendly accenting of deconstruction in Derrida's writings (63). That is to say, God in deconstructive understanding is undeconstructible which is again like the impossible-possible because deconstruction is understood as the prayer for the impossible.

With regard to the application of deconstruction in the study of the religious texts, Ian W. Mabbett made a comparative study between Derrida's deconstruction and Buddhism with reference to Nagarjuna, the second-century Mahayana Buddhist teacher, who founded Madhyamika that discusses the doctrine of void and produced an article entitled "Nagarjuna and Deconstruction." By this, Mabbett has justified how Eastward and Westward or the opposites meet at a common point like "the apostle of the Middle Way" as discussed in Buddhism or "the prophet of infinite deferral" as discussed in deconstruction (203). This has brought Derrida and Nagarjuna at a common point where they "are seeking to give form—a self-referring and self-canceling form—to the same vision" (204) which is concerned with "a characterization of the various ways . . . dismantling of concept-reifying views . . ." (205).

Making a comparison between the theme of the Buddhism and deconstruction, Mabbett notes, "Deconstruction, which employs a special type of contemplative thought . . . gives us the eye of insight to see that this is what is happening. It is really like the Buddha eye, which sees all things, and the enlightenment it promises is really like *bodhi*" (208). He has explored Nagarjuna's doctrine of void and Derrida's concept of deconstruction and come up with some similarities between them. These similarities are discussed under the points as follows: both avoid any claim about a determinate reality; both identify their teaching with what is really the case; both criticize the logic of binary oppositions; both celebrate emptiness; both use the same four-cornered logic—a given concept can have no fixed or determinate referent in reality; both dismantle the concept of the self; and both recognize a conventional and higher truth.

John D. Caputo relates Derrida's conception of God to the sense of journey and vocation after St. Paul and remarks: “You can get a sense of the sort of path that postmodernists have in mind by giving a deconstructive analysis of the religious idea of having a 'vocation,' which means to follow the call that directs our spiritual journey” (49). He compares the spiritual journey made by St. Paul in religion with the deconstructive journey made by Derrida in philosophy as both of them had many adventures because St. Paul himself had to “run out of a lot of towns as a heretic” (Caputo 52). So in essence Derrida is not an atheist and deconstruction does not eschew religion, but they provide a different look on it. This different look has been explained by Kearney that although Derrida did not directly talk of ‘God’ in his writings, we can, however, allude to his discussion on aporias of the impossible-possible. He cites Derrida mentioning that the *in* of the impossible is no

doubt radical, implacable and undeniable; it is not simply negative or dialectical; it rather introduces the possible which is likely to come true (302).

Derrida's conception of aporias and transcendence are also concerned with the conception of religion and God. To this, Matthias Fritsch explored aporias and transcendence in Derrida's works and published a paper "Deconstructive Aporias: Quasi-Transcendental and Normative." As Fritsch argues, aporias became an important feature in Derrida as "his works turns more explicitly than before to moral and political questions" since the early 1980s (3). The answers to those questions could simply be like aporias. Similarly, he observes aporetic structure in Derrida's discussion on the themes like law and justice, hospitality, forgiveness, cosmopolitanism, responsibility, gift-giving, friendship, and democracy and sovereignty with reference to his different works (3-4). Reviewing Derrida's works and themes discussed in them, Fritsch concludes:

In each of these cases, then, an unconditional and a conditional version of the concept—justice and the law, unconditional openness and conditional hospitality, the pure gift and economic exchange, democratic freedom and openness and the limits needed for equality and sovereignty, etc.—are shown to be "irreconcilable but indissociable," or "at the same time, but also by turns, inseparable and in contradiction with one another," so that the task is to "think *together both* this heterogeneity *and* this inseparability. (4)

Fritsch identifies different themes which consist of oppositional concepts like justice and the law, unconditional openness and conditional hospitality, the pure gift and economic exchange, democratic freedom and openness and the limits needed for equality and sovereignty and so on and analyzes their relation to each other. On this analysis he finds that they are in the relation of aporetic co-implication, i. e. existence of one depends upon the existence of the other; they are both inseparable and contradictory. That is why, Fritsch after Derrida argues for "the ineluctable impossibility of reaching a fully just, hospitable, forgiving or generously giving decision" (6). Thus, he further mentions that all decisions would have to pass through the "ordeal of the undecidable" or the "experience (and experiment) of the impossible" (Derrida qtd. in Fritsch 7). As these normative values cannot be fully achieved, the God who represents the highest degree of these normative values is impossible to achieve, so religion is the experience of the impossible and the practice of religion is like the ordeal of the undecidable because there is aporetic relation between the practical value and normative value of every concept and practice. The practical value can transcend but cannot actualize the absolute value. So their value is relational and quasi-transcendental or ultra-transcendental (Fritsch 24-25).

David Tacey made an extensive review on Derrida's religiosity and came to a conclusion that his works have significant value in relation to the issues of God and religion. He compares deconstruction with "a way of doing truth, of keeping things authentic and open to the possibility of transcendence." He further affirms that Derrida practiced deconstruction to "unravel and deconstruct, not to arrive at nothing, but to affirm a sacred reality that he sensed was undeconstructible" (3). So this suggests that like religion deconstruction seeks for a sacred reality as undeconstructible which can be compared with onto-theological conception of God! This

seeking of the undeconstructible in deconstruction goes through the process of doing truth and transcendence which are also the key values in religion. Thus there is transcendence in deconstruction which is as explained by Chung Chin-Yi like “a mid-point and meeting ground between the transcendental and empirical.” That is, transcendence in deconstruction is different from the transcendence in religion as it contains more of empirical qualities; so it is “quasi-transcendental, or the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical.” (5).

God can be compared with Derrida's conception of ‘differance’ which resists any definite qualities and differs from religious conception of God. In this regard, Tacey affirms that “the God of classical theism has died in Western culture and there is no return to it.” So God should be perceived as “the rebirth of God in the light of current knowledge and the rise of transcendence in contemporary times” rather than with the traditional understanding of transcendence and God (Tacey qtd. in Hindess 4). This suggests that deconstruction is concerned with the rebirth of God which can be understood through “ultra- or quasi-transcendental level of analysis—a level at which differences and identities are not viewed as (relatively) stable and settled” (Fritsch 25). That is, the conception of God gets deconstructed on and on

Tacey further explored Derrida regarding how he is concerned with religion and God and published under the title of "Jacques Derrida: The Enchanted Theist" which became a groundbreaking work regarding the long-standing issues on Derrida, deconstruction and religion. As Derrida is thought to be an atheist and deconstruction against religion, he initiates this discussion with the question, “Can an atheist believe in God?” By this he has signaled that as an atheist, Derrida believes in God! It seems to be ambiguous like difference, but this is the way of understanding God in deconstruction, i. e. Derrida's religiosity. this can be observed in Derrida's life as Tacey notes: “Intellectuals and theologians have been made nervous in recent times by the rumour that Derrida returned to God in his late career” (3). This created a huge debate among the critics both supporting and opposing Derrida. Those Derrideans who were strict atheists argued, “Some academics attempt to deny that Derrida, their Derrida, ever returned to religion, or, if this is acknowledged, it is put down to sentimentality in old age and the degeneration of a great mind” (Tacey 4). For Tacey it was true that he was transformed into a theist and his religiosity was quite puzzling, but his transformation was natural. However, many theologians “dismissed Derrida as a radical, nihilist and opponent of the holy.” They strongly denied Derrida’s transformation and doubted: “How can this emissary of evil turn around and dare to suggest that he has something to say about God?” (4). Understanding Derrida’s new conception of religion and God and welcoming his direct concern on such issues, Tacey affirms:

The answer to this conundrum is to say that Derrida is not interested in going back to classical theism. His agenda is quite different and more radical: he wants to move toward a new understanding of God and faith He is interested in God after the death of God, after theism, but also after classical atheism, sceptical thinking and the Enlightenment. What happens when we see beyond the death of God and the deconstruction of metaphysics? What do we see then? (4) Now it is obvious that Derrida is concerned with religion and God and that he has been transformed into a theist from an atheist. However, it is also to be noted that Derrida’s understanding of religion

and God is different from that of other theologians. More importantly, Tacey alludes to Derrida's earlier work like "Faith and Knowledge" in which he has indicated that "there is, or will be, a return of the religious in global civilization" (4). So it was not that Derrida returned to religion in his later career but that he had had faith from the very beginning. This has been further supported by the proposal of the topic 'Religion' discuss at the Capri dialogues in 1994 by Derrida himself. It was a philosophical summit at which Derrida talked straightforwardly on religion (4). To this Tacey brings forward Derrida's psyche before the Capri dialogue:

He had been asked to select the theme for the European Philosophical Yearbook and he replied: 'without whispering, almost without hesitating, machine-like: 'religion.' 'Why?' asks Derrida to himself. 'From where did this come to me, and yes, mechanically?' (1998 [1996]: 38). This is a clue to his involvement with religion; it comes to him from another part of himself. He is not in control of this interest; it wells up and assails him like an alien will, an authority outside his own. He is compelled to attend to religion, which is not to his liking, since he would prefer to remain a classical atheist. Instead, he is driven out of this position into one that I should like to call enchanted atheism, that is, atheism with God. (4)

As Tacey has mentioned, the theme of "The Capri Dialogues" was to discuss, among the philosophers, the condition of religion in society. In the beginning of the dialogue Derrida addressed the delegates: "We are not priests bound by a ministry, nor theologians, nor qualified, competent representatives of religion, nor enemies of religion as such, in the sense that certain so-called Enlightenment philosophers are thought to have been" (Derrida qtd. in Tacey 5). This declaration by Derrida himself puts in the position that he is not against religion; neither is he its blind follower.

In the Capri dialogue philosophers widely discussed the concept of religion and God and its significance in the present world. The major questions discussed were: What is religion? What is it doing and what is being done with it at present? What is happening and so badly? What is happening under this old name? Tacey has summarized Derrida's concept of religion expressed in this dialogue as: "Religion is not something we do but something that is done to us. It is a response to a presence, and faith is generated once this presence has been felt. That, to me, is how we ought to understand Derrida. It is not that he is religious; rather, something in him is religious, and he cannot shake it off" (11). Similarly, Caputo describes Derrida's concept of religion as "religion without religion" (qtd. in Tacey 11). Furthermore, Tacey finds Derrida as "a post-religious philosopher", "an enchanted atheist" and "a secular intellectual" (11). He comments on Derrida's analysis of religion at present:

Derrida speaks as a secular intellectual who is disenchanting with secularism, and also disenchanting with religions. He realizes that the majority of educated people in the West have become allergic to religions because they associate them with dreary church or synagogue services, hypocrisy, moralism, piety, fascistic styles of worship and warmongering fundamentalism. These problems have almost ruined the credibility of the religions in our time. (11)

As discussed above, Tacey's understanding of Derrida and his religious identity is that he is an enchanted atheist. To this, he explains, "Derrida insisted on his atheist persona as a defense against the mystical incursion that had assailed him from within. None of us likes to have our freedom stolen from us, and so Derrida remains the 'enchanted atheist,' one who struggles with the spirit as if it were a spectre, a ghost" (11). This suggests that outwardly Derrida was an atheist but inwardly possessed some kind of spirit or faith which appeared to be a spectre or a ghost. So he has a split-personality, and accordingly, he has identity crisis.

As Tacey has mentioned, Derrida addressed some prominent religious scholars and believers at a joint congress of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature (2000). In this speech he spoke about his lifelong faith and different stages of development in faith, and justified the importance of atheism as a 'stage' in the development to theism:

If belief in God is not also a culture of atheism, if it does not go through a number of atheistic steps, one does not believe in God. There must be a critique of idolatry, of all sorts of images in prayer, especially prayer, there must be a critique of onto-theology True believers know they run the risk of being radical atheists. Negative theology, prophetic philosophical criticism, deconstruction: if you don't go through these in the direction of atheism, the belief in God is naive, totally inauthentic. In order to be authentic, the belief in God must be exposed to absolute doubt. However paradoxical it may sound, believing implies some atheism, and I am sure that true believers know this better than others, that they experience atheism all the time. It is part of their belief. (Derrida qtd. in Tacey 13)

Derrida's address on religion/faith has opened up an avenue to true understanding of religion and God and justified how atheism is a way to theism. So Derridean theology is often called a negative theology or transcendence and he is also called *an unbelieving believer* (my emphasis). As Tacey suggests, "Derrida's is a path of negative transcendence, and he is interested in moving toward faith, but not without the intellect, its doubts and questions. Perhaps one could call him an unbelieving believer" (15). Tacey concludes Derrida's transformation from an atheist to a believer as an authentic spiritual journey which Derrida dared to express and accept. In this regard, Tacey commends that Derrida, as a deconstructionist, "had the courage to deconstruct himself" (15). Thus the answer to the question—can an atheist believe in God?—is 'yes' because, argues Tacey, "if God can be reassembled after being torn apart, interrogated and rebuked, and if something remains that survives the deconstructive process, it might legitimately claim to be regarded as holy" which can be called God as it is the presence that might be hidden in the spiritual/ moral emptiness (4). After exploring the Derridean concept of faith in deconstruction, C. E. Evink highlights the significance of employing deconstruction in religion and argues that it can help to minimize violence and enhance tolerance. Thus he commends:

In deconstructing or dismantling a specific religion . . . in order to be able to criticize religion's dogmas and rituals, in order to open it for other religious experiences, in order to make way for tolerance, and in order to reach, as closely as possible, a relation to alterity without violence, a 'we', a friendship of 'we' that precedes any community and doesn't exclude anyone. (318-19)

Thus, Evink alludes to Derrida's understanding of various religious practices and his conception of religion as bottomless abyss, and finds a balancing relation between them accepting all of them equally as 'we' not as the 'other' (319). To this, Evink first is suspicious of how one can keep going through the bottomless abyss or maintain tolerance with several religious traditions. However, the secret he discovered is 'the faith' which keeps one moving with renewed strength and speed. So he states that deconstruction has such faith "that keeps him [a believer] moving and that shows him the way, be it a way toward an aporia, not knowing where to go, at the risk of never arriving? I think it is indeed a specific faith that guides deconstruction" (320). This suggests that Derrida's religiosity contains deconstructive faith which accepts diversity and plurality, contradictions and ambiguities, and difference.

The studies above on Derrida and deconstruction in relation to religion and God suggest some key constructs which identify Derrida's religiosity. These constructs can be listed as follows: (i) Religion and God is like difference; (ii) It regards scriptures as texts and explores new meanings of scriptures in context; (iii) Religion is the guidelines to pursue the impossible-possible and identify the undecidable; (iv) Religion is an affirmation for the truth, justice and the authentic pursue; (v) Religion is the practice of deconstructing one's faith; (vi) Religion is all comprehensive and inclusive; (vii) There is no difference in a theist and an atheist; in a religious and a secular; in a devotee and God; (viii) God is the perception of the undeconstructible and a sacred reality as a trace; (ix) A deconstructive believer is like an unbelieving believer, a spiritual materialist, a quasi-transcendentalist and a critic of religion; and (x) Founded on deconstructive belief, Derrida's religiosity believes in the incoming of the impossible-possible. All these constructs of Derrida's religiosity constitute the foundation for the development of postmodern spirituality which bears potentials for enhancing sustainable peace in the world.

Derrida's Religiosity and the Teachings of the Gita

As the constructs of Derrida's religiosity have been identified, the teachings of the Gita have been compared with these constructs and the points of similarities have been identified. The data related to the Gita have been extracted from A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's version, *Bhagavad-gita as It Is*. This version of the Gita has been regarded as a text as in Derrida's religiosity scriptures are also understood as texts. So in what follows, constructs of Derrida's religiosity have been compared with the teachings of the Gita.

As Derrida's religiosity regards religion as difference which works on binary oppositions, the teachings of the Gita contains many binary oppositions across different chapters, such as *sukha* and *dukha* (happiness and sadness; 2.14); *karma* and *akarma* (action and inaction; 3.8); *siddha* and *asiddha* (success and failure; 4.22); *maana* and *apamaana* (honour and dishonour; 6.7); *sat* and *asat* (spirit and matter; 9.19); *bhaya* and *abhaya* (fear and fearlessness; 10.4); *sattva* and *tamas* (goodness and ignorance; 14.15); *kshara* and *akshara* (15.16). Like in Derrida's religiosity, these oppositions have been treated as complementary to each other in the teachings of the Gita. Use of such oppositional concepts as complementary has created the state of undecidable in Arjuna from the very beginning which can be observed in the verse 3.2 of the Gita because Arjuna realized that

Lord Krishna's teachings in chapter 2 were equivocal and confusing (*vyamisreneva vakyena*) so he could not decide whether to do his duty (lead the war against Kauravas) or abandon it.

In chapter 4 of the Gita Lord Krishna affirms that the Lord will manifest whenever and wherever there is increase in irreligious practice (4.7), and establish the religion (4.8). This supports the incoming of the impossible-possible in Derrida's religiosity because both of these beliefs are genuinely concerned with the truth and justice.

The humble sage's equal vision that finds equality among a *brahmana*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste (5.18) can be compared with comprehensive and inclusive nature of Derrida's religiosity. Thus a brahman or a humble sage can be called a deconstructionist who is like an unbelieving believer "who neither rejoices upon achieving something pleasant nor laments upon obtaining something unpleasant, who is self-intelligent, who is unbewildered, and who knows the science of God, who is already situated in transcendence" (5.20). Similarly, he/she also believes in the expressions *sama-lostrasma-kanchanah* ("being equiposed to pebbles, stone, and gold" [6.8]) and *sama-buddhir visisyate* ("a person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind"; 6.9) as these can be claimed to be the characteristic features of a deconstructive belief, a construct of Derrida's religiosity.

In chapter 7 Lord Krishna asserts that all the created beings—material and spiritual—are originated from him and dissolve into him at the end (7.6). This suggests the comprehensive and inclusive nature of the teachings of the Gita which is also the feature of Derrida's religiosity. As deconstructing one's faith and the undecidable are constructs of Derrida's religiosity, they can be found in the teachings of the Gita when Lord Krishna in the verses 6.46 and 7.17 instructs variably. In the verse 6.46 the Lord taught Arjuna to be a *yogi* as the *yogi* is "greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker" but in the verse 7.17 he is teaching Arjuna to be a *jnani*, "the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service."

The description of *Brahma* in 8.3 can be compared with these two constructs of Derrida's religiosity, a sacred reality and the undeconstructible because Lord Krishna describes *Brahma* as the indestructible transcendental living entity (8.3). So the concept of God in Derrida's religiosity goes exactly with the concept of *Brahma* in the teaching of the Gita. Similarly, the nature of Derrida's religiosity as quasi-transcendental can be observed in the Lord's description of *Sanatana* as "the unmanifest nature, which is eternal and is transcendental to this manifested and unmanifested matter" (8.20). Furthermore, this understanding of *Sanatana* is strongly supported by the belief in the undeconstructible and a sacred reality in Derrida's religiosity.

Lord Krishna describes himself as *eketvena prithaktvena bahudha visvoto mukham* ("the one without a second, diverse in many; 9.15; Prabhupada 420) which contains a trace, a construct of Derrida's religiosity, as the understanding of the Lord is shifting and this shifting is going toward diversity which is not that easier to perceive. So these are the characteristics of difference.

Furthermore, Lord Krishna's Universal Form, the opulences, as described in the verses (11.5-7, 10, 11, 16, 19, 20) justify the occurrence of difference, a construct of Derrida's religiosity, in the teachings of the Gita as the Lord's forms and qualities have no limitations; they differ and defer on different occasions, leaving traces and constituting both a structure and a movement. Like the nature of difference the Universal Form of Lord Krishna is beyond conception and description.

The Lord further explains the qualities of the transcendentalist who can transcend the three modes of nature—(*sattva*) goodness, (*rajas*) passion and (*tamas*) ignorance (14.22-25). These different modes transform through traces in the transcendental process in order to realize the undeconstructible. In this process a transcendental practitioner becomes like an unbelieving believer who shares the qualities of a transcendentalist who: does not hate illumination, avoids attachment and delusion; is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remains neutral and transcendental, knows that the modes alone are active; is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; treats alike both friend and enemy; has renounced all material activities (14.22-25; Prabhupada 623).

In chapter 15 Prabhupada describes *asvattha* ("a banyan tree"; 15.3) and affirms, "The real form of this tree cannot be perceived in this world" (633). This nature of *asvattha* exactly captures the meaning of difference as discerned by Derrida's religiosity because both cannot be perceived exactly. To this, Prabhupada further states: "No one can understand where it ends, where it begins, or where its foundation is." This is exactly what happens in Derrida's religiosity which results in difference as the undecidables leading to the realization of the undeconstructible. Thus a deconstructionist believer or an unbelieving believer who possesses these qualities can be compared with a *veda-vita* as described in the Gita (16.1-3). These qualities are: fearlessness; purification of one's existence; cultivation of spiritual knowledge; charity; self-control; performance of sacrifice; study of the Vedas; austerity; simplicity; nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquility; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; vigor; forgiveness; fortitude; cleanliness; and freedom from envy and from the passion for honour (Prabhupada 656).

Similarly, the most sacred expression, *Om Tat Sat* ("evoking that eternal Supreme"; 17.23) indicates the sacred reality or the undeconstructible as the constructs of Derrida's religiosity. To me, this *mantra*, '*Om Tat Sat*' (the sacred hymn) represents the way Derrida discerned the meaning of difference—"neither a word nor a concept" (qtd. in Nuyen 115) which, however, refers to the sacred reality or the undeconstructible inherent in everything. Thus, like this *mantra*, difference is all-pervasive and all-inclusive which are the qualities of Derrida's religiosity.

The description of *sattvik jnana* ("knowledge in the mode of goodness"), the knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities though they are divided into innumerable forms (18.20; Prabhupada 717) can be compared with Derrida's religiosity which concerns authentic passion for learning about the truth and the undeconstructible. Similarly, the description

of a *sattvik karta* ("a worker in the mode of goodness"; 18.26) can be compared with an unbelieving believer in Derrida's religiosity. So both of them possesses the qualities as described in the Gita that he/she does duties without association with the modes of material nature, without false, with good determination and enthusiasm, and without wavering in success or failure (18.26; Prabhupada 720), i. e. he/she goes through the traces and the undecidables in order to realize God as the undeconstructible. Furthermore, he/she can also be compared with a brahmana, as described in the Gita, who possesses the qualities like peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness (18.43; Prabhupada 730).

In the last chapter of the Gita the occurrence of traces and the undecidables, the constructs of Derrida's religiosity, can be found in Lord Krishna's instruction to Arjuna when the Lord allows him freedom to decide on his duty himself one verse—*yathēcchasi tatha kuru* ("do what you wish to do"; 18.63) but in the next verse he suggests him to always think of him, become his devotee, worship him and offer his homage unto him as he is his very dear friend (18.65; Prabhupada 747, 749). More importantly, this deconstructs the hierarchy between the God and the devotees, theists and atheists, religious and secular, etc. and regards them being complementary to each other. Such comprehensive and inclusive nature of religion is the shared quality of both Derrida's religiosity and the teachings of the Gita which has laid the foundation for postmodern spirituality.

CONCLUSION

Since the introduction of deconstruction to academic discourses by Derrida in 1960s, there emerged many controversial issues in its conception and implications; relation of deconstruction to religion was more controversial until the last years of his life as some critics identified constructs of religiosity with deconstruction positively while others strongly denied them. However, Derrida himself got engaged with religious issues in his later years which supported those Derrideans who had perceived constructs of religiosity in him. Thus, I reviewed the studies on deconstruction in relation to religion, deduced some constructs, and listed them as Derrida's religiosity.

When I explored the teachings of the Gita from the perspective of Derrida's religiosity, I identified some teachings of the Gita having similarities with them. Thus I reached the conclusion that Derrida's religiosity and the teachings of the Gita have some common themes as both of them regard religion and God as difference, scriptures as texts, deconstruct faith, accept the undecidables, find binary oppositions as complementary to each other, perceive God as the undeconstructible and a sacred reality, seeks for the truth and justice, and are comprehensive and inclusive. More importantly, a believer guided by them is like an unbelieving believer, a spiritual materialist (one who possesses higher degree of spiritual intelligence) and a quasi-transcendentalist who believes in the incoming of the impossible-possible like Lord Krishna's descending on the earth to promote justice. All these constructs of Derrida's religiosity and the teachings of the Gita are so significant that they can lay true foundation for the studies on interspirituality and postmodern spirituality and its enhancement for promoting sustainable peace in the world.

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