

Free Yourself from Past, Present and Future' The Path to Self-Realization and Liberation

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ABSTRACT

'The ecstasy, which he calls "Liberation while yet living" (Jivanmukti), is not a state like that of real liberation. He may be still subject to a suffering body, from which he escapes only at death, when he is liberated. His ecstasy is in the nature of a meditation which passes into the void (bhavana Samadhi) effected through negation of thought (citta vritti) and detachment from the world.' (Avalon, 1975, p. 289)

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Jivanmukta, the one liberated while living also known as Atman-jnani, because of his discovery of his true self (Atman) and greatest self of all (Brahman), thereby transforming to Brahma-jnani.

There is no greater bliss to live a life to the fullest knowing the path or even aspiring for self-realization. The path to self-realization is not a smooth journey, it would lead us to the process of detachment to the worldly pleasures, from our attachment objects of mortal world. It starts with the question of who am I? What is the purpose of my life? These questions lead us to renounce the mortal matters and never ending desires of this world.

Blessed is the man who has attained the liberation of his soul from the worldly illusions and realizing the absolute truth that everything in this world is mortal. The desire to self-realize by knowing absolute truth about Brahman, getting in touch with our inner self and to liberate our soul is the greatest goal of life. Realization of self, reaching our full potential and to free ourselves from the predicament of our emotions, egocentrism, self-centric thoughts from the past, present and future is the path to unfold the knowledge of pure consciousness.

Aham Brahmasmi, the knowledge that 'I am Brahman', 'I am Divine'. The consciousness of I and Brahman are one, the greatest truth one could ever know, the unity of one's individual self with the absolute self or the greatest self of all. Jeevan Mukta is the one who has attained this knowledge, the one who is liberated while living. He has liberated himself from the bondages and desires of mortal world.

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When there is understanding that one is united with the divine, every drop of ignorance, desires, doubts, perceptions all gets dissolved and destroyed. The self-realized man is blessed, one who is untouched by the ignorance and desires of this world. All the accumulated pain, desires, doubts and errors in the past are washed away with the knowledge of Brahman and the deep understanding of one's own self.

Self-Realization- Perspective from Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita is the condensed form of Upanishads, where Sree Krishna imparts his wisdom of Vedas and Upanishads to his dear disciple Arjuna. Krishna, signifies 'Centre of Consciousness' and the name Arjuna refers to 'One who makes sincere efforts'. This emphasizes the importance of seeking and making sincere efforts to realize one's own self and knowing the Brahman, the great self of all. As beautifully depicted in Bhagavad Gita, the war is between the just and the unjust, similarly there is a war in every human being between the forces of desires, greediness, for wealth, power and the positive forces of happiness, peace, contentment and spiritual bliss. When Arjuna seeks the counsel of Krishna, he is seeking for his liberation and not materialistic possessions. The distinguishing between mere self and the real self itself is a conflict in humans. Arjuna like bee, collecting nectar from the flowers synthesizes honey, he makes efforts to possess Brahma vidya, the absolute truth of Brahman breaking the stronghold of attachment. Being fully aware of the self and understanding that purpose of life is central for leading a blissful and liberated life, if not one would get lost in the pleasures of this mortal world.

Attachment & Detachment for Self-realization from Bhagavad Gita

To become a Jivanmukta, one should self-realize, understanding own self and the greatest self. Asakti is the Sanskrit word for 'attachment' and 'anasakti' is the Sanskrit word for 'detachment' (Namita & Naidu, 1992). Attachment could be defined as a feeling of affection or emotional connectedness towards a particular person, place or a thing. As per Hindu mythology, attachment is described as a never ending desire for material possessions and an adoration towards these possessions which could be materialistic, worshipping their role models, attachment towards land or place, money etc. The greatest barrier to self-realization is one's attachment to the worldly matters, many may have their own attachment objects. Attachment prevents one from seeing the reality of life as it is. Higher plateaus in spirit are for Jivanmukta, one who is able to detach from his desires.

Detaching oneself from their own attachment objects are the key to unlocking the divine secret of Knowledge, the knowledge of pure Brahman. Even Arjuna, is disturbed emotionally when he sees his friends, teachers and relatives in the opposite army. His determination is weakened by the power of attachment he has towards his relatives. He is suffering from dejection and sorrow, Krishna strengthens him by giving him the awareness about his duties and reminds him that he is not a coward, but a warrior, Kshatriya. Attachment is the greatest contributor to Dukkha. This attachment could make a person spiritually blind enough to lose the path of realizing the absolute truth.

'He who has no attachment directed toward anything, or upon attaining anything good or bad, who neither greets it nor hates it, his wisdom is established' (Bhagavad Gita 2.57)

The one who seeks to understand the absolute truth should be able to distinguish between two realities i.e., transitory & eternal, one should aspire to know and identify with the reality, to understand the pure consciousness, the Brahman. When one could distinguish between the reality and the reflection of reality, he will no longer consider the perishable matter as

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valuable, and this leads him to the path of liberation from the attachments, following the inner experience, would help him to know his inner self, i.e. Self is known by the self. Such person is free from desires and gains mastery over prakriti, or the perishable matters of life.

'Belonging to the immeasurable, imperishable, eternal owner of the body, these bodies are said to be perishable; therefore, fight, O Descendant of Bharata' (Bhagavad Gita 2.18)

Sreekrishna speaks to Arjuna, about the eternal nature of Atman and the perishable nature of body and the world. In the cycle of life, our perishable body, Prakriti is subject to change caught between the cycles of life and death, there is only one that doesn't change, the Atman that is nitya, that remains forever and that has no beginning and end, but the body is mortal and perishable (anitya). Arjuna, fully immersed in the bondages of this world is perplexed and his vision being clouded is unable to see the reality and see the transitory part as real. Lord Krishna, the mighty counsellor helps him to see reality correctly, making him aware of the bondage of attachments of this world and to see the true reality as it is. Making Arjuna aware of his duty to fight as a Kshatriya, the mighty warrior, Arjuna is liberated from the bondages of this world, liberating him from the false perceptions and distorted realities of the world by knowing the absolute truth of Brahman.

'Neti Neti'- I'm not my body

The firm understanding that one is not the body-mind complex is the fruit of self-realization. 'Neti Neti' translates to "neither this, nor that" or "not this, not this " in Sanskrit. This is a profound understanding that you are not your body, or anything that identifies you from this perishable world. You are not even your thoughts or feelings, you are not your skin, you are not even the grey hairs on your scalp. You are much more than that, your body can't define you, your body is just an upadhi that carries your spirit that is truly liberated with Brahma Vidya. This is the way to dis-identify your mere self, Purusha from the perishable matter of the external world, Prakriti and identifying yourselves with the greatest self of all, i. e the Brahman. Neti Neti is a powerful meditation technique used in Yoga practice. The power of this understanding will change the direction of your life, freeing you from your bondages, healing your traumas as you start the process of identification & misidentification. This will boost up the self-concept level freeing us from our beliefs, thoughts that defined us once, giving us a fresh perspective of ourselves and that of others.

Application of the knowledge of Jivanmukti in Therapeutic setting

Healings via Self Realization

Understanding one's true self and the knowledge of absolute truth is the path to self-realization. Like How Krishna provided great counsel for Arjuna, to attain liberation from the attachment to this mortal world, so could we help individuals attain liberation from the bondages of their past, present and the anxieties of future. We could lead individuals to the path of self-realization and experience more powerful sense of self by discovering a safe place within, and by taking off all the labels their mind, the external world had given and the judgements of the world imposed based on their life experience and events such as adverse childhood experience, traumas, abuse or neglect.

To access a transcendent sense of Self

To help individuals access a transcendent sense of self, self is seen just as a context, and one is not just that body that took physical abuses, we are much more than our body, our thoughts, memories, desires, emotions, more than the roles we perform in daily lives. These are ever- changing and unstable, but there is a part of us that doesn't change. This

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knowledge works wonders for individuals who have experienced traumas in the past, which will help to understand that though physical body is harmed, there is an unchanging self that is transcended.

The individuals may also have judgements and labels about themselves based on the schemas, they may have developed from their early experiences and their belief systems. When one is on a journey to self-realization, the seeker would start introspecting their cognitive structures or schemas formed in the past. Upon self-realization, the existing schemas may be reframed or destroyed accordingly. Hence the individuals upon self-realization are free from cognitive errors and distortions, and would receive the ability to see reality as it is.

Mindfulness meditation may also have been seen to have shown results. Striking a right balance between attachment and detachment is crucial in regulating emotions, achieving high positive goal and finally reaching one's full potential i.e., achieving Self-actualization. Mindfulness is the best way to achieve this balance and regulating emotions. It is a mind body integrative technique to be fully attentive to the present moment.

To help clients access a stable sense of self

Individuals with anxiety disorders, mental illnesses such as dissociative states, mood disorders etc. may not have a stable sense of self all the time, one could use meditative technique of Neti Neti to explore a calm and safe center within the individual through psychotherapeutic interviews from where the client could explore their changing feelings, body safely.

Detaching from the Past- Free- Focus- Release, Expand and Engage

Psychological interventions that use mindfulness and acceptance strategies such as Acceptance and commitment therapy are used to encourage clients to embrace unwanted thoughts, feelings, anxiety, anger, pain and guilt as an alternative to experiential avoidance (Hofmann & Amundsen, 2007)

Clients are encouraged to be mindful of the perspective from which awareness of experiences is possible without attachment to their content. Ultimately one can connect with their values and make choices that are in alignment with those values (Lundgren et al., 2008) Acceptance and commitment could help clients access a stable sense of self and a transcendent sense of self in order to facilitate diffusion from the mere self and conceptualized self.

CONCLUSION

The greatest pursuit of human life is to self-realize thereby understanding the purpose and meaning of one's life. This paper describes the importance of making effort to knowing the greatest self of all, the Brahman thus transforming to a JivanMukta, the one who is liberated while living. As one becomes focused on realising own self with the union with the greatest self, our attachments, labels and judgements imposed on ourselves shall be removed like a veil enabling us to shine brighter in the light of the union with the divine.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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