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AI AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING SACRED TEXTS – A CASE STUDY ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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Abstract:

This study explores the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI)–based applications in learning sacred texts, with reference to The Bhagavad Gita. Drawing upon Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the research compares three modes of learning—traditional text-based reading, listening to spiritual discourses, and AI-enabled application-based learning—based on the researcher's sustained personal learning experience over five years. The study adopts a qualitative, reflective, secondary research approach and analyses how attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation operate across these learning modes. The findings suggest that AI-based learning tools introduce distinct cognitive and environmental stimuli that transform sacred learning from a passive, reverential activity into an interactive, self-regulated, and personalized learning experience. The study contributes to emerging literature on digital spirituality and AI-mediated learning by offering a theoretically grounded, experiential perspective.

Key words: *Artificial Intelligence, The Bhagavad Gita, Self-regulated learning, Social learning theory*

Introduction:

The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Shri Krishna and Arjuna that is considered as the philosophy of life itself. This sacred text consists of 700 verses spread across eighteen chapters. There are many commentaries, purports and translations of The Bhagavad Gita that are available for learning this vast voluminous sacred text. Different spiritual scholars have interpreted and adapted the teachings of The Bhagavad Gita to be able to apply in daily life for spiritual elevation and uphold of the Dharmic practices. Learning The Bhagavad Gita through was limited to conventional methods like reading the texts and translations as well as listening to spiritual discourses in temples or religious gatherings. These methods though effective may be considered as time consuming and laborious by the new tech savvy generation. This study explores whether AI based Applications can enhance or complement the learning experiences of new generation learners seeking spiritual wisdom. The research also compares AI based learning with conventional methods through the lens of Bandura's Social Learning Theory focusing on how learning occurs via tools, content and context.

Review of literature:

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977, 1986) posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and internal processing of information, mediated by four cognitive processes: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. The theory emphasizes the interplay of personal cognitive factors, environmental influences, and behaviour, known as reciprocal determinism. This framework is particularly relevant in understanding how learners engage with sacred texts across diverse learning modalities, including traditional reading, listening to discourses, and AI-mediated learning. Bandura's framework provides a lens to examine how different learning tools—books, discourses, and AI-based applications—affect learner attention, retention of content, application of teachings, and motivation to engage with the text over time.

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Pihlaja, S. (2021). The Bhagavad Gita is considered as a religious text and this study highlights how discourses in religious places may be construed as chanting hymns or prayers thereby limiting the ability to act as an input in the environment for drawing limited attention of limited learners.

NEWBY, G. D. (2008) Explores the use of electronic media in the study of sacred texts. This study was made in the context of learning the Bible. The study concluded that the electronic use of the sacred texts would be part of the lives of the religious learners of the world. The availability of reading material online was at the initial stage during this time period.

Dutt, V. Exploring Moral Learning through Bhagavad Gita: A Comparative Study of Social Robot Interaction and Traditional Reading The study was made in a controlled group to teach Chapter I of The Bhagavad Gita to a group of students by social robot Picoh. The findings were that by use of Picoh, there was positive engagement and user involvement in moral learning thereby introducing a new way of studying philosophy.

Research gap:

Existing literature on digital learning of sacred texts has primarily examined the availability of online religious resources, particularly in the context of Bible studies, with limited attention to learning mechanisms. Experimental studies using technologies such as social robots to teach selected chapters of the Bhagavad Gita demonstrate pedagogical innovation but remain short-term and tool-centric. While spiritual discourses are widely recognised as traditional modes of learning,

their effectiveness in terms of attention, retention, and motivation is often embedded within a religious and devotional setting, making it difficult to analytically isolate these processes as external learning influences. Consequently, discourses may not function as neutral comparators within conventional social learning frameworks. Existing studies rarely differentiate between **faith-mediated engagement** and **tool-mediated learning mechanisms.** Moreover, there is a lack of research examining AI-based applications as structured, interactive learning tools that operate independently of religious authority or devotional context. This creates a gap in understanding how AI-based learning environments compare with traditional methods in facilitating cognitive and motivational processes involved in studying sacred texts. The present study addresses this gap by examining AI as a complementary learning tool through the lens of Bandura's mediational processes.

Objectives of the study:

1. To examine the AI based Applications for learning The Bhagavad Gita

2. To compare reading texts, listening to spiritual discourses and AI App based learning using Bandura's Social Learning Theory

3. To analyse the four meditational processes-attention, retention, reproduction and motivation through the three learning modes

4. To explore whether AI based Applications can alter the environmental stimuli and learner behaviour in the context of The Bhagavad Gita

Conceptual Research Model :

Figure 1 presents the conceptual research model developed for the study based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The model explains how AI-enabled learning environments facilitate the learning of sacred texts through observational learning processes, leading to cognitive and behavioural outcomes among users.

Figure 1: Conceptual Research Model Based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory
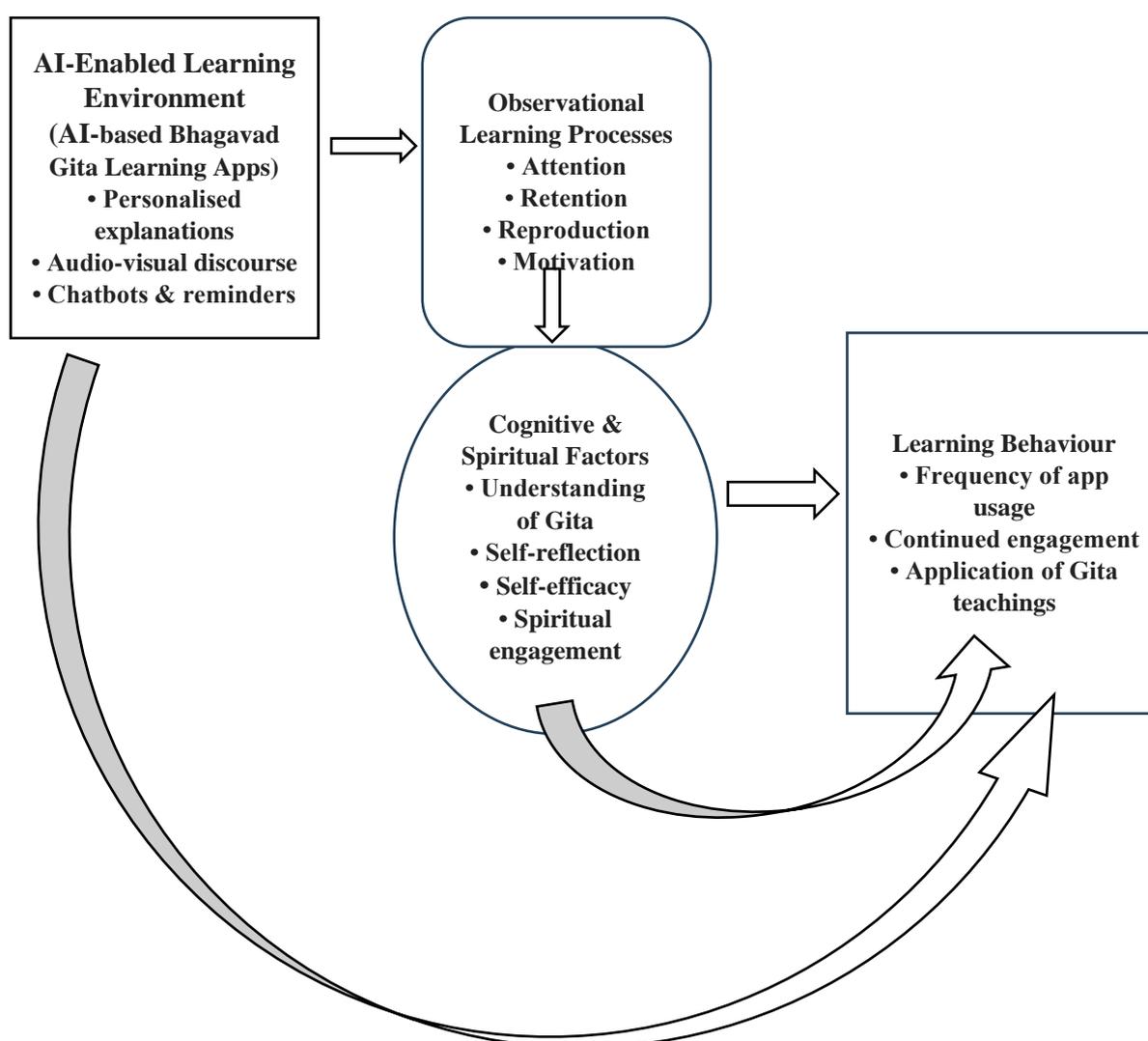
Research methodology:

1.Research design

The present study adopts a qualitative, secondary research design based on reflective self-experiences.

2. Nature of data

Data is drawn from five years of sustained engagement with:

1. Printed and digital texts of The Bhagavad Gita
2. Recorded and live spiritual discourses
3. AI based Bhagavad Gita applications

3. Theoretical Framework

Bandura's Social learning theory serves as the analytical framework, with emphasis on cognitive, environmental, and behavioural determinants.

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4. Analysis and discussion

The study conceptualizes learning as an interaction between:

- Learning tools – books, spiritual discourses, AI Apps
- Mediational processes – Attention, Retention, Reproduction, Motivation
- Learning outcomes – Understanding, reflection, application

Attention refers to the learner's capacity to selectively focus on relevant aspects of the model or content. Without sustained attention, learning does not occur, regardless of exposure.

1. **Reading books** demands *intentional and effortful attention.* Engagement is largely self-regulated, requiring discipline, silence, and cognitive readiness.

2. **Listening to spiritual discourses** enhances attention through *narrative flow, voice modulation, storytelling, and the charisma of the speaker,* making attention socially and emotionally guided.

3. **AI-based apps** capture attention through *interactivity, personalization, instant responses, and micro-learning formats,* reducing attentional fatigue and allowing learning in short, repeated bursts.

   In my learning experience, attention during book-based study was sustained through deliberate effort and self-discipline, whereas discourses facilitated attention through auditory cues, narrative engagement, and social presence. AI-based applications further altered the attentional process by enabling short, interactive engagements, allowing attention to be re-engaged multiple times across contexts. Thus, AI tools complemented traditional methods by lowering attentional entry barriers while sustaining engagement through interaction.

Retention involves the cognitive encoding, storage, and recall of observed material. Symbolic coding, mental imagery, and repetition play key roles.

1. **Reading Books** support retention through *annotation, re-reading, and reflective pauses,* and encouraging long-term memory formation.

2. **Listening to Spiritual Discourses** aid retention via *examples, metaphors, repetition of key ideas,* and emotional resonance, though recall may depend on note-taking or repeated listening.

3. **AI-based apps** enhance retention through *summarization, instant clarification, repetition on demand, and contextual explanations,* reinforcing memory through adaptive reinforcement.

Retention of scriptural concepts occurred through different cognitive pathways across the three modes. Textual study enabled symbolic coding through reading and annotation, discourses strengthened memory through metaphoric explanation and emotional anchoring, while AI-based tools reinforced retention by allowing repeated access to explanations and personalized clarification. Over time, these modes functioned cumulatively rather than independently, strengthening conceptual recall.

Reproduction refers to the learner's ability to translate retained knowledge into action—cognitive, verbal, or behavioural—through practice and application.

1. **Reading Books** facilitate reproduction through *internal reflection* and gradual incorporation of teachings into thought and conduct.

2. **Listening to Spiritual Discourses** encourage reproduction by *demonstrating lived examples* of dharmic conduct, often through stories of saints, warriors, or householders.

3. **AI-based apps** support reproduction by *answering situational questions,* helping learners apply Gita principles to contemporary life contexts.

The reproduction of Bhagavad Gita teachings in daily life emerged gradually through reflective reading and

observation of exemplars presented in discourses. AI-based applications further supported this process by enabling contextual questioning, allowing scriptural principles to be interpreted in relation to modern dilemmas. This facilitated a more immediate translation of philosophical concepts into practical reasoning and behaviour.

Motivation determines whether learned behaviour is initiated and sustained. It can be intrinsic (meaning, values) or extrinsic (reinforcement, feedback).

1. **Reading Books** rely heavily on *intrinsic motivation,* such as spiritual curiosity, discipline, and commitment.

2. **Listening to Spiritual Discourses** generate motivation through *collective energy, inspiration, emotional upliftment, and reverence for the speaker.*

3. **AI-based apps** introduce *immediate feedback, ease of access, and autonomy,* sustaining motivation through convenience and responsiveness.

Motivation to continue learning was sustained differently across modes. While book-based study required intrinsic discipline, discourses provided emotional and social reinforcement. AI-based applications complemented both by offering immediacy and autonomy, enabling continued engagement even during periods of limited time or access to traditional learning environments.

Taken together, the four mediational processes did not operate in isolation within any single learning mode. Instead, reading, listening, and AI-based interaction functioned as complementary pathways within the broader social learning process. The integration of AI tools did not replace traditional methods but enhanced attentional access, reinforced retention, supported contextual reproduction, and sustained motivation, thereby extending Bandura's social learning framework into digitally mediated spiritual learning contexts.

From Bandura's perspective, books provide **low-intensity environmental stimulation,** requiring strong internal regulation. The environment neither adapts to the learner nor reinforces engagement. Consequently, books rely heavily on the learner's prior motivation and cognitive effort, with minimal environmental scaffolding.

While discourses provide strong environmental stimulation, their influence is **intertwined with religious authority and devotional affect**, which complicates their classification as neutral learning environments. Attention and motivation are externally enhanced, but not purely through observable reinforcement; they are mediated by belief and reverence.

AI-based apps constitute **highly structured and analytically isolable environments**. They provide observable reinforcement, controllable stimuli, and repeatable interactions. Unlike discourses, AI environments operate independently of faith-based authority, making them suitable for examining environmental effects on learning processes.

The present study considers five AI-based mobile applications that facilitate learning of the Bhagavad Gita through digital and interactive features. These applications were selected based on their explicit use of artificial intelligence–enabled functionalities such as conversational chatbots, personalized explanations, multilingual support, and audio-based learning aids. The selected applications include *Ask Krishna AI*, *Bhagavad Gita Community AI*, *Gita GPT* developed by Nihal Ram Tripathi, *Bhagavad Gita Hindi and English*, and *Bhagavad Gita English Audio*. Among these, three applications provide interactive chatbot interfaces that allow users to pose questions and receive AI-generated responses related to verses, meanings, and contextual interpretations, while the remaining applications primarily support text-based and audio-based engagement with the scripture. These applications were

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used as complementary learning tools alongside traditional methods such as reading books and listening to spiritual discourses. The selection enables a comparative examination of AI-mediated learning experiences and their role in supporting attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation in the study of sacred texts.

Table 1 Number of downloads and User ratings:

	Downloads	User ratings (out of 5)	Based on
Ask Krishna AI	14,000	4.6	470
Bhagavad Gita Community - AI	9,800	No ratings	No ratings
Gita GPT	51,000	3.88	680
Bhagavad Gita Hindi and English	4,40,000	4,73	1,300
Bhagavad Gita Hindi Audio, Eng	1,60,000	3.2	490

Source: AppBrain 2026

Table 2 Developer, availability and Chatbot

	Developed by	Available from	Chatbot Yes/No
Ask Krishna AI	HNIX Innovations Pvt Ltd	January 2025	Yes
Bhagavad Gita Community - AI	EMTI – Emerging Technologies and Innovations	July 2023	Yes
Gita GPT	Nihal Ram Tripathi	February 2023	Yes
Bhagavad Gita Hindi and English	Ved Vyas Foundation	December 2021	No
Bhagavad Gita Hindi Audio, Eng	Audio Stories	December 2019	No

Source: AppBrain 2026

Conclusion:

AI based Bhagavad Gita learning Apps features –

- Personalized verse explanations
- Audio-visual discourse
- Chatbot based Question and Answers
- Daily Shloka reminders
- Multilingual translations

Observational Learning Processes (Mediating Variables)

AI apps act as digital "models" through

- Attention – Audio visual explanation of shloka grabs attention
- Retention – Repetition, summaries and saved verses aids better retention

- Reproduction – Applying the learnings to daily life
- Motivation – Personalized notifications, streaks and rewards motivate to continue learning

The Cognitive Outcomes (Personal factors)

- Improved understanding of The Bhagavad Gita
- Enhanced spiritual engagement
- Increased self-reflection and moral reasoning

The study concludes that AI based applications represent a significant pedagogical shift in sacred learning by aligning closely with Bandura's meditational processes. When viewed through Social Learning Theory, AI emerges not merely as a content

delivery tool but as an interactive learning environment that reshapes cognition, motivation and behaviour.

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