

## A Critical Analysis of the Psychological Concepts in the Bhagavad Gita

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper offers a critical analysis of the psychological concepts ingrained within the Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Indian scripture. The Bhagavad Gita, the dialogue that transpires between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna delves into the human psyche and explores themes of morality, obligation, and the inner workings of the human mind on a profound level. This study uses a systematic methodology to identify and explicate several psychological concepts and phenomena that are portrayed in the text, including the nature of the self (atman), various states of consciousness, the significance of desires and emotions, and approaches to attaining mental equilibrium. Furthermore, this paper elucidates how the concepts of the Bhagavad Gita reverberate with contemporary psychological theories, providing insights into the eternal wisdom embedded within this revered philosophical text. The objective of this analysis is to enhance our comprehension of human psychology and well-being by integrating Eastern philosophy with Western psychology.

**Keywords:** *Bhagavad Gita, Psychological Concepts, Atman, Consciousness, Desires, Emotions, Mental Equilibrium, Eastern Philosophy, Western Psychology, Human Psyche, Morality, Obligation, Spirituality*

The Bhagavad Gita, a revered ancient Indian scripture, recounts a profound philosophical and spiritual discussion between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, taking place in the backdrop of Kurukshetra's battlefield. The Gita is a section of the epic Mahabharata that comprises profound insights into spirituality and human existence. It addresses the fundamental challenges of life, responsibility, and the essence of the self by presenting a synthesis of various philosophical ideas and practical teachings. Lord Krishna's doctrines on dharma (duty) and possible paths to self-realization are fundamental to the Gita and emphasize the significance of psychological themes in the narrative.

The true essence of the self, or "atman," is one of the key psychological themes explored in the Bhagavad Gita. The Gita illustrates the concept that every individual has an eternal soul or atman, that is independent of their physical body and mind. Contemporary psychology's research on identity and self-awareness correlates with this concept of the self (Radhakrishnan, 1929). Furthermore, the Gita explores the various states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, and the transcendent state of higher awareness, or "samadhi." This

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Received: May 08, 2024; Revision Received: May 17, 2024; Accepted: May 20, 2024

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comprehensive investigation aligns with psychological research on altered states of consciousness and mindfulness (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1951).

The Gita provides a detailed analysis of desires and emotions, highlighting the crucial role of these elements in both spiritual development and human behavior. To achieve mental equilibrium and inner tranquility, Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna how to regulate his desires and emotions (Sivananda, 1980). Contemporary theories of emotion regulation and cognitive behavioral methods for emotional well-being align with the Gita's teachings on psychological state management (Feuerstein, 1974).

Additionally, the Gita discusses moral psychology and ethical conundrums, illustrating Arjuna's internal struggle over his duty as a warrior. In his discourse on righteousness, Lord Krishna correlates moral decision-making with spiritual growth by incorporating the concept of 'karma yoga', or the path of selfless action. This idea reflects psychological perspectives on moral development and resilience (Easwaran, 2007).

Fundamentally, the profound psychological insight provided in the Bhagavad Gita provides timeless knowledge that transcends beyond cultural and chronological barriers. Per contemporary psychological theories and practices, its investigation of the self, consciousness, desires, and morals offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending human psychology and well-being. The Gita continues to provoke thoughtful discussions on the intricacies of the human mind and soul by infusing Eastern philosophy with Western psychology.

### **THE NATURE OF THE SELF (ATMAN) AND IDENTITY**

In the Bhagavad Gita, the significance of the concept of the self (atman) in comprehending human identity and psychology is crucial. Lord Krishna illuminates the nature of the atman, emphasizing its eternal essence and independent existence outside the physical body that transcends beyond birth and death (Bhagavad Gita 2.20). This spiritual interpretation of the atman is consistent with psychological ideas concerning the establishment of identity and self-concept. The Gita's teachings on the atman, promote self-awareness and reflection, emphasizing the significance of realizing one's true nature, which transcends worldly identities.

A sense of inner stability and purpose is fostered by Krishna's conversation with Arjuna, which emphasizes the atman's tenacity and permanence (Bhagavad Gita 2.22). According to this philosophical perspective, which is consistent with psychological studies on identity formation, psychological well-being is enhanced by having a strong sense of self (Erikson, 1994). Furthermore, modern theories of self-awareness (Gallagher, 2000) that highlight the importance of introspective awareness for psychological development and fulfillment are consistent with the Gita's presentation of the atman as the essence of consciousness.

The Bhagavad Gita provides a profound framework for understanding psychological resilience and self-discovery. Its emphasis on the atman informs discussions on human identity and existential purpose. Our understanding of human identity and well-being is enhanced when these teachings are combined with modern psychological theories, which promote a comprehensive strategy for psychological development and self-awareness.

## **STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND AWARENESS**

The Bhagavad Gita provides insights into altered levels of awareness that align with psychological perspectives, offering a complex portrayal of various states of consciousness. The transcendent nature of the self (atman), which remains constant despite these variations, is highlighted by Lord Krishna as he addresses different states of consciousness, such as waking, dreaming, and deep sleep (Bhagavad Gita 2.16). By accentuating the transient nature of human awareness and the fundamental continuity of the self, this portrayal is consistent with psychological views regarding altered states of consciousness (Tart, 1972).

The teachings of Krishna also address samadhi, which is a profound state of meditation marked by heightened awareness and union with the divine (Bhagavad Gita 6.20-23). This aligns with contemporary research on the heightened states of awareness facilitated by mindfulness and meditation strategies, which have been associated with improved well-being and cognitive performance (Lutz et al., 2008).

In addition to examining consciousness, the Gita discusses how emotions and desires affect mental states. Krishna emphasizes that emotional regulation is crucial for psychological equilibrium when he counsels Arjuna to move beyond desires and accomplish equanimity through self-control and spiritual practice (Bhagavad Gita 2.64-65). This is consistent with contemporary psychology theories of emotional intelligence and self-regulation (Goleman, 2000).

Furthermore, the Bhagavad Gita offers a comprehensive understanding of consciousness that integrates the mental, spiritual, and physical aspects and provides significant insights into the interdependence of human experience (Radhakrishnan, 1994). Our grasp of awareness and its consequences for mental health and personal development is enhanced when these ancient teachings are combined with modern psychological viewpoints.

## **THE ROLE OF DESIRES, EMOTIONS AND MENTAL STATES**

The Bhagavad Gita provides a comprehensive look at emotions and desires, illuminating their psychological significance and behavioral implications. As he highlights the detrimental consequences of unbridled cravings and attachments, Lord Krishna counsels Arjuna on recognizing and regulating desires (Bhagavad Gita 2.62-63). This is consistent with contemporary psychological theories regarding the control of desires and the function of motivation in pursuing objectives (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

Krishna also addresses the implications of emotions on mental states and decision-making, including fear, anger, and attachment. To foster emotional resilience and inner serenity, he emphasizes the necessity of overcoming these emotional disturbances through self-awareness and detachment (Bhagavad Gita 2.70-71). This resonates with modern perspectives of emotion regulation and cognitive-behavioral methods of resolving negative affect (Gross, 1998).

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), Gita's depiction of psychological states emphasizes the significance of developing emotional intelligence and mindfulness to attain psychological well-being and spiritual awakening. Understanding emotional reactivity and cultivating emotional equilibrium in the face of life's obstacles is simplified by Krishna's teachings on equanimity and detachment.

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Furthermore, the Bhagavad Gita explores the ideas of attachment (*raga*) and aversion (*dvesha*), emphasizing how they influence interpersonal interactions and behavior (Bhagavad Gita 3.34–35). This view resonates with psychological research on interpersonal dynamics and attachment patterns, which underscores the influence of early experiences on relationships in adulthood (Bowlby, 1982).

In conclusion, the Bhagavad Gita imparts eternal guidance on self-mastery and emotional resilience that is in alignment with contemporary psychology theories and practices. It also offers a profound analysis of desires, emotions, and psychological states.

### **ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND MORAL PSYCHOLOGY**

In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna's moral quandary presents a thorough exploration of duty (*dharma*) and moral judgment, providing insightful analysis from both a philosophical and psychological perspective. On the battlefield, Arjuna must choose between his moral obligations as a warrior to fight and not kill his mentors and family (Bhagavad Gita 1.28–31). In response to Arjuna's predicament, Lord Krishna illustrates *dharma* as an ethical obligation that is per one's moral character and place in society (Bhagavad Gita 2.31-33).

The Gita's discourse on *dharma* illuminates the intricacies of moral thinking and ethical decision-making from a psychological perspective. The psychological battle between one's own ideals and societal standards is reflected in Arjuna's fight (Kohlberg, 1981). Krishna emphasizes in his teachings the significance of contextualizing one's ethical commitments and encouraging a balanced response to moral quandaries that take into account one's conscience as well as more general responsibilities (Bhagavad Gita 3.8-9). In addition, the Gita encourages people to behave with integrity and clarity by highlighting the importance of mindfulness and self-awareness in moral decision-making (Shapiro et al., 2006). Krishna's advice to Arjuna emphasizes the need for moral bravery and principled behavior in overcoming moral obstacles. This aligns with modern psychology notions regarding the formation of moral character and the incorporation of moral principles into the process of making decisions (Rest, 1986).

In conclusion, the Bhagavad Gita provides a comprehensive exploration of moral responsibility and ethical conduct, including psychological insights into mechanisms of moral judgment and the fusion of individual moral principles with social standards. The Gita's teachings deliver insightful advice for resolving moral quandaries and fostering ethical behavior in daily life by integrating psychological concepts with intellectual knowledge.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AND INNER STRENGTH**

Lord Krishna's teachings on equanimity provide crucial psychological insights, and the Bhagavad Gita offers essential techniques for developing mental equilibrium and resilience. Krishna gives Arjuna advice on maintaining inner equilibrium in the face of challenges encountered in life, stressing the value of detaching oneself from results and keeping an unwavering focus on one's responsibilities (Bhagavad Gita 2.47). This is consistent with contemporary mental health approaches to stress and resilience-building that emphasize the value of acceptance and flexible coping mechanisms (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Krishna's discourse emphasizes the importance of *yoga* (*union*) in developing inner peace and self-control. The Gita promotes a comprehensive wellness that includes mental, bodily, and spiritual aspects (Bhagavad Gita 2.48). These principles are reinforced by psychological

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research on mindfulness and meditation, which demonstrates how effectively these practices foster psychological resilience and emotional control (Baer, 2003).

In addition, Krishna emphasizes the significance of emotional and cognitive flexibility in preserving mental equilibrium by offering advice on overcoming the dualities of success and failure as well as pleasure and suffering (Bhagavad Gita 2.14–15). This resonates with cognitive-behavioral concepts, which advocate embracing uncertainty and rephrasing unfavorable beliefs (Beck, 1979).

"Samatvam yoga uchyate", the Gita's teaching on equanimity, emphasizes the psychological advantages of emotional equilibrium and non-reactivity, which promote heightened psychological flexibility and general well-being (Harris, 2022). Krishna offers guidance for cultivating resilience and prospering amid misfortune by prioritizing self-control and disciplined action (Bhagavad Gita 2.50).

The Bhagavad Gita, in summation, provides eternal wisdom on developing mental balance and fortitude through self-awareness, detachment, and disciplined practice. By integrating ancient teachings with contemporary theories of psychology, we may develop an enhanced understanding of psychological health and acquire beneficial abilities for confronting everyday challenges.

### *Comparative Analysis with Contemporary Psychological Theories*

Upon comparison with contemporary psychological theories, the ideas expounded in the Bhagavad Gita reveal remarkable overlaps and complementary perspectives. For instance, the Gita's emphasis on mindfulness and self-awareness aligns with contemporary cognitive behavioral therapy (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). According to Hayes et al. (1999), Lord Krishna's teachings on detaching from consequences align with contemporary principles of acceptance and commitment therapy, which foster psychological adaptability and resilience. Furthermore, the Gita's investigation into equanimity and regulating emotions corresponds with ideas from modern positive psychology and emotional regulation research (Gross, 1998; Seligman, 2002).

The Bhagavad Gita's comprehensive approach to well-being, which integrates spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral elements, makes its teachings relevant and applicable to modern psychology. The Gita's emphasis on moral behavior, inner serenity, and self-mastery provides valuable guidance for overcoming obstacles in contemporary life and fostering psychological flourishing (Radhakrishnan, 1994). According to Ryan and Deci (2024), the Gita contributes to our comprehension of human psychology by integrating Eastern philosophical ideas with Western psychological frameworks and offering practical methods for personal development and resilience.

In conclusion, the Bhagavad Gita is a universal reservoir of knowledge that enriches and complements contemporary psychological concepts and practices. A holistic approach to psychological health and personal growth is fostered by integrating these long-standing teachings with contemporary research to improve our understanding of human behavior and well-being.

### **SYNTHESIS OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY**

A comprehensive understanding of human psychology and well-being is greatly aided by the fusion of Eastern philosophical concepts—best represented by the Bhagavad Gita—with

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Western psychological frameworks. By integrating Eastern ideas such as self-realization, mindfulness, and eliminating desires with Western theories of positive psychology, existential psychology, and cognitive-behavioral therapy, a more holistic understanding of human nature is revealed (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Seligman, 2002; Yalom, 2020).

The Bhagavad Gita's emphasis on self-awareness, emotional control, and moral behavior aligns with contemporary psychology theories that promote resilience and mental health (Gross, 1998; Baer, 2003). According to Ryan and Deci (2024), this integration highlights the significance of holistic well-being by fostering a greater understanding of the interconnectedness between mind, body, and spirit. Furthermore, Western conceptions of human development and motivation are reinforced by the Gita's insights into existential topics like meaning, purpose, and personal progress (Erikson, 1968).

Through integrating Eastern and Western perspectives, researchers and professionals may acquire a diverse range of psychological knowledge that may direct strategies for treatment, promote resilience in individuals, and improve the quality of life in general (Radhakrishnan, 1994). This integration highlights the commonality of human experiences and provides beneficial assets for anyone who wishes to foster psychological flourishing, tranquility, and fulfillment.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the critical analysis of psychological concepts in the Bhagavad Gita provides significant insights that integrate traditional Eastern wisdom with modern psychological knowledge. The scriptures of the Gita offer archaic wisdom which is still pertinent in contemporary psychology through its analysis of the self (atman), states of awareness, wants and emotions, moral conundrums, and strategies for maintaining mental equilibrium. The idea of Atman emphasizes the significance of identity and self-awareness, which is in tandem with contemporary views of self-concept and human development. The Gita's portrayal of various consciousness levels and mindfulness aligns with cutting-edge research on altered states of awareness and meditation methods. Furthermore, Krishna's lessons on ethical decision-making and regulation of emotions offer insightful viewpoints for boosting moral behavior and mental resilience in day-to-day living. This analysis emphasizes the cross-cultural dialogue potential in mental health interventions and well-being enhancement, as well as the holistic character of human psychology, by integrating Eastern philosophical ideas with Western psychological frameworks. Emphasizing the interdependence of mind, body, and spirit, the Bhagavad Gita provides beneficial strategies for facilitating psychological welfare and personal development. To improve therapeutic techniques and promote a better knowledge of human psychology and well-being, prospective researchers and practitioners may benefit from delving further into the fusion of traditional wisdom and modern psychology.

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### **Acknowledgment**

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Chatterjee, D. (2024). A Critical Analysis of the Psychological Concepts in the Bhagavad Gita. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 1968-1974. DIP:18.01.170.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.170