

Research Paper

Decolonizing Psychology through Gītā-Based Indian Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Mainstream Psychology has long faced critique for its Western-centric biases and its limited incorporation of non-Western perspectives. This paper argues that the Bhagavad Gītā, a seminal Indian text, provides culturally grounded paradigms that can meaningfully decolonize and enrich the global discourse of Psychology. By integrating literature on decolonization, Indian Psychology (IP), and Gītā-based constructs, we propose an indigenous framework of well-being centered on *dharma* (ethical duty), the *guṇas* (qualities of nature), *anāsakti* (non-attachment), and *bhakti* (devotion). These concepts offer alternatives to individualistic and materialistic notions of self, flourishing, and therapy. We critically examine mainstream psychological assumptions regarding personhood and healing, illustrating how Gītā teachings reframe well-being as an ethical, relational, and spiritual. Empirical findings and conceptual mappings illustrate the significance of Gītā-based Psychology in culturally responsive therapy, personality theory, and education. We conclude that adopting Gītā-informed frameworks represents a crucial step toward a globally inclusive, ethically rich, and spiritually integrative Psychology.

Keywords: *Decolonizing Psychology; Indian Psychology; Bhagavad Gītā; Anāsakti (Non-Attachment); Dharma and Guṇas; Spiritual Psychology*

Modern Psychology, shaped by Western ways of knowing, often applies ideas from WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic) societies to everyone, sidelining non-Western perspectives (Henrich et al., 2010; Arnett, 2008). This bias has sparked calls to decolonize Psychology, valuing indigenous knowledge as a legitimate framework for understanding the mind (Smith, 2012; Adams et al., 2015). In India, Indian Psychology (IP) draws on texts such as the Bhagavad Gītā, a 700-verse dialogue that tackles life's big questions, to build theories and practices (Matthijs, 2010; Bhawuk, 2011).

This paper argues that Gītā-based Indian Psychology challenges and enriches mainstream Psychology by offering fresh perspectives on self (*ātman*), motivation (driven by *dharma*), and healing (*bhakti*). Key concepts, *dharma*, *guṇas*, *anāsakti*, and *bhakti*, act as tools for understanding personality, therapy, and well-being.

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The paper is structured as follows: The Critical Literature Review highlights the limitations of Western Psychology and introduces concepts from Indian Psychology. The Methodological Note explains how we interpret the concepts from the Gītā. The Theoretical Framework presents a Gītā-based model using *dharma*, *guṇas*, *anāsakti*, and *bhakti*. The Core Arguments outline five transformative ideas. The Comparative Theoretical Engagement places Gītā-based Psychology alongside global indigenous models (Ubuntu, Taoist, Australian, Latin American). The Ethical and Intersectional Considerations section addresses feminist, Dalit, and anti-caste critiques, ensuring fair applications. The section on Bridging Indian and Western Psychological Models connects *anāsakti* and *bhakti* to modern Psychology (mindfulness, ACT, attachment, meaning-based therapy). The Engagement with Global Decolonization Movements section connects Gītā-based Psychology to Liberation Psychology, Māori Psychology, and critiques of Fanon’s psychiatry. The Addressing Potential Criticisms section addresses concerns regarding Hindu-centrism, applicability, and evidence, providing inclusive strategies. The Applications section, aimed at both scholars and practitioners, examines uses in education, therapy, and policy. The Empirical Evidence and Proposed Studies section review existing studies, proposes new research areas such as brain science and long-term impact studies, and employs clear language to engage a wider audience. The Final Reflection wraps up findings, supported by a reader-friendly glossary of Sanskrit terms.

We aim to demonstrate that the Gītā enhances Psychology’s global goals through dialogue with indigenous, Western, and decolonial ideas, utilizing a clear model, comparison tables, and accessible language, while addressing ethical and critical issues and concerns.

CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Western Psychology’s Cultural Limits and the Call for Decolonization

Although Psychology presents itself as a global science of the human mind, a substantial portion of its theories, methods, and assumptions remain anchored in Western paradigms. Arnett (2008) and Henrich et al. (2010) famously highlighted this issue, noting that the vast majority of psychological research is based on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) populations, which are outliers on many psychological measures. Despite this, findings from these samples are routinely generalized as universal.

Mainstream psychological theories tend to emphasize individualism, autonomy, and personal success, traits deeply embedded in Western cultural contexts (Bhatia & Priya, 2018). Christopher and Hickey (2008) argue that these assumptions are not neutral but reflect the ideological heritage of liberal individualism. Consequently, psychological constructs like “self-esteem,” “self-efficacy,” or “autonomy” are valorized, even though they may not align with how personhood and well-being are understood in collectivist or spiritual cultures (Chirkov, 2014). Similarly, Lavrič and Flere (2008) observe that the spiritual dimensions of well-being are often sidelined in favor of a secular, rationalist view of human flourishing, despite the centrality of religion and spirituality in the lives of billions globally. These ethnocentric assumptions have practical consequences. Bhatia (2018) notes that when psychological norms are exported from the West to non-Western societies, they risk invalidating or pathologizing local experiences and traditions. Stewart and Bond (2002) emphasize that applying Western behavioral benchmarks globally reduces complex cultural realities into misaligned metrics of adjustment or dysfunction. This critique is not only theoretical; it highlights the lived dissonance many individuals in the Global South experience when psychological frameworks ignore their socio-cultural context (Renner & Salem, 2014).

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Historically, the development of Psychology in colonized regions often involved the displacement of indigenous knowledge systems (Dudgeon & Bray, 2024). Through colonial education systems, Western psychological theories became the standard, while local wisdom traditions were dismissed as unscientific or mystical (Pols, 2007). This intellectual colonization produced what some scholars refer to as an epistemic rupture, wherein indigenous frameworks of self and healing were delegitimized or overlooked (Ciofalo, 2019).

Decolonization, in this context, is not simply about adding multicultural case studies or translating tests into local languages. It demands a structural rethinking of Psychology's foundations and an epistemological shift toward embracing non-Western systems of knowing (Adams et al., 2015). Indigenous Psychology, as defined by Kim and Berry (1993), is not merely cultural Psychology; it is Psychology created by and for a cultural group, using indigenous concepts and methods.

Numerous thinkers across continents have contributed to this decolonial turn. Fanon (1961) examined the psychological damage inflicted by colonialism and emphasized that true healing required not just clinical intervention but political and cultural liberation. Martín-Baró (2019), writing in post-civil war El Salvador, argued that Latin American Psychology had become an imported science, one that was irrelevant to the masses. He proposed a Liberation Psychology rooted in people's struggles, values, and histories.

Smith (2012) extended these critiques to research methods themselves, showing how colonial logics permeate academic inquiry. She called for Decolonizing methodologies that respect indigenous epistemologies and empower communities rather than extract from them. In the field of Psychology, a serious engagement with non-Western models on their own terms, without forcing them into Western theoretical molds (Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 2000).

Moghaddam (1987, 2008) identified another issue: that many Third World psychologists unwittingly validate Western theories using local data, a phenomenon he called "double reification." Even well-meaning cross-cultural studies often test Western assumptions without generating new, culturally grounded theory. To move beyond this, he and others have proposed an "omnicultural" Psychology (Moghaddam, 2024) that draws equitably from all cultural traditions.

Thus, the call for Decolonizing Psychology is neither anti-Western nor romanticizing the "local." It is a movement for pluralism: a Psychology rooted in the diverse experiences, beliefs, and knowledge systems of humanity. By broadening its foundations beyond WEIRD norms, Psychology becomes more ethical, inclusive, and accurate.

Indian Psychology and the Bhagavad Gītā

India offers a uniquely rich foundation for developing an indigenous Psychology rooted in millennia of knowledge (Banavathy & Choudry, 2015). Indian Psychology (IP) refers to theoretical frameworks and practices derived from Indian philosophical, spiritual, and cultural traditions, especially those found in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain worldviews (Matthijs, 2010). It does not simply adapt Western models to Indian contexts but generates original concepts and methods based on indigenous epistemologies of mind and consciousness (Paranjpe, 1996).

Foundational texts such as the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Yoga Sūtras*, and *Bhagavad Gītā* have long explored questions central to Psychology: What is the self? What constitutes suffering? How can one attain well-being or liberation? While framed in a metaphysical idiom, these texts contain psychological insights of high relevance to modern theory and practice (Rao, 2011).

Among these, the *Bhagavad Gītā* (hereafter, *Gītā*) stands out for its explicit exploration of emotional distress, moral conflict, and pathways to inner transformation (Johnson, 2007). Set within the *Mahābhārata*, the *Gītā* presents a psychological dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and Lord Krishna, in which Arjuna experiences existential anxiety, despair, and confusion about his role and duty. Krishna's counsel addresses not only ethical dilemmas but also emotional regulation, identity, and purpose. Scholars have described the *Gītā* as a spiritual-psychological manual that articulates a theory of the person, motivation, behavior, and change (Bhawuk, 2011).

Several key concepts in the Gītā are of particular interest to Psychology:

- **Dharma (Ethical Duty):** Dharma refers to one's righteous duty, moral obligation, or purpose aligned with cosmic order (Olivelle, 2009). In the *Gītā*, Arjuna's svadharma, his personal duty as a warrior, is central to his psychological conflict. Krishna emphasizes that living by one's dharma is essential for well-being, even when doing so is emotionally challenging (*Gita* 18.48). This differs from Western notions of self-actualization or personal goals, as dharma is relational and centered on responsibility. It implies a meaning-making structure based on moral alignment, not merely self-defined ambition (Paranjpe, 1996).
- **Guṇas (Qualities of Nature):** The *Gītā* elaborates the three guṇas, *sattva* (balance, clarity), *rajas* (activity, passion), and *tamas* (inertia, darkness), as fundamental psychological tendencies that shape cognition, emotion, and behavior (Putra & Sedlmeier, 2013). Rather than static personality traits, the guṇas are seen as dynamic and modifiable through lifestyle, diet, thought patterns, and spiritual practice. Psychologically, these can be mapped onto affective and behavioral patterns: *sattva* correlates with calmness and ethical conduct, *rajas* with ambition and anxiety, and *tamas* with depression and confusion (Bhargav et al., 2023). Empirical studies by Wolf (1999) and others have validated these constructs through psychometric profiling in Indian samples.
- **Anāsakti (Non-Attachment):** *Anāsakti*, or non-attachment, is the emotional attitude of acting with full commitment while not clinging to outcomes. Central to Karma Yoga is not fatalism, but rather a cultivated state of equanimity. In contemporary psychological terms, it resembles acceptance-based coping, an internal locus of control, and psychological resilience flexibility (Singh & Raina, 2015). Banth and Talwar (2010) developed the Anasakti Scale, finding strong correlations between non-attachment and indicators of positive mental health.
- **Bhakti (Devotion):** *Bhakti* refers to devotional love and surrenders to a divine entity. The *Gītā* frames Bhakti Yoga as a valid path to inner peace and liberation. Psychologically, bhakti introduces a transpersonal attachment figure, offering emotional security, resilience, and meaning, especially in the face of adversity (S. Verma, 2010). Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2004) argue that this is analogous to the attachment bond in Western Psychology, where the divine becomes a "secure base." Research in India shows that devotional coping can reduce stress and enhance well-being (Midha & Singh, 2023).

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- **Integration in Modern Psychology:** Indian psychologists have increasingly engaged with these Gītā-based ideas to build culturally resonant interventions. Bhawuk (2011) proposes that *anāsakti* and *lokasaṅgraha* (working for the good of all) can significantly enrich Western Positive Psychology's focus on individual well-being. Paranjpe (2002) and Dalal and Misra (2010) argue for a Psychology that sees the self not as ego-centered but as moral and spiritual. In applied settings, Gītā-based therapy has been used to address depression, anxiety, and value conflicts, particularly among Indian clients (Sharma & Batra, 2018). In organizational contexts, Karma Yoga principles have predicted job satisfaction and ethical behavior (Mulla & Krishnan, 2013).

These developments illustrate that the Gītā is not just a religious text but also a comprehensive psychological framework. It offers culturally grounded, ethically rich, and spiritually integrated models of human nature, well-being, and transformation. Additionally, it provides a genuinely alternative foundation to the dominant psychological paradigms, especially when the goal is to decolonize Psychology and make it more inclusive of indigenous wisdom.

Methodological Note: Interpreting Gītā-Based Constructs for Psychology

This study employs a hermeneutic and interpretive methodology grounded in Indian philosophical traditions and aligned with decolonial research ethics (Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008; Datta, 2018). The *Bhagavad Gītā* is approached as a psychological dialogue articulating concepts of self (*ātman*), mind (*manas*), and ethical action (*karma*) within a spiritually embedded ontology.

Key constructs, *anāsakti* (non-attachment), *svadharma* (personal duty), *bhakti* (devotion), and *guṇas* (psychological tendencies), were selected for their psychological relevance. Interpretations draw from diverse commentarial traditions, including Advaita (Śaṅkara), Vishishtadvaita (Rāmānuja), Dvaita (Madhva), and *Achintya-Bhedābheda* (Chaitanya school), allowing a pluralistic yet theologically grounded framework (C. Sharma, 1962). The *Achintya-Bhedābheda* perspective uniquely emphasizes the simultaneous oneness and difference between the self and the Divine, offering a relational ontology that informs the Gītā's teachings on *bhakti* and identity.

Triangulation was achieved through:

- a) Indian Psychology literature (e.g., Sinha, 1934/1958; Bhawuk, 2011),
- b) Empirical validation (e.g., Gupta & Agrawal, 2022) Anāsakti Scale; Wolf, 1999, *guṇa* profiling),
- c) Cross-cultural mappings with psychological constructs like resilience, moral identity, and attachment (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004).

The author's dual positionality, as a scholar of Western Psychology and a practitioner rooted in Indian traditions, informed the inquiry. Reflexive journaling, consultation with interfaith scholars, and a commitment to epistemic humility ensured culturally respectful interpretation.

This methodology supports a non-reductionist, spiritually grounded integration of Gītā wisdom into psychological theory, upholding both indigenous context and global relevance.

Theoretical Framework: Gītā-Based Indian Psychology

This section presents an integrated theoretical framework based on core teachings from the *Bhagavad Gītā*, situated within the broader Indian psychological tradition. The model is built on four interrelated pillars: *Dharma* (righteous duty), *Guṇas* (psychological tendencies), *Anāsakti* (non-attachment), and *Bhakti* (devotion). These are not isolated constructs but part of a systemic, spiritually informed view of the self, ethics, and well-being.

The framework offers a counterpoint to mainstream Western psychological models, which typically emphasize personal agency, individual success, and hedonic well-being. Instead, Gītā-based Psychology focuses on ethical fulfillment, emotional balance, and spiritual realization. Below, we introduce the conceptual model, followed by detailed descriptions of each pillar, with connections to psychological constructs, therapeutic implications, and empirical evidence.

Dharma: Purpose as Moral Responsibility

In the Gītā, dharma is not merely one's job or social role, but a cosmic and ethical imperative, the right action aligned with one's position in the larger order (B. Gupta, 2006). Acting according to svadharma (one's personal duty) provides a sense of identity and integrity (Dhillon, 2023). The violation of dharma, as seen in Arjuna's paralysis in battle, leads to psychological distress, inner conflict, and moral confusion (Johnson, 2007).

From a psychological standpoint, *dharma* aligns with purpose-driven living, but it introduces an ethical and relational dimension absent in secular definitions. It anchors self-worth not in individual achievements but in fulfilling one's responsibilities toward others and society. This reframing is particularly useful in collectivist cultures, where well-being is tightly interwoven with duty, roles, and moral coherence (J. Verma, 2020).

Guṇas: Dynamic Personality Constitution

The Gītā describes personality not as fixed traits but as the interplay of three dynamic forces (*guṇas*): *Sattva* – clarity, wisdom, balance; *Rajas* – activity, ambition, restlessness; *Tamas* – inertia, confusion, delusion.

These psychological modes fluctuate across time and situations and can be cultivated or reduced through self-awareness, discipline, and lifestyle choices (Wolf, 1999). Unlike the value-neutral tone of the Big Five personality model (John & Srivastava, 1999), the *guṇa* theory is normative: *sattva* is the aspirational state, while *rajas* and *tamas* require regulation. The *guṇa* model offers a developmental direction toward increased *sattva*, a holistic perspective that links mind, behavior, diet, and environment, and a morally infused approach to personality, where growth includes ethical self-transformation.

Anāsakti: Volitional Detachment from Outcomes

Anāsakti, detachment from the fruits of action, is one of the Gītā's most celebrated teachings. It is often misunderstood as passivity, but it refers to non-clinging: performing one's duties with full dedication while releasing one's obsession over the results.

Psychologically, *anāsakti* promotes emotional regulation and resilience, reduces anxiety and perfectionism by decoupling self-worth from outcomes, and encourages process-focused motivation, which has been linked to better performance and well-being (Pande & Naidu, 1992).

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It bears a close similarity to acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and the concept of internal locus of control (Ryan et al., 2019), with the important distinction that it is grounded in ethical-spiritual commitment, not merely cognitive techniques.

Bhakti: Devotion as Secure Attachment

Bhakti, or devotion to a higher being, introduces the emotional and relational aspect of the framework. In the Gītā, Krishna emphasizes that bhakti, marked by love, surrender, and trust, is a valid and effective path to psychological balance and liberation.

From a therapeutic angle, Bhakti functions like a transpersonal attachment (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004), providing emotional support and a stable sense of security. It enhances coping capacity, especially in situations of grief, uncertainty, or moral failure (Singh et al., 2013). Devotional practices, prayer, chanting, and visualization can serve as emotion-regulation tools and meaning-making strategies (Malviya et al., 2022).

Bhakti allows for the integration of spirituality into therapy without diminishing it to clinical constructs, providing a culturally sensitive approach to inner transformation.

Meta-Philosophical Grounding: Ātman and Transcendence

At the foundation of the entire framework lies the metaphysical claim that the true self (ātman) is eternal, pure consciousness, distinct from ego (ahaṁkāra) or bodily identity. Although it is not directly measurable, this belief informs the Gītā's entire Psychology of change: liberation from suffering involves transcending false identification with the ego and realizing one's spiritual essence.

This perspective encourages a long-term, virtue-based vision of growth; a shift from ego-centered to self-centered awareness; and a redefinition of health as equanimity, clarity, and unity with higher values.

Table 1. Comparison of Mainstream Western Psychology and Gītā-Based Indian Psychology

Dimension	Mainstream Psychology	Gītā-Based Psychology
Self	Individual, autonomous, ego-driven	Ethical, relational, spiritual (<i>ātman</i>)
Personality	Traits (e.g., Big Five), value-neutral	<i>Guṇas</i> (modifiable, ethically weighted)
Motivation	Achievement, autonomy	Duty (<i>dharma</i>), service, spiritual evolution
Well-being	Happiness, fulfillment	Equanimity, virtue, alignment with <i>dharma</i>
Coping	Cognitive reframing, resilience	<i>Anāsakti</i> , acceptance, karma-yoga
Spirituality	Optional, external to therapy	Intrinsic, central to mental health
Growth Ideal	Self-actualization	Self-transcendence (<i>mokṣa</i> , <i>sthita-prajñā</i>)

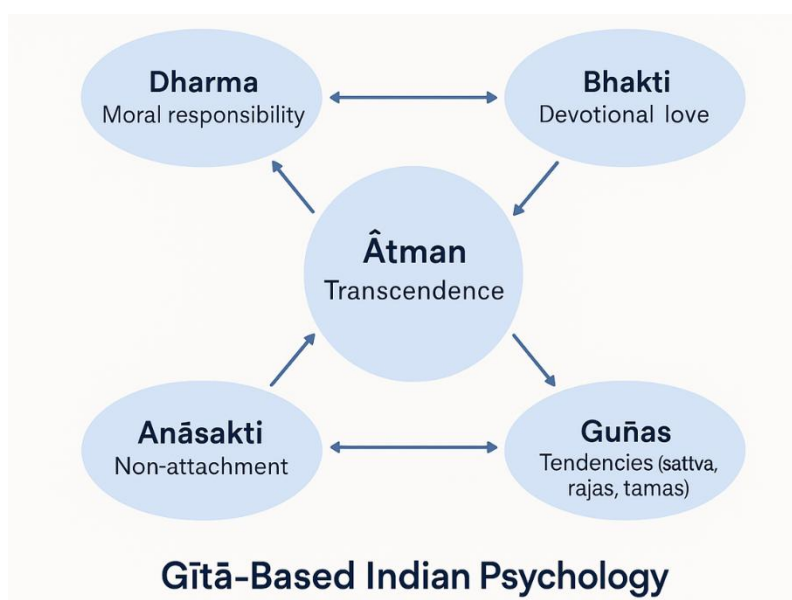


Figure 1. Gītā-based psychological model grounded in Indian epistemology

This conceptual model illustrates the key elements of a psychological framework rooted in the Bhagavad Gītā and Indian philosophical traditions. At its core lies **Ātman** (Transcendence), representing the spiritual self, eternal, unchanging, and distinct from ego or mind. Surrounding **Ātman** are four interrelated psychological pillars:

- 1. Dharma (Moral Responsibility):** Ethical duty aligned with spiritual order and relational purpose, not egoistic goals.
- 2. Bhakti (Devotional Love):** Affective and spiritual attachment to the Divine, fostering emotional resilience, meaning, and security through surrender.
- 3. Guṇas (Psychological Tendencies):** The three modifiable forces, **sattva** (clarity), **rajas** (passion), and **tamas** (inertia), that shape cognition, emotion, and behavior.
- 4. Anāsakti (Non-Attachment):** The ability to act with full dedication while letting go of results, cultivating equanimity, and emotional regulation.

Interconnectivity: The arrows signify the reciprocal influences among these elements. For instance, practicing **anāsakti** promotes regulation of the **guṇas**; cultivating **bhakti** enhances adherence to **dharma**. All components are integrated through the realization of **Ātman**, reflecting a non-dualistic, holistic view of selfhood and well-being in Indian Psychology.

This integrative system contrasts with Western Psychology's typically individualistic orientation by grounding motivation, behavior, and identity in spiritual ethics, relational responsibility, and transcendental self-realization.

Core Arguments: Gītā-Based Paradigms Reshaping Psychology

The core arguments illustrate how Gītā-based Indian Psychology reshapes key paradigms in mainstream Psychology. Rather than functioning merely as an "add-on" to Western theory, the Gītā offers foundational alternatives that challenge and enrich prevailing models of the self, emotion, motivation, well-being, and therapy. We organize the discussion around five central claims.

1. From Ego to Ātman: Rethinking the Self

Western Psychology, particularly in its humanistic and cognitive-behavioral traditions, tends to conceptualize the self as autonomous, individualistic, and bounded (Morris, 1992).

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Constructs such as self-esteem, self-concept, and personal identity reflect this perspective. In contrast, the Gītā views the self (ātman) as universal, eternal, and identical across beings, not confined to the body-mind complex or ego (ahaṁkāra) (Gītā 2.20).

This ontological shift has profound psychological implications:

- It moves the locus of healing from ego-strengthening to ego-transcendence.
- It reduces existential anxiety by emphasizing unity and continuity beyond death.
- It promotes compassion and equanimity as one sees others as extensions of the same Self (cf. Gītā 6.29–30).

This perspective aligns with particular transpersonal and contemplative psychologies but is far more central and explicit in Gītā-based models (Kumar, 2010).

2. From Achievement to Duty: Reframing Motivation

Modern Psychology often defines motivation in terms of goal pursuit, reward structures, or self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The Gītā shifts this focus to duty-driven motivation, fulfilling one's *svadharma* with integrity, regardless of personal gain. Krishna's injunction to “perform your prescribed duty without attachment to the results” (Gītā 2.47) encapsulates this ethic.

This reframes:

- Prioritizes *moral coherence over emotional gratification*.
- Shifts emphasis from *self-expression to self-offering*.
- Encourages *persistence in morally difficult situations*, where rewards are uncertain or painful (e.g., caregiving, activism).

Such a model is especially relevant in collectivist cultures where responsibilities often outweigh desires and may offer **psychological sustainability** in fields prone to burnout (e.g., healthcare, education).

3. From Control to Surrender: Redefining Emotional Health

Emotional well-being in mainstream Psychology is often associated with control, mastery, and regulation of affective states. Techniques such as cognitive restructuring, emotional labeling, or problem-solving fall within this paradigm. While effective in many cases, they risk reinforcing a control-centric mindset (Gross, 1998).

The Gītā offers an alternative path: surrender (*śaraṇāgati*), *bhakti*, and *anāsakti* cultivate a relational and spiritual mode of regulation. Rather than controlling emotions, the practitioner is invited to:

- Witness and release them (as Krishna tells Arjuna to “become a man of steady wisdom,” Gītā 2.15)
- Channel them through devotion, rather than suppression
- Trust in a higher order, thereby reducing rumination and fear

This model is closer to acceptance-based approaches (e.g., ACT, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy) (Hayes et al., 2011) but includes existential and metaphysical depth not typically found in Western methods.

4. From Outcome to Process: Transforming Coping and Resilience

Western models of coping tend to emphasize problem-focused or emotion-focused strategies, often evaluated by their impact on achieving desired outcomes (Baker & Berenbaum, 2006). Gītā-based Psychology proposes karma-yoga, acting wholeheartedly without attachment to results, as a way of reducing suffering and building resilience.

This shift:

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- Encourages *commitment without dependency*
- Builds a *stable identity through values*, not validation
- Enhances *long-term inner peace, regardless of external volatility*

In high-uncertainty environments, such as during illness, failure, or social conflict, *anāsakti* offers a deep source of psychological strength. Singh and Raina (2015) found that higher *anāsakti* scores correlate with lower stress and greater well-being, particularly in Indian contexts.

5. From Secularism to Spiritual Integration: Reclaiming the Sacred in Psychology

Mainstream Psychology often maintains a secular stance, treating religion and spirituality as external variables. Even when integrated, they are frequently reduced to coping tools or identity markers (Pargament et al., 2013).

The Gītā's Psychology is inseparable from spirituality. Concepts such as *bhakti*, *ātman*, *mokṣa* (liberation), and *karma* are not peripheral; they are central to psychological flourishing.

This holistic integration:

- Acknowledges that *existential questions* (Who am I? Why do I suffer?) are part of mental health
- Validates *devotional practices* (prayer, chanting, surrender) as legitimate therapeutic tools
- Replaces fragmented self-help advice with a *coherent path of ethical, emotional, and spiritual transformation*.

The Gītā does not merely fill gaps in Western Psychology; it proposes an alternative center. Its teachings challenge fundamental assumptions about what it means to be a person, how healing occurs, and what flourishing entails. By integrating duty, detachment, devotion, and transcendence, Gītā-based Psychology builds a moral-spiritual paradigm, one that can serve both Indian contexts and global Psychology's need for inclusivity, depth, and wisdom.

Comparative Theoretical Engagement

To situate Gītā-based Indian Psychology within global decolonial Psychology, this section compares it with other indigenous models: Ubuntu Psychology (Africa), Taoist Psychology (China), Australian Indigenous Psychology, and Latin American Indigenous Psychology (Liberation Psychology). Each model critiques Western Psychology's individualism and universalism, offering culturally rooted frameworks. A comparison table highlights overlaps and distinctions across key psychological dimensions.

Ubuntu Psychology (Africa)

Ubuntu, rooted in South African Nguni philosophy, emphasizes relationality: "I am because we are" (*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*). Ubuntu Psychology views the self as inherently communal, with well-being tied to social harmony and mutual care (Nobles, 2015). Ethical behavior strengthens community bonds, and coping involves collective rituals and storytelling.

Overlaps with Gītā: Like Gītā's *dharma* and *lokasaṅgraha* (social good), Ubuntu prioritizes duty to others over individual gain. Both frame well-being as ethical alignment, not hedonic pleasure. *Bhakti*'s relational devotion parallels Ubuntu's communal support, fostering resilience.

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Distinctions: Gītā's *ātman* emphasizes spiritual transcendence, absent in Ubuntu's focus on earthly community. Ubuntu lacks a dynamic personality model like *guṇas*, and its ethics are social rather than cosmic, unlike *dharma*.

Taoist Psychology (China)

Taoist Psychology, based on the *Tao Te Ching*, centers on harmony with the Tao (universal way) through *wu wei* (non-action) and yin-yang balance. The self is fluid, adapting to natural rhythms, with well-being achieved through simplicity and non-striving (Shiah, 2020). Coping involves mindfulness and aligning with cosmic flow.

Overlaps with Gītā: *Anāsakti*'s detachment from outcomes resembles *wu wei*'s effortless action, both reducing anxiety. *Guṇas*' dynamic interplay mirrors yin-yang's balance, and both models critique ego-driven Western individualism. Spiritual growth in both transcends material goals.

Distinctions: Gītā's *dharma* prescribes active duty, contrasting with *wu wei*'s passivity. *Bhakti*'s devotional attachment to a divine figure has no Taoist equivalent, and Gītā's *ātman* is eternal, unlike Taoism's impermanent self.

Australian Indigenous Psychology

Australian Indigenous Psychology, rooted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, emphasizes connection to land, Dreaming (spiritual narratives), and community. The self is holistic, encompassing body, spirit, and environment, with well-being tied to cultural continuity and land stewardship (Dudgeon & Bray, 2017). Healing involves ceremonies and storytelling.

Overlaps with Gītā: Both view the self as spiritual (*ātman* vs. Dreaming spirit), beyond the Western ego. *Dharma*'s ethical duty aligns with Indigenous responsibilities to land and community. *Bhakti*'s ritual practices resemble Indigenous ceremonies, fostering resilience.

Distinctions: Gītā's *guṇas* offer a structured personality model, absent in Australian frameworks. *Anāsakti*'s detachment contrasts with Indigenous emphasis on land attachment. Gītā's universal *dharma* differs from Indigenous place-based ethics.

Latin American Indigenous Psychology (Liberation Psychology)

Liberation Psychology, developed by Martín-Baró (2019), integrates Indigenous Latin American values with social justice, emphasizing communal healing and resistance to oppression. The self is collective, shaped by socio-historical contexts, with well-being linked to social transformation. Coping involves community rituals and activism.

Overlaps with Gītā: *Karma yoga*'s selfless action parallels Liberation Psychology's activism for the collective good. *Bhakti*'s surrender to a higher purpose resembles faith-based resilience in Latin American communities. Both critique Western individualism, prioritizing relational ethics.

Distinctions: Gītā's *ātman* and spiritual transcendence contrast with Liberation Psychology's focus on socio-political liberation. *Guṇas* have no equivalent, and *dharma*'s cosmic ethics differ from Latin America's context-specific justice.

Synthesis and Implications

These indigenous models share a decolonial stance, rejecting Western Psychology’s atomistic, universalist assumptions. They emphasize relational selves, ethical living, and spiritual or communal well-being, aligning with Gītā-based Psychology’s critique of ego-driven paradigms. However, Gītā’s unique blend of spiritual transcendence (*ātman*), dynamic personality (*guṇas*), and active duty (*dharma*) distinguishes it, offering a versatile framework for global dialogue. This comparison informs cross-cultural research and applications, enriching Psychology’s inclusivity.

Table 2. Comparison of Gītā-Based Psychology with Global Indigenous and Western Models

Dimension	Western Psychology	Gītā-Based	Ubuntu	Taoist	Australian Indigenous	Latin American
Self	Individual, ego-driven	Spiritual (<i>ātman</i>), relational	Communal, relational	Fluid, cosmic	Holistic, land-connected	Collective, socio-historical
Personality	Fixed traits (Big Five)	Dynamic (<i>guṇas</i>)	Social roles	Yin-yang balance	Cultural narratives	Socially constructed
Motivation	Achievement, autonomy	Duty (<i>dharma</i>), service	Community harmony	Non-striving (<i>wu wei</i>)	Land stewardship	Social justice
Well-being	Happiness, fulfillment	Equanimity, virtue	Social harmony	Simplicity, balance	Cultural continuity	Collective liberation
Coping	Cognitive reframing	<i>Anāsakti</i> , <i>bhakti</i>	Collective rituals	Mindfulness, flow	Ceremonies, storytelling	Activism, rituals
Spirituality	Optional, external	Intrinsic (<i>ātman</i> , <i>bhakti</i>)	Communal, implicit	Cosmic (Tao)	Land-based, Dreaming	Faith-based, social
Decolonial Approach	Universalist, Eurocentric	Indigenous, spiritual	Relational, anti-colonial	Non-dual, anti-ego	Land-centered, anti-colonial	Justice-oriented, anti-oppressive

Ethical and Intersectional Considerations

Applying Gītā-based Indian Psychology requires sensitivity to intersectional critiques and ethical concerns, particularly from feminist, Dalit, and anti-caste perspectives. This section addresses potential risks of reinforcing social hierarchies, proposes ethical uses of spiritual texts, and warns against essentialism or religious imposition, ensuring alignment with decolonial and social justice principles (Smith, 2012; Datta, 2018).

Feminist Critiques

Feminist scholars critique the Gītā’s male-centric narrative (e.g., Arjuna as a male warrior) and traditional interpretations that may reinforce patriarchal norms (Spivak, 1988). For instance, *dharma* as duty could be misread to uphold gendered roles (e.g., women as caregivers). To address this, Gītā-based Psychology must adopt inclusive hermeneutics, emphasizing *bhakti*’s universal devotion, accessible to all genders, and *svadharma*’s focus on individual purpose over societal roles. Applications like therapy or education should prioritize gender equity, ensuring women’s voices shape interventions (e.g., *bhakti*-based groups led by women).

Dalit and Anti-Caste Critiques

Dalit and anti-caste scholars, such as Ambedkar (1946) and Ilaiah (1996), critique the Gītā's *varṇa* system (Gītā 4.13) for historically justifying caste hierarchies. Misinterpretations of *dharma* as caste duty risk perpetuating exclusion. Gītā-based Psychology must reject such readings, interpreting *varṇa* as symbolic of psychological tendencies (e.g., *guṇas*) rather than social strata, as argued by Bhawuk (2011). *Svadharmā* should be framed as personal vocation, not caste-bound, and applications (e.g., career counseling) must include marginalized groups, using participatory methods to co-create interventions with Dalit communities.

Ethical Use of Spiritual Texts

Using spiritual texts like the Gītā ethically requires avoiding reinforcement of social hierarchies. This involves contextual hermeneutics, interpreting *dharma* and *bhakti* in light of modern egalitarian values, and secular adaptations for diverse settings (e.g., framing *anāsakti* as mindfulness in therapy). Researchers and practitioners must engage communities to ensure applications reflect local needs, avoiding top-down impositions. For example, *karma yoga* programs in schools should be co-designed with teachers and students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring cultural and social relevance (Datta, 2018).

Avoiding Essentialism and Religious Imposition

Essentializing Indian Psychology as Gītā-based risks homogenizing India's diverse traditions (e.g., Jain, Buddhist, Sikh). Similarly, imposing Hindu frameworks on non-Hindu populations may alienate minorities or secular groups. To mitigate this, Gītā-based Psychology should be presented as one of many Indian frameworks, with principles like *anāsakti* and *dharma* translated into universal psychological constructs (e.g., non-attachment, ethical motivation). Applications must offer opt-in, pluralistic formats, ensuring accessibility without religious coercion (Smith, 2012).

Addressing feminist, Dalit, and anti-caste critiques ensures Gītā-based Psychology aligns with decolonial and ethical goals. By adopting inclusive hermeneutics, participatory methods, and pluralistic frameworks, the approach avoids reinforcing hierarchies or essentialism. These considerations guide the ethical implementation of applications, fostering a socially just Psychology.

Bridging Indian and Western Psychological Models

Gītā-based Indian Psychology not only critiques Western paradigms but also enriches them through dialogue with contemporary frameworks. This section compares *anāsakti* with mindfulness and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and *bhakti* with attachment theory and meaning-based therapy, highlighting the mutual enhancement of these concepts while preserving their cultural specificity (Bhawuk, 2011).

Anāsakti and Mindfulness/ACT

Anāsakti, the Gītā's principle of non-attachment to outcomes (Gītā 2:47), encourages action without fixation on results, fostering equanimity (Singh & Raina, 2015). Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist traditions and Western adaptations, emphasizes present-focused, non-judgmental awareness to reduce stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Both share a focus on detaching from reactive thoughts, promoting psychological flexibility. For example, *anāsakti*'s emphasis on process over outcome aligns with mindfulness's acceptance of the present moment.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) further parallels *anāsakti* by promoting acceptance of emotions, defusion from unhelpful thoughts, and commitment to value-driven actions (Hayes, 2011). *Anāsakti*'s practice of acting diligently without egoic attachment mirrors ACT's pursuit of meaningful goals despite uncertainty. However, *anāsakti*'s spiritual grounding in *dharma* and cosmic order distinguishes it from ACT's secular, empirical focus, offering a culturally rooted alternative for Indian contexts.

Bhakti and Attachment Theory/Meaning-Based Therapy

Bhakti, the Gītā's path of devotional surrender to a divine figure (*Gītā* 18.66), fosters resilience through a transcendent relationship. Attachment theory posits that secure relational bonds (e.g., with caregivers) provide a "secure base" for emotional stability (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004). *Bhakti*'s divine relationship serves a similar function, offering a spiritual secure base, as seen in practices like chanting or prayer. Unlike attachment theory's interpersonal focus, *bhakti*'s transcendence emphasizes cosmic connection, enriching Western models with spiritual depth.

Meaning-based therapy, such as logotherapy or existential approaches, centers on finding purpose to cope with suffering (Vos et al., 2015). *Bhakti* aligns by providing meaning through surrender to a higher purpose, as in *śaraṅgati* (complete surrender). For instance, *bhakti*-based therapy's use of devotional practices to alleviate grief parallels meaning-based therapy's emphasis on purpose-driven healing (Park, C. L., 2010). However, *bhakti*'s cultural and spiritual specificity contrasts with meaning-based therapy's universalist tendencies, grounding interventions in Indian contexts.

Synthesis and Implications

Integrating *anāsakti* with mindfulness/ACT and *bhakti* with attachment theory/meaning-based therapy creates a dialogue where Gītā-based Psychology enriches Western models with spiritual and cultural depth, while Western frameworks offer empirical rigor and universal applicability. This synergy avoids Western hegemony, aligning with decolonial goals (Smith, 2012). For example, *anāsakti*-informed mindfulness programs could enhance stress reduction in Indian schools, while *bhakti*-integrated therapy could inform global attachment-based interventions. These integrations guide ethical applications and inspire cross-cultural research, fostering a pluralistic Psychology.

Engagement with Global Decolonization Movements

Gītā-based Indian Psychology aligns with global decolonization movements that resist Western psychological hegemony and reclaim indigenous knowledge. This section explores its connections with Liberation Psychology (Ignacio Martín-Baró), Māori Psychology (New Zealand), and Frantz Fanon's psychiatry critiques, highlighting shared goals of cultural reclamation, social justice, and psychological liberation (Smith, 1999).

Liberation Psychology (Martín-Baró)

Liberation Psychology, developed by Ignacio Martín-Baró (2019), emphasizes collective healing and social justice, critiquing Psychology's role in perpetuating oppression. It prioritizes socio-historical contexts and communal well-being, using praxis to empower marginalized groups. Gītā-based Psychology aligns through *karma yoga*'s selfless action and *lokasaṅgraha* (social good), which promote collective welfare (Bhawuk, 2011). For example, *dharma*-driven interventions, like community counseling, mirror Liberation Psychology's focus on social transformation. However, Gītā's spiritual transcendence

(*ātman*) contrasts with Martín-Baró's secular, political emphasis, offering a complementary spiritual dimension.

Māori Psychology (New Zealand)

Māori Psychology, rooted in New Zealand's indigenous culture, centers on *whakapapa* (genealogy), *whānau* (extended family), and holistic well-being, integrating spiritual, physical, and communal health (Kopua et al., 2019). It critiques Western individualism, emphasizing relationality and cultural continuity. Gītā-based Psychology shares this relational focus through *lokasaṅgraha* and *bhakti*'s communal devotion, as seen in group rituals fostering resilience. Both reject Western atomism, prioritizing interconnectedness. However, Gītā's *guṇas* and *dharma* provide a structured psychological framework, unlike Maori Psychology's narrative-based approach, enriching cross-cultural applications.

Frantz Fanon's Psychiatry Critiques

Frantz Fanon's (1961) critiques of colonial psychiatry highlight how Western frameworks alienate colonized minds, advocating psychological liberation through cultural reclamation. His work emphasizes Decolonizing the psyche from imposed inferiority. Gītā-based Psychology aligns by centering *ātman* (true self) as a source of intrinsic dignity, countering external oppression (Bhawuk, 2011). *Anāsakti*'s detachment from colonial validations parallels Fanon's rejection of Western norms. Unlike Fanon's political and psychoanalytic focus, Gītā's spiritual ethics offer a transcendent path to liberation, complementing his socio-political approach.

Synthesis and Implications

Gītā-based Psychology joins Liberation Psychology, Māori Psychology, and Fanon's critiques in challenging Western Psychology's universalism, advocating culturally grounded frameworks for healing and empowerment. Shared goals include relationality, social justice, and resistance to colonial legacies, with Gītā's spiritual constructs adding depth to global decolonization. This alignment informs ethical applications (e.g., community-based therapy) and inspires cross-cultural research, fostering a pluralistic Psychology that honors diverse epistemologies (Adams et al., 2015).

Addressing Potential Criticisms

Gītā-based Indian Psychology, while offering a culturally grounded framework, faces potential criticisms regarding its Hindu-centric focus, generalizability to secular or pluralistic societies, and limited empirical base. This section acknowledges these concerns and proposes strategies to adapt the framework for diverse contexts, ensuring inclusivity and rigor (Smith, 2012).

Hindu-centric Focus

The Gītā's Hindu origins may raise concerns about excluding non-Hindu or secular populations, potentially alienating India's diverse religious communities (e.g., Muslim, Christian, Jain) or global audiences. While the Gītā is a philosophical text, its religious associations risk perceptions of Hindu hegemony (Datta, 2018). To address this, Gītā-based Psychology can be framed as one of many Indian psychological traditions, emphasizing universal principles like *dharma* (ethical duty) and *anāsakti* (non-attachment) that resonate across faiths (Bhawuk, 2011). Interfaith dialogue, incorporating Jain or Buddhist analogs (e.g., *ahimsa*, mindfulness), ensures inclusivity.

Generalizability to Secular/Pluralistic Societies

Applying a spiritually rooted framework in secular or pluralistic societies may face resistance due to its religious undertones or cultural specificity. For example, *bhakti*'s devotional practices may not suit secular contexts. To enhance generalizability, constructs can be translated into secular terms: *anāsakti* as mindfulness, *bhakti* as meaning-making, and *dharma* as ethical motivation (Brown, 2016). Applications, such as *karma yoga* in education, can use opt-in formats, allowing participants to engage with principles without religious commitment. Cross-cultural adaptations, informed by community input, ensure relevance in diverse settings.

Limited Empirical Base

The empirical base for Gītā-based Psychology, while growing (e.g., Singh & Raina, 2015; Banth & Talwar, 2010), remains limited compared to Western frameworks, raising concerns about scientific validity. This reflects the nascent stage of Indian Psychology research, constrained by funding and institutional support. To address this, the framework advocates for expanded empirical studies, including RCTs and cross-cultural validations, as proposed in the Empirical Evidence section. Collaborations with global researchers can strengthen evidence, integrating Gītā constructs with established methods (e.g., neuroimaging for *anāsakti*).

Strategies for Adaptation

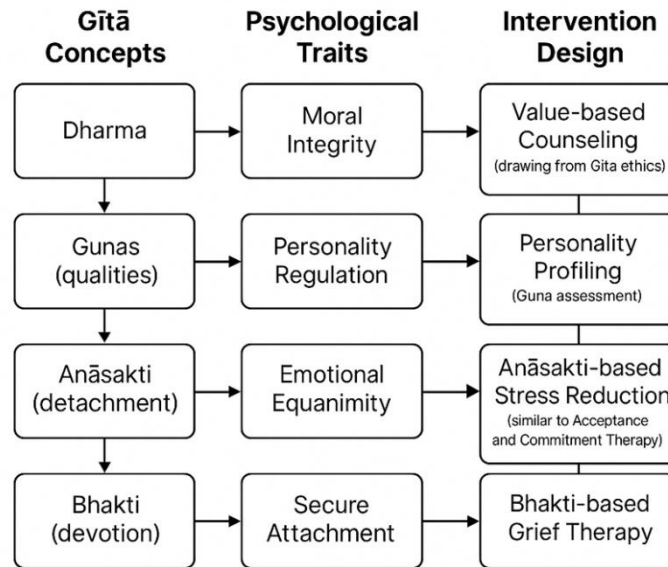
To ensure applicability in secular, interfaith, or intercultural contexts:

- **Secular Translation:** Present constructs as psychological principles (e.g., *bhakti* as relational coping), using secular language in therapy or education (Brown, 2016).
- **Interfaith Engagement:** Incorporate parallel concepts from other traditions (e.g., Sufi devotion, Christian agape) to broaden appeal, fostering dialogue in pluralistic settings (Haberman, 2013).
- **Intercultural Collaboration:** Use participatory methods to co-design interventions with diverse communities, ensuring cultural fit (e.g., adapting *karma yoga* for global workplaces).
- **Research Expansion:** Prioritize empirical studies, leveraging partnerships with Western and indigenous scholars to validate constructs across contexts.

By acknowledging concerns about Hindu-centrism, generalizability, and empirical limits, Gītā-based Psychology demonstrates reflexivity. Strategies like secular translation, interfaith dialogue, and research expansion ensure the framework's inclusivity and applicability, aligning with decolonial and pluralistic goals. These adaptations inform ethical applications and future research, fostering a globally relevant Psychology.

Applications: Gītā-Based Psychology in Education, Therapy, and Policy

Figure 2: Translating Gītā Psychology into Educational, Clinical, and Policy Interventions



The Gītā-based Indian Psychology framework offers practical ways to address challenges like student stress, mental health stigma, and ethical governance in India. This section shares clear examples and case studies to show how *dharma* (ethical duty), *guṇas* (personality qualities), *anāsakti* (non-attachment), and *bhakti* (devotion) can make a difference in real-world settings.

1. Education: Cultivating Character and Purpose

Indian schools face high student stress and identity struggles, calling for approaches that build values and resilience (Pienyu et al., 2024). The Gītā offers tools to help students grow ethically and emotionally.

Gītā-based Psychology offers culturally resonant strategies to support student well-being, identity formation, and ethical development in education. Svadharma-based career counseling guides students to choose paths aligned with their personal values and inner dispositions, fostering a deeper sense of purpose and life satisfaction, beyond conventional aptitude tests (Banth & Talwar, 2010). The practice of anāsakti, drawn from the Gītā’s teachings on karma yoga, helps students engage fully in their efforts while remaining detached from outcomes, reducing performance anxiety and nurturing emotional resilience, particularly in exam-driven environments (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022). Additionally, guṇa profiling, based on the psychological tendencies of sattva (clarity), rajas (activity), and tamas (inertia), offers students a framework for understanding their personality patterns and developing self-regulation and ethical awareness (Wolf, 1999). Together, these interventions create a holistic educational approach that integrates psychological insight with spiritual and ethical growth.

2. Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy: A Culturally Rooted Therapeutic Model

Western therapeutic models often overlook the spiritual and community-centered dimensions that are integral to Indian culture. In contrast, Gītā-based Psychology offers a

culturally grounded approach that integrates ethics and spirituality into counseling. Bhakti-based practices, such as chanting and prayer, foster emotional resilience by cultivating a sense of connection to a higher power, which can be especially helpful in coping with grief and suffering. The principle of *anāsakti*, or non-attachment to outcomes, supports clients in accepting loss and uncertainty, aligning closely with the goals of acceptance-based therapies (Banth & Talwar, 2012). *Guṇa*-based therapy uses assessments of dominant psychological tendencies, such as *sattva* (clarity), *rajas* (activity), or *tamas* (inertia), to guide individualized interventions like yoga, dietary adjustments, or lifestyle changes to promote emotional balance (Dalal & Misra, 2010). Additionally, karma yoga, which emphasizes selfless action, helps reduce self-centered patterns and fosters psychological stability through purpose-driven behavior. Together, these approaches form a holistic therapeutic model rooted in Indian epistemology.

3. Policy and Social Well-being: Enabling Dharmic Flourishing

Public health and social policies in India often overlook culturally embedded values, which limit their effectiveness and public engagement. Gītā-based Psychology addresses this gap by offering culturally resonant frameworks for mental health, youth development, and ethical leadership. Mental health campaigns that incorporate stories of dharma (ethical duty) and bhakti (devotional resilience) can help reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking by aligning with familiar spiritual narratives. Youth programs inspired by karma yoga and its emphasis on *lokasaṅgraha* (welfare of society) cultivate a strong sense of civic responsibility and moral action among young people. In professional settings, karma yoga also supports workplace ethics by promoting selfless, purpose-driven behavior, encouraging employees to see their roles as contributions to a larger social and spiritual order. These culturally grounded approaches make public policy more inclusive, ethical, and psychologically impactful.

Empirical Evidence and Proposed Studies

Existing Empirical Evidence

A growing body of empirical research rooted in Indian Psychology has substantiated key psychological constructs derived from the Bhagavad Gītā, particularly *anāsakti* (non-attachment), the *triguṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*), and related ethical-motivational frameworks. Banth and Talwar (2012) initially validated the Anāsakti Scale using a sample of 300 Indian university students, revealing significant negative correlations between *anāsakti* and stress, and positive correlations with resilience and life satisfaction. Building on this foundation, Singh and Raina (2015) developed and psychometrically validated a test on *anāsakti* among Indian youth, confirming its predictive role in emotional regulation and well-being. Complementary findings were presented by Gupta and Agrawal (2022), who demonstrated that *anāsakti* significantly predicted life satisfaction and mitigated negative affect in a sample of 240 educated Indian adults.

The Gītā's threefold personality typology, the *triguṇas*, has also been empirically validated. Wolf (1999) developed a *guṇa*-based profiling model through factor analysis and structured interviews with Indian participants, identifying *sattva* with clarity and balance, *rajas* with activity and restlessness, and *tamas* with inertia and confusion. More recently, Singh, Sharma, and Sharma (2016) found that *sattva* was positively correlated with self-efficacy and psychological resilience, while *rajas* and *tamas* were associated with distress and maladaptive coping strategies. These findings are consistent with Sharma and Adhikari's (2024) field study, which revealed that professionals exhibiting *sattvic* traits and karma yoga orientation reported stronger ethical conduct and job satisfaction.

Decolonizing Psychology through Gītā-Based Indian Psychology

Empirical support for Gītā-based educational interventions has also begun to emerge. A feedback-based study on a college-level Bhagavad Gītā course reported improvements in students' emotional regulation, decision-making clarity, and reduced anxiety, highlighting the pedagogical potential of Gītā teachings in contemporary youth development. Complementing these psychological and educational findings, Wallace and Benson's (1972) seminal physiological study demonstrated that meditation practices grounded in yogic and Gītā-based principles led to reductions in stress markers such as heart rate and blood lactate, indicating somatic benefits. Furthermore, Prasad et al. (2025) conducted a workplace study linking karma yoga values, particularly non-attachment and purposeful action, with improved work-life balance and psychological well-being among IT professionals in India. Collectively, these studies establish a robust empirical foundation for the application of Gītā-derived constructs across clinical, educational, and organizational contexts, supporting their continued integration into culturally grounded models of well-being and ethical functioning in modern Indian society.

Summary of Key Empirical Findings

Study	Construct	Methodology	Sample Size	Key Findings
Singh & Raina (2015).	Anāsakti	Scale validation, youth survey	210	Anāsakti positively correlated with emotional well-being and balance
Gupta & Agrawal (2022).	Anāsakti	Regression analysis, quantitative survey	240	Anāsakti predicted higher life satisfaction and lower negative affect
(Dhawan & Maini, 2022)	Guṇas	Self-efficacy scale, Guṇas profiling	250	Sattva is linked to self-efficacy; rajas/tamas are linked to distress
(Meenakshi et al., 2023)	Karma Yoga / TriGuṇa	Field study with a professional sample	180	Triguna traits influenced ethical orientation and well-being
Wallace & Benson (1972)	Meditation	Physiological monitoring	36	Meditation reduced stress markers (heart rate, lactate)
Lolla (2020)	Gītā'-based Education	Feedback survey, qualitative insights	150	Students reported reduced anxiety and value-based learning
Prasad et al. (2025)	Work-life Balance / Karma Yoga	Correlational study, workplace survey	500	Karma yoga traits linked to psychological well-being and balance

Proposed Studies and Interventions

Anāsakti-Based Stress Reduction RCT: A proposed future direction in Gītā-based psychological research involves evaluating the impact of *anāsakti* (non-attachment) on stress reduction through a controlled experimental design. This study would test the efficacy of a six-week Gītā-based *anāsakti* training program aimed at enhancing emotional regulation and reducing stress among university students. Using a randomized controlled trial design, 100 participants would be divided equally into an intervention group receiving the training and a control group receiving no intervention. Key outcome measures would include the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the Anāsakti Scale, and physiological indicators such as cortisol levels. It is hypothesized that participants in the intervention group would exhibit significantly lower stress and greater emotional balance compared to the control group, thereby

Decolonizing Psychology through Gītā-Based Indian Psychology

empirically validating *anāsakti* as a culturally rooted and effective stress-reduction intervention.

Bhakti-Based Therapy Pilot Program: A proposed pilot study aims to examine the therapeutic potential of bhakti-based practices, such as prayer, chanting, and devotional reflection, in supporting individuals experiencing grief. This mixed-method research would involve 30 bereaved participants engaging in weekly bhakti-centered sessions over an eight-week period. The study would employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, using the Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993) to measure psychological adaptation and narrative analysis to explore changes in meaning-making and emotional coping. It is anticipated that the intervention would lead to improved resilience, enhanced emotional processing, and a more profound sense of existential support, thereby demonstrating the cultural and psychological relevance of bhakti as a grief therapy approach in the Indian context.

Integration with Neuroscience and Longitudinal Studies: Future research on Gītā-based Psychology could benefit from integrating cognitive neuroscience to explore the neurobiological correlates of key constructs such as *anāsakti* and the *triguṇas*. For instance, functional MRI (fMRI) studies may investigate how *anāsakti* practices impact brain regions associated with emotional regulation, such as the prefrontal cortex and limbic system, as well as activity within the default mode network, which has been linked to self-referential thinking and mind-wandering (Davidson & Lutz, 2008). Additionally, a five-year longitudinal study could track the evolution of *guṇa* profiles in individuals engaging in yogic and lifestyle-based interventions, assessing changes in psychological functioning, moral behavior, and overall well-being. Such interdisciplinary approaches would help bridge Indian philosophical frameworks with modern neuroscience, advancing a model of integrative Psychology that is both culturally rooted and empirically validated.

Future Research Directions

Despite these contributions, the field of Indian Psychology, and Gītā-based frameworks in particular, remains under-researched relative to its potential. Several future directions are critical:

- **Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs):** To establish credibility in clinical and academic Psychology, Gītā-inspired interventions (e.g., karma-yoga counseling, *guṇa* profiling) must be empirically tested through RCTs, particularly in schools and mental health clinics.
- **Scale Development and Cross-Cultural Validation:** Tools like the Anāsakti Scale and *Guṇa* Assessment inventories need broader validation across linguistic, regional, and diasporic Indian populations. Comparative studies with Western constructs (e.g., Big Five, mindfulness) would enrich the cross-cultural dialogue.
- **Integration with Neuroscience and Cognitive Science:** Investigating how Gītā-based practices influence neural patterns, emotion regulation, or attention mechanisms would allow for dialogues with cognitive neuroscience, adding depth and scientific rigor to these ancient insights.
- **Ethical Frameworks in Policy and Organizational Psychology:** Future work could explore how dharma-centric models influence ethical decision-making, civic responsibility, and leadership, especially in Indian bureaucracies, business, and education systems.

In a global moment marked by ecological crisis, mental health epidemics, and moral disorientation, Psychology must ask deeper questions about who we are and what it means to live well. The *Bhagavad Gītā* offers not easy answers, but a robust framework of inquiry, practice, and transformation. By reclaiming and reinterpreting such texts, Indian Psychology not only decolonizes the field but also re-envisioning it.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued for the relevance and necessity of a Gītā-based Indian Psychology as both a Decolonizing initiative and a theoretical innovation. Drawing from core concepts such as *dharma*, *guṇas*, *anāsakti*, and *bhakti*, we have presented a framework that challenges dominant assumptions in Western Psychology, particularly its secularism, individualism, and ego-centered models of selfhood and well-being.

Far from being a spiritual relic, the *Bhagavad Gītā* emerges as a living psychological text, capable of shaping education, therapy, and policy in culturally grounded ways. Its teachings are not prescriptive dogma but dynamic psychological tools that address emotional conflict, ethical ambiguity, and existential suffering. They offer a holistic paradigm in which ethical living, emotional regulation, and spiritual growth are integrated, not compartmentalized.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

Term	Translation / Interpretation
Ātman	The true Self, the eternal, unchanging essence of a being, is distinct from the ego or body-mind.
Anāsakti	Non-attachment, acting without clinging to results or outcomes; emotional equanimity.
Bhakti	Devotion: loving surrender to the Divine, seen as a transformative emotional and spiritual path.
Dharma	Righteous duty or moral order; personal and social responsibility aligned with cosmic law.
Guṇas	Three fundamental qualities of nature: <i>sattva</i> (clarity), <i>rajas</i> (passion), <i>tamas</i> (inertia).
Karma	Action and its consequences often refer to one's duty and ethical behavior.
Karma Yoga	The spiritual discipline of selfless action is performed without attachment to outcomes.
Lokasaṅgraha	Welfare of the world, acting for the good of society and collective harmony.
Mokṣa	Liberation from the cycle of birth and death; spiritual freedom and realization of the Self.
Rajas	One of the guṇas, characterized by activity, restlessness, and desire.
Sattva	One of the guṇas, characterized by clarity, balance, purity, and wisdom.
Śaraṅgati	Spiritual surrender: the act of entrusting oneself to the Divine will.
Svadharmā	One's own duty: the unique ethical responsibility based on nature, role, and context.
Tamas	One of the guṇas, characterized by inertia, darkness, ignorance, and confusion.
Sthita-prajñā	A person of steady wisdom; one who remains calm in pleasure and pain, anchored in Self-realization.

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