

Research Paper

Psychological Well Being from the Perspective of Bhagavad Gita

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ABSTRACT

The essence of Bhagavad-Gita provides a psychotherapeutic model for mentally distressed patient in the form of a dialogue and discussion with Arjuna narrated by Lord Krishna. Six different aspects of wellness make up the psychological well-being, which can be improved by incorporating Bhagavad-Gita teachings. The insightful conversation depicted the state of Arjuna with clouded mind, dry mouth, sweating, burning sensation, shivering of limbs, fear and palpitations. Lord Krishna identified the signs of anxiety and offers the best course of action for controlling one's emotions and desires with the help of intellectual equanimity, positive psychology, and other techniques. The paper is concluded in an attempt to provide an insight towards developing psychotherapeutic model for the modern society sufferers revealing the secrets of mental health as propounded by Lord Krishna in Shrimadbhagavad-Gita.

Keywords: *Psychotherapeutic, Wellbeing, Palpitation, Equanimity*

Manomaya kosha is the third of the five koshas where the mental faculty processes the thoughts and emotions. The agitated mind resulting from desire, anger, fear and envy cause imbalances in the manomaya kosha by disrupting the free flow of prana. Hence all the problems and imbalances of manomaya kosha percolate in pranamaya kosha as well as annamaya kosha and resulting in disease. Mental distress or psychological distress is a state of unpleasant feelings at the level of manomaya kosha and collectively the symptoms of anxiety and depression. A counseling session by applying different psychotherapeutic techniques as Lord Krishna did to Arjuna in Bhagavad-Gita has been quite effective in the case of mental illnesses.

Shrimadbhagavad-Gita is a famous commentary of Bhisma-parva of Mahabharata penned by Veda-Vyasa. When Arjuna faced an intense psychological turmoil before the commencement of the battle then Lord Krishna preached him about the true knowledge of duty, action and renunciation. These teachings of SriKrishna have been compiled in a famous book with 18 chapters and 700 verses. The first chapter of Bhagavad-Gita is called the 'Depression of Arjuna' in the psychological view point where Arjuna was overwhelmed by an emotional upheaval leading to a state of inaction after seeing his kith and kin. Lord

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Krishna addressed the inner conflicts of Arjuna on the ground of psychotherapy to adjust with real situations.

Psychological wellbeing is associated with longer and better quality of life and the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita cultivate a true enlightenment and perfect sense of mastery for happiness of mind and peace, whereas detachment from the material objects is a formula gives birth to equanimity which has a key role in psychological stability. The psychologist Carol Ryff developed a model of psychological wellbeing. It encompasses six distinct dimensions namely self acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, positive relationships, environmental mastery and purpose in life. The psychological wellbeing is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. [1]

The paper seeks to investigate the psychotherapeutic dimension of Bhagavad-Gita to explore its impact on humanity.

Concept of Mind as described by Bhagavad-Gita: In Sankhya philosophy the mind comes from sattvic ahankara. The mind is the central point of practice in the philosophy of Bhagavad-Gita and Yoga. The following verse gives an idea on why Bhagavad-Gita puts a great emphasis on controlling the mind;

B.G.6.6: The mind is the best of friends to someone who has conquered the mind, but it remains the worst foe for those who have not. A self-realized yogi must learn to control the mind because it is inherently erratic and unstable. [2]

In **Chapter 6, Verse-34:** The mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate, and immensely strong, according to Arjuna, who compares it to wind. In another verse (6.35), it is stated that one can regulate the mind via regular practice and detachment, whereas a lack of control will result in mental diseases. So it can be concluded that psychological well-being is not possible without stability of mind.

Techniques to gain stability of Mind for attaining Psychological well-being: The teachings of Bhagavad-Gita help to regulate the mental faculty and manage to stabilize by adopting some techniques as described in the following verses;

- **Chapter 6, Verse- 11 and 12:** One should go to a secluded place and should lay kusa grass on the ground and then cover it with a deerskin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low and should be situated in a sacred place. The yogi should then sit on it firmly and practice yoga to purify the heart by controlling the mind, senses and activities and fixing the mind on one point.
- **Chapter 6, Verse- 13 and 14:** Holding oneself straight, with the neck and head in a straight line, and keeping one's gaze fixed on the tip of the nose are all proper postures. Therefore, one should contemplate Me (Krishna) within the heart and make Me the ultimate purpose of life, with an unagitated, quiet mind, free from fear, and completely free from sex life.
- **Chapter 6, Verse 15:** The mystic transcendentalist achieves the kingdom of God by ceasing to exist in the material world by continuously controlling his body, mind, and activities.
- **Chapter 6, Verse 16:** O Arjuna, if one eats too much or too little, sleeps too much or not enough, there is no chance of becoming a yogi. So, it is essential to regulate diet and sleep for mental stability.

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By following the above mentioned techniques, the mind becomes calm and stable and the sign of austerity of mind is revealed by the following verse;

Chapter 17, Verse 16: The austerities of mind include satisfaction, gravity, self-control, simplicity, and purification of one's existence.

Concept of Positive Psychology and Intellectual Equanimity towards attaining Psychological Well-being: The term positive psychology was coined by Martin Seligman in 1998. Positive psychology is a science of positive aspects of human life such as happiness, well-being and flourishing. ^[3] Martin Seligman defined positive psychology as, “Scientific study of optimal human functioning [that] aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive”. The central themes of positive psychology include happiness, hope, creativity and wisdom. ^[4] One can attain his full psychological potential by taking the path of Bhagavad-Gita. It means living with positive psychology just by acquiring the sense of Bhagavad-Gita will promote psychological well-being. The essence of Bhagavad-Gita teachings on positive psychology encompasses following disciplines;

1. Knowing the nature of true self
2. By losing attachment in the fruits of action

1. Knowing the nature of true self: In the Bhagavad-Gita Lord Krishna explains the way to achieve self-realization and freedom from the cycle of birth and death by following spiritual laws. The true self is considered as pure soul which is distinct from the physical body. The material body is perishable by nature as against the imperishable soul. The following verses of chapter-2 provide the true nature of soul.

- **Chapter-2, Verse-20:** The soul never experiences either birth or death. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, always present, and primordial. Even though the body is killed, he is not.
- **Chapter-2, Verse-22:** The soul accepts new material bodies in the same way that someone might put on new clothes while removing old, useless ones.
- **Chapter-2, Verse-23:** The soul cannot be destroyed by any weapon, nor can it be burned by fire, nor soaked up by water, nor withered by wind.
- **Chapter-2, Verse- 24:** The individual soul is indestructible, insoluble, and cannot be dried or burned. He is unchanging, unmovable, everywhere present, and always the same.
- **Chapter-2, Verse-25:** The soul is supposedly inconceivable, invisible, and immutable. In light of this, you shouldn't mourn the body.

By realizing the true nature of self one can acquire positive psychology within oneself and positivity in turn is a key to psychological well-being.

2. By losing attachment in the fruits of action: Attachment is the root cause of suffering; hence Bhagavad-Gita recommends detachment from the fruits of action. In this case the outcome will exhilarate the practitioners by reducing disappointments in life. Such person will attain happy life with sound mental health. The following verses provide the nature and importance of detachment;

- **Chapter-2, Verse- 71:** The only person who can truly achieve peace is someone who has completely let go of all desires for sensual fulfillment, who leads a life

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devoid of desires, who has let go of any sense of ownership, and who is free of false ego.

- **Chapter-3, Verse- 19:** Therefore, one should perform their duties without being dependent on the results of their activities since by doing so they will eventually reach the Supreme.
- **Chapter-3, Verse- 25:** The learned may behave in a manner similar to that of the ignorant, but without attachment to outcomes, in order to guide others in the right direction.
- **Chapter-3, Verse- 30:** O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight.
- **Chapter-3, Verse- 31:** Those persons who execute their duties according to my injunctions and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy, becomes free from the bondage of fruitive actions.
- **Chapter-3, Verse- 34:** The attachment and aversion to the senses and their objects can be controlled by certain rules. Such attachment and aversion are obstacles on the way to self-realization, so one should not allow them to rule over someone.
- **Chapter-12, Verse- 12:** If you find this practice difficult to accept, devote yourself to the study of knowledge. However, meditation is superior than knowledge, and even better than meditation is giving up the outcome of one's actions; since by doing so, one might find inner peace.
- **Chapter-12, Verse- 16:** I am quite fond of my devotee who does not depend on ordinary course of activities, who is pure, knowledgeable, free from care and any suffering, and who does not strive for any particular outcome.
- **Chapter-12, Verse- 17:** One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things- such a devotee is very dear to Me.
- **Chapter-12, Verse- 18-19:** One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honour and dishonour, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service- such a person is very dear to Me.

So, by following the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita one is certainly going to receive the connection with Lord Krishna and sound mental health with spiritual progress.

Intellectual Equanimity: The anxiety and other mental illnesses arise from the attachment and expectations in the fruits of action and detachment from results is the way to a happy life. Attachment is a cause for bondage. Bhagavad-Gita puts great emphasis on one who does not lose his patience during favorable and unfavorable conditions and maintains even-mindedness, such a person is said to be sit in a state of equanimity.

Lord Krishna says in **sloka 2:14** O son of Kunti, the temporary appearance of happiness and suffering, and their disappearance in due course, are comparable to the arrival and departure of the winter and summer seasons. O son of Bharata, they result from sense perception, and one must learn how to deal with them without getting upset.

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In **sloka 2:15** Lord Krishna declares, "O best of men, the one who is steady in both happiness and distress and is not shaken by either is unquestionably eligible for liberation."

In **sloka 2:56** It is written that one is referred to as a sage of stable mind who is free from attachment, fear, and anger and who is not troubled in mind even amidst the triple afflictions or elated when there is happiness.

In **sloka 2:57** It is reiterated that, in the material world, one who is unaffected by any benefit or harm he may receive, neither applauding it nor despising it, is securely fixed in perfect knowledge. Importance of equanimity has repeatedly been emphasized in various slokas.

Thus, for attaining psychological well-being equanimity is considered to be most essential. Mind being the very restless in nature acquire calmness by constant practice and detachment.

Insights from Bhagavad-Gita for Mental Health: When the flickering mind is seated in peaceful state then mental health is acquired. In other cases, there is possibility to fall in material pool. The following verse gives an idea of how attachment to material objects leads to downfall of soul from the point of liberation.

- **Chapter 2, Verse- 62:** While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises.
- **Chapter 2, Verse- 63:** Anger leads to complete delusion, which causes memory to become confused. Memory confusion leads to the loss of intellect, and when intelligence is lost, a person descends once more into the material world.

When a person is in Krishna consciousness, he can stop being connected to sensual pursuits and become transcendental to all attachment and detachment. This kind of devotional consciousness is the causeless mercy of the Lord. ^[2] In the following verses the follower of Bhagavad-Gita or one who is in Krishna consciousness becomes free from all desires and possessiveness and develops his intelligence and also attains the mercy of the lord Krishna.

- **Chapter 2, Verse- 64:** However, in order to obtain the full mercy of the Lord, a person must be free from every attachment and aversion and be able to control his senses using regulative principles of freedom.
- **Chapter 2, Verse- 65:** In such a satisfied consciousness, one's intelligence quickly becomes well-established, and the threefold sufferings of material existence cease to exist for the person who has reached this point of satisfaction.
- **Chapter 6, Verse- 10:** A person who believes in transcendence should always engage his body, mind, and self in interaction with the Supreme, live alone in an isolated place, and always practice to control the mind. He ought to be free from desires and possessiveness.

There are some other techniques which are mentioned in Bhagavad-Gita to keep the mind healthy. They are;

- **Chapter 4, Verse- 29:** Many Hatha yoga scriptures, as well as the Bhagavad-Gita, describe a method for managing the senses, especially the mind, by controlling and altering the breathing process.

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- **Chapter 17, Verse 2-3:** According to one's existence under the various modes of nature, one's faith can be of one of three kinds, says Lord Krishna: faith in kindness, faith in passion, or faith in ignorance.

One so associate with demigods, demons, ghosts, and spirits depending on the type of faith they practice. The belief in the Supreme Soul, however, serves as a powerful source of motivation and inspiration for achieving mental wellness.

The **73rd verse of 18th chapter** reveals the dissolution of illusion, doubt, worry and depression and regaining of memory and preparedness of action as against the **28th to 30th verse of 1st chapter** where Arjuna is overwhelmed with compassion and shows the symptoms of anxiety and depression with mental instability. In order to live a psychologically healthy life for all eternity, it is crucial to follow the instructions provided by Lord Krishna and Arjuna in their interaction and discussions in the Bhagavad-Gita.

CONCLUSION

Bhagavad-Gita offers valuable psychotherapies as a dialogue/ discussion between Arjuna and Lord Krishna. The resolution of inner conflict by doing the right thing is one of the main points of Bhagavad-Gita. The concept of mental health is covered by Lord Krishna by treating the senses especially the mind in rightful direction. To know the temporary nature of materialistic pleasure is a key to psychological well-being. Hence Bhagavad-Gita teaches to live only in joy, mental balance and positive thinking.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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