



Mental Health in the Bhagavad-Gita: A Precarious Approach

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Abstract:

The Bhagavad Gita, also known as the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita or simply the Gita, is widely regarded as the most renowned sacred text of Hindu philosophy and religion. This publication aims to summarize the principles of the Bhagavad Gita and their implications in the context of holistic health perspectives and behavioral treatment models in the Indian cross-cultural setting. This study examines the application of the behavioral therapy model to the concept of a mentally healthy person in the Bhagavad Gita, within the context of cross-cultural settings and its relevance to current psychological medicine. We promote the practical use of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to improve the effectiveness of behavioral therapeutic therapies for patients and to provide additional benefits. An analysis has been conducted on the fundamental principles of Indian culture about the understanding and importance of behavioral treatment in a multi-ethnic society.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, Cross-cultural set up, Holistic Health, Behavioural Therapy, Psychotherapy.

Background:

The Bhagavad Gita contains an abundance of the spiritual essence found in the Vedas and Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita, a component of the Hindu book Mahabharata, is literally translated as "Song of the Lord." In most parts of India, there are specific factors that contribute to the development of one's personality, particularly in the areas of spirituality, religion, culture, situational support, and intra-psychic explanation. These factors include a reliance on elders, a belief in the transmigration of the soul, fatalism, and the presence of superiority-inferiority complexes based on caste. These factors are significant in the behavioral therapeutic model used in contemporary mental health medicine. Life is the continuous integration of the physical body, sensory perception, mental faculties, and spiritual essence, resulting in overall well-being encompassing bodily, sensory, mental, and spiritual dimensions. The advancement of medicine relies solely on creativity, careful observation of patients, deep contemplation, and rigorous experimentation in the laboratory. The condition of balance between the internal and external environment determines the state of health and disease, generating a spectrum with varying degrees. The Bhagavad Gita imparts valuable teachings on how to overcome passivity caused by acute anxiety and sadness, by addressing conflicts and promoting resolution. The Bhagavad Gita presents various therapeutic paradigms for understanding and addressing sickness, which are derived from the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna at the beginning of the

Kurukshetra war. The Bhagavad Gita explores the ideas of holistic health, contemporary health behavior, and behavioral therapy, with a particular emphasis on identifying conflicts and diagnosing patients based on underlying psychological theories and principles. The Bhagavad Gita delves into the concepts of the teacher and disciple (Guru-Shishya) as well as the personality of the patient.

Introduction:

The Bhagavad Gita comprises 18 chapters, known as Yogas, and consists of 701 verses, referred to as Shlokas. The first chapter is titled Sorrow (Vishada Yoga), while the last chapter is titled Nirvana and Renunciation (Moksha Sanyasa Yoga). The Bhagavad Gita, composed by Sage Veda Vyasa and transcribed by Lord Ganesha, is a section of the Bhishma Parva within the ancient epic Mahabharata, dating back to the period between 2500 and 5000 B.C. The central theme of the Mahabharata is around the conflict between two factions of relatives, namely the unscrupulous Kauravas and the virtuous Pandavas. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the Pandavas, aided by Lord Krishna, triumphed over the alliance of Kauravas. The Bhagavad Gita takes place in a setting where the skilled and perceptive archer Arjuna is on a chariot guided by Lord Krishna. Arjuna is preparing to confront a massive army of adversaries, which includes his loved ones, mentors, and teachers. Despite Arjuna's formidable skills as a warrior, he contemplates retreating from the battlefield because of feelings of sadness, unease, remorse, uncertainty, and strong emotional bonds

with his loved ones. His main concern is the potential destruction of his relatives and teachers. The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and his devotee Arjuna, in which Krishna provides guidance on the correct path of action to attain Arjuna's destiny, which is the triumph of morality over immorality in the war. The text also explores various aspects of behavior and psychotherapy.

Some experts suggest that the Bhagavad Gita encompasses all parts of "Mama Dharma" - my obligations, responsibilities, entitlements, ethics, morals, attitude, actions, activities, and so on (Swamy 2002). Within our brains, we engage in internal battles that revolve on conflicting forces of positivity and negativity, mirroring the predicament faced by Arjuna in our own lives. Mental health specialists address the symptoms and facilitate long-term healing of patients suffering from depression, anxiety, and conflicts. This process is analogous to resolving disputes through the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. Several prominent Indian psychiatrists have advocated for the utilization of the ethical principles included in the Bhagavad Gita in order to manage, provide guidance, and apply modern value to psychotherapy and healing in the present day (Govindaswamy 1959: i-ix; Rao et al. 1974: 34-44).

Counseling or psychotherapy models are crucial and indispensable interventions in the treatment of patients with psychological disorders, such as depression. Psychiatrists in the past have examined the efficacy of these models in the Indian context, taking into account the many cultural, religious, spiritual, and sociological perspectives, sometimes referred to as the eastern/oriental culture (Varma and Ghosh 1976: 177-186; Neki 1975: 92-100; Surya and Jayaram 1996:10-12). Dr. Neki (1975) is the subject of extensive controversy regarding the use of the master-disciple (Guru-Chela) idea as a model in psychotherapy. Several prominent Indian psychologists and psychiatrists have discussed and proposed the use of the Bhagavad Gita as a source and model for developing psychotherapeutic concepts that are suitable for the Indian context. These discussions and proposals can be found in the works of Balodhi (1984: 64-68), Rao and Parvathidevi (1974: 34-44), Ramachandra Rao (1983: 123-131), Satyananda (1972), Jeste and Vahia (2008: 197-209), Rao (2002: 315-325), Hegde (2008: 60), Govindaswamy (1959: i-x), Balodhi and Keshavan (2011: 300-302), and Gangadhar (2011: 303).

Constructive Mental Health:

The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes the significance of positive mental health through several practices such as Pranayama (deep breathing), Pariprashna (conversation), Sraddha (devotion), Ekagramana (meditation), and

Yuktahara-Vihara (excellent diet and relaxation). According to Chidbhavananda (1971: 55-57, 183-186), a person who has achieved tranquility by controlling their senses and is unaffected by grief, desire, or anger, as well as someone whose pleasure comes from within and is not dependent on external indulgence (Chidbhavananda 1971: 13-20, 657-667), is described by Lord Krishna as being mindful, attentive, or 'Sthitaprajna'. These individuals are able to act freely and effectively in times of conflict.

The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita make a substantial contribution to addressing physical comorbidity resulting from an unhealthy lifestyle. It is crucial for humans to prioritize the care of their bodies, which can be seen as a temple (Kshetra) that provides a dwelling place for the divine, as described by Lord Krishna.

Mental Re-structuring:

The Bhagavad Gita provides a comprehensive therapeutic solution for challenging issues when anxiety is of utmost importance. The primary focus is on the mental re-structuring known as 'Jnana', the action referred to as 'Karma', and the faith known as 'Bhakti'.

Action or "Karma"

Engaging in appropriate action or 'Karma' is an extra method for confronting and resolving difficulties. According to the Bhagavad Gita, the appropriate course of action, known as "Karma," is determined by an individual's inherent qualities, referred to as "Varna," as well as their stage of development, known as "Asrama." An individual's activity, also known as "Karma," consists of two parts that contribute to the social and cultural organization and influence the actions inside this social structure. The initial dimension of 'Karma' or action is rooted in 'Varnas', which are divided into four categories: the priestly class or 'Brahmin', the warrior class or 'Kshatriya', the business class or 'Vaishya', and the laborer class or 'Shudra'. The second aspect of action, known as "Karma," is also divided into four categories called "Asramas." These categories are the learning stage, or "Brahmacharya," the householder stage, or "Grahastha," retirement from household life, or "Vanaprastha," and complete renunciation from worldly affairs, or "Sanyasa."

In the Bhagavad Gita, the three facets of action, known as 'Karma', are referred to as 'Karmayoga'. Therefore, it is important to a) cultivate a sense of detachment from the results of one's actions, known as 'Nishkamakarma' (Chidbhavananda 1971: 172), b) perform tasks with utmost skill and precision, referred to as 'Karmasu Kaushalam' (Chidbhavananda 1971: 176), and c) contribute to the betterment of society, known as 'Yajnarthat Karma' (Chidbhavananda 1971: 221).

Lord Krishna counseled Arjuna to overcome his reluctance to fulfill his duty to engage in battle, as Arjuna is not only born into the warrior class but has also consistently demonstrated his warrior nature. The code of behavior serves to safeguard the interests of individuals as well as society as a whole, as guided by the principle of 'Dharma' (Chidbhavananda 1971: 31–33, 151–153). **Knowledge “Jnana”**

According to the Bhagavad Gita, the process of making an accurate and genuine assessment of a situation, known as 'Jnana', is the first step in dealing with any state of affairs. Jnana, in a deeper meaning, refers to comprehensive knowledge about the ontogenic and phylogenic aspects of the universe. It enables individuals to comprehend immediate conditions. The essence or 'Atman' of human beings is not subject to any physical or even behavioral aspects (Chidbhavananda 1971: 29–31, 266–711–713). Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that the soul undergoes the stages of childhood, youth, and old age, and also transitions into a new body, similar to how an old fabric is changed with a new one (Chidbhavananda 1971: 13–14, 131–132). Problems arise simply when the person makes mistakes as the one who enjoys or suffers (Chidbhavananda 1971: 248). Indeed, it is the physical form that encompasses the ego and undergoes experiences, rather than the true essence of oneself. Hence, the key strategy to overcome these hardships is to discern one's philosophical disposition.

Faith or “Bhakti”

By acknowledging the existence of a global soul, known as faith or 'Bhakti', one can overcome self-centeredness. In order to achieve salvation or reach liberation, the sole method is to have faith or 'Bhakti' in God (Chidbhavananda 1971: 513–51, 520–523, 642, 940, 954–957). In order to achieve and maintain enlightenment, consistent meditation practice is crucial inside the spiritual realm. Spiritual or religious practices encompass the use of exercise and meditation as ways to govern the mind and cultivate certain attributes.

Present Mental Treatment and its importance to the Bhagavad Gita:

The Bhagavad Gita is highly relevant to psychotherapy in the current psychiatric situation. The Bhagavad Gita offers numerous advantages to individuals who are experiencing depression, confusion, mania, or delusions associated with schizophrenia. The Bhagavad Gita has proposed a more comprehensive and personalized approach to understanding mental symptoms and personal well-being, which can be valuable in the development of behavioral-therapeutic therapies. The Bhagavad Gita can serve as a valuable framework for psychiatry, namely in the development of comprehensive evaluation models for reducing and curing mental

illness. This has considerable significance in the field of psychiatry.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The ethnic or cultural background has a significant role in shaping one's identity and might influence the acceptance of a specific treatment, which in turn can impact psychopathology. An analysis of the Bhagavad Gita's cross-cultural perspectives might be beneficial for creating practical interventions aimed at promoting spiritual, religious, and socio-cultural enlightenment in the context of aging assistance. Applying the principles of utilitarianism from the Bhagavad Gita helps enhance trust and communication, which are essential aspects of the psychotherapy process. In the Indian setting, the dichotomy relationship between a master and disciple, such as Lord Krishna and Arjuna, should be utilized to achieve a more effective therapeutic outcome.

Psychological distress patients exhibit a high incidence of scepticism and agnosticism, as shown by Curlin et al (2007: 1193-1198). The counselors' belief system plays a crucial role in utilizing religious and spiritual practices to enhance the patient's well-being, facilitate recovery, and help them cope with challenging circumstances. The principle of medical ethics entails respecting the cultural, religious, and spiritual belief systems of the patient without imposing upon them. It is important for a psychiatrist to consider the possibility of using a meaningful spiritual intervention alongside other treatments. Spiritual practices can provide various benefits to patients, including the placebo effect. The Bhagavad Gita's secular content could be integrated to provide advantages for patients. Thus, we strongly advocate for the inclusion of spirituality as an integral component of therapeutic interventions within the framework of contemporary mental health paradigms.

Jnana refers to the comprehension of the inherent spiritual essence that exists universally. This understanding can be beneficial in alleviating personal stress and emotional disruptions that often accompany the aging process. Additionally, it can provide solace in the face of grief caused by the loss of a loved one by recognizing the concept of the soul's immortality. The notion of "Nishkamakarma" in the Bhagavad Gita is suitable for anxiety states that arise from unpredictable outcomes of actions. The concept of "Bhakti" emphasizes the identification of the individual soul with the ultimate soul via wholehearted devotion and submission. The concept of "Yoga" not only offers a theoretical foundation for achieving liberation from emotional problems, but also serves as a guide for enhancing mental health by effectively integrating the mind and body. In order to preserve compatibility in a therapeutic relationship with a patient, the therapist must respect and appreciate the patient's values and

belief system, and refrain from imposing their own beliefs on the patient. For example, individuals with emotional imbalance should engage in regular reading of the Bhagavad Gita, a practice known as Bibliotherapy, and seek guidance from religious leaders. The aforementioned debate concludes that the Bhagavad Gita has made significant contributions as a cross-cultural, psychological, holistic health, and behavioral therapeutic idea within the Indian setting.

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