Hindu Beliefs in the Bhagavad-Gita

The Bhagavad-Gita discusses the culture of Hinduism practiced during 500-200 BCE in India. The second teaching about philosophy and spiritual discipline seems significant because the description about self-discipline and knowledge practiced in Hinduism cultures is explained. How are certain beliefs like reincarnation and nirvana practiced by Hindus? Why is understanding these concepts important? Lord Krishna states that “when suffering and joy are equal for him and he has courage, he is fit for immortality” (Miller 33). This quote introduces both concepts of nirvana, which is attaining peace, and reincarnation, which is the process of being reborn. Looking closely at the repetition and binary oppositions found within this teaching, hopefully there will be an answer to interpret why reincarnation and nirvana are so heavily depended on in Hinduism.

Throughout this chapter, multiple words are repeated to iterate the importance of spiritual discipline. These repetitions could be embedded to explain why the teachings about reincarnation are significant to believe. On page 34, the word “enduring” is repeated three times, and the word “unborn” is included twice, which could describe the process of reincarnation. These lines say “our bodies are known to end, but the embodied self is enduring,” “unborn, enduring, constant, and primordial, it is not killed when the body is killed,” and “when a man knows the self to be indestructible, enduring, unborn, unchanging, how does he kill or cause anyone to kill” (Miller
Unborn and enduring are also binary oppositions as one means not yet existing and the other remains in existence. This passage is necessary as it seems to expose the concept of reincarnation by stating that the body will not persist but the soul will last forever. Why did Hinduism start to believe in reincarnation? Why is it important to their beliefs? The text explains that “death is certain for anyone born, and birth is certain for the dead; since the cycle is inevitable, you have no cause to grieve” (Miller 35). Since the book is placed in a time of war, could this teaching have been taught in order to calm one’s fear and sadness about death? After death is an unanswered question to humans as some believe in heaven and others in complete darkness, but what if we never died? How does the soul travel from body to body? The speaker explains that “as the embodied self enters childhood, youth, and old age, so does it enter another body” (Miller 33). The anomaly of “another body” compared to one’s lifetime journey begins to expresses the continuous process of life. Lord Krishna says “never have I not existed, nor you, nor these kings; and never in the future shall we cease to exist” (Miller 33). Just like other religions, the soul continues to endure, but Hindus believe that the soul transfers into another body.

Discipline is an important term that is repeated constantly throughout the chapter. Understanding the repetition, could discipline be used as another word to describe the cultural achievement of nirvana? Two revealing lines express that “disciplined by understand, one abandons both good and evil deeds” and “when your understanding turns from sacred lore to stand fixed, immovable in contemplation, then you will reach discipline” (Miller 39). In Hinduism culture, nirvana is a place of perfect peace and happiness. By not choosing good or evil, self-knowledge is achieved and peace is attained. Another quote that leads me to think discipline ties to nirvana is stated on page 41, saying “without discipline, he has no
understanding or inner power; without inner power, he has no peace.” There are many questions to understanding the concept of nirvana, as only few accomplish it. Like how can one find perfect peace and happiness with yourself, others, and the world? People tend to judge and question so many different things that it is hard to be completely happy or perfectly at ease with everything. As the second teaching is talking about what to do in order to attain nirvana, there is an anomaly explaining how one becomes ruined. It says “from attachment desire arises, from desire anger is born. From anger comes confusion; from confusion memory lapses, from broken memory understanding is lost; from loss of understanding, he is ruined” (Miller 40-41). The inclusion of this chain in describing nirvana helps explain what damages one to reach it, implying that attachment ruins a mind. But doesn’t every one become attached to something in life like family or an item? And from attachment arises desire, but can you desire nirvana and cannot attain it because you want to reach it?

Understanding reincarnation and nirvana individually, how do these two concepts tie together? Why are these important to the Bhagavad-Gita and Hinduism culture? As I mentioned earlier, this book is set during a time of war and both help to alleviate suffering. At the end of this chapter, it states that “this is the place of infinite spirit; achieving it, one is freed from delusion; abiding in it even at the time of death, one finds the pure calm of infinity” (Miller 42). Reincarnation and nirvana are practiced hand in hand, as nirvana allows one to accept the world and be at peace with any outcome. Reincarnation is the belief that the soul lives infinitely, so one does not have to fear death. Yet questions remain if Arjuna has received an insightful lesson about discipline in the time of war and if he will follow these teachings.
Work Cited