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Review of lessons from Bhagavad Gita with reference to mental health

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Abstract

Mental health is part of overall wellbeing. It affects not only mind but also the physical health of a person. This shows the importance of studying mental health. There are many ancient texts and scriptures which have discussed about hoe to keep mental health in proper manner. Thus, this paper has tried ti learn lessons from the Bhagavad Gita to know more about it.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, Review, mental health

Introduction

Mental health has become a concern, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, people have started paying attention to it. The regulations such as lockdown, work from home pattern of working and social distancing have also contributed in raising the importance of mental health. The evidence of mental health and ways to manage it has been described in our ancient texts. These include Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali Yoga sutra, Vedas, Jainism etc. This paper has reviewed the studies from Bhagavad Gita.

Literature Review

Many medical solutions have been provided by Bhagavad Gita (Das & Behura, 2021). It has psychotherapy benefits (Tiwari & Pandey, 2013). The Bhagavad Gita also goes into great detail about Anasakti. Anasakt can pursue their goals with tenacity thanks to their coping methods, which fosters wellbeing. Their method exhibits adaptive coping, which reduces stress and increases happiness (Singh & Raina, 2015) ^[5].

The ways to deal with distress through the context of Bhagavat Gita were recommended. He has described the conversation between Arjun and Sri Krishna in which Sri Krishna has tried to reduce Arjuna's distress and anxiety by doing controlled breathing and meditation (Bhatia, *et al.*, 2013) ^[2].

Bhagavad Gita has significant spiritual significance in Hinduism, but psychologists and psychotherapists who work with patients who suffer from worry, despair, dread, guilt, and negative attitudes can also benefit much from it (Tewari, 2022) ^[3]. It has considered intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as the reins (Abhayankar, 2015).

Religion has a negative relationship with substance addiction, social functioning, quality of life, and appointment attendance (Khan, 2019) ^[6].

As a precaution against significant troubles, the Gita emphasises adopting a healthy lifestyle that includes obtaining enough rest, exercising regularly, and eating a balanced food (Keshavan, 2020) ^[1].

Research Methodology

The study is based on systematic literature review. Different papers have been studied related to Bhagavad Gita.

Lessons from Bhagavad Gita

Hindu scripture known as the *Bhagavad Gita* offers wisdom and direction to uplift and inspire people who are experiencing psychological hardship, such as healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic (Das & Behura, 2021). It is well known for its psychotherapeutic benefits and insightfulness (Tiwari & Pandey, 2013). The *Gita's* lessons can alleviate worry and barriers, offering a healthy approach to mental health even though the causes may vary (Das & Behura, 2021).

Teaching *Gita* lessons to medical responders can support current remedies and lessen anxiety and discomfort while integrating seamlessly with current medical procedures. Medical responders deal with a variety of stressful situations, such as the worry of catching and spreading the coronavirus, the lack of protective equipment, exhaustion from long hours, physical discomfort, family seclusion, and violent episodes. These pressures are acknowledged as major obstacles that may influence the health of medical personnel working on the front lines of the COVID-19 epidemic (Das & Behura, 2021). Three avenues for fostering psychological toughness are provided by the *Bhagavad Gita: Jnana Yoga* (self-awareness), *Karma Yoga* (selfless deeds), and *Dhyana (Raja) Yoga* (meditation and introspection). It places a strong emphasis on the value of duty, independence from results, and internal motivation. The lessons emphasise values like endurance, bravery, dedication, patience, enthusiasm, self-discipline, and giving up worldly pleasures in order to solve issues that medical responders frequently confront, such as fear, workload, and difficult working conditions. The *Gita* offers a framework for dealing with mental issues and recommends physical strategies including diet, rest, breathing techniques, exercise, and meditation (Das & Behura, 2021).

The *Bhagavad Gita* also provides a very extensive explanation of *Anasakti*, or non-attachment. *Anasakti* is a person with coping mechanisms who approaches every circumstance calmly and has faith that everything works out for the best. On their route to achieving goals, they are unaffected or disturbed by both positive and negative events. According to research, a person's capacity to get past adversity depends on how they perceive, accept, and handle those situations. With the aid of their coping mechanisms, *Anasakti* can pursue their objectives with tenacity, which promotes wellbeing. Their strategy exemplifies adaptive coping, which reduces stress and improves wellbeing (Singh & Raina, 2015) [5].

The *Gita* teaches about "*Sthitaprajna*," the capacity to be unperturbed by negative emotions and have control over the senses, in order to execute duty without mental clutter. The *Gita's* teachings on cognitive appraisal, right action, and devotion to a higher power are therapeutically significant for issues relating to anxiety (Das & Behura, 2021).

The *Gita* places a strong emphasis on the superiority of intellect over senses, attributing mental muddle to passions and their negative consequences on responsibility and judgement. This can ultimately result in self-destruction. In order to reduce worry and achieve harmony, the *Gita* suggests using relaxation techniques including controlled breathing (*pranayama*) and meditation. The term "mindfulness" refers to a sensitive, welcoming, and thought-independent method of paying attention. It also implies "awareness" or "bare attention." In order to achieve the condition of *Sthitaprajna* (a state of unperturbedness), which is described in the *Gita* as being separated from the

assault of the senses, one must practise mindfulness. In the shloka below Lord Krishna advises doing meditation to achieve the "mindful state" and urging people to keep their emotions under control (Bhatia *et al.*, 2013) [2]:

**आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं
समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् |
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे
स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी || 70||**
(Bhagvat *Gita*, chapter 2, verse 70)

Translation: *The sage who stays unaffected despite the flow of attractive objects around him achieves peace, not the one who tries to sate cravings. This is analogous to how the ocean remains undisturbed by the constant flow of waters from rivers merging into it.*

The *Bhagavad Gita* offers strategies for maintaining mental stability and getting through crises. Hinduism places great spiritual significance on it, but psychologists and psychotherapists who work with patients who struggle with anxiety, despair, fear, guilt, and negative attitudes can also gain a great lot from using it (Tewari, 2022) [3]. The personality is compared to a chariot, with the senses acting as the horses, the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as the reins. A balanced mind, a steady intellect, and inner tranquilly are all encouraged as ideal states of being by the *Gita* (Abhyankar, 2015). The *Bhagavad Gita* also emphasizes impermanence and a process-driven existence while acknowledging the world's fleeting character. During existence's constant change and finiteness, it views this fleeting reality as *maya* and focuses on what it believes as the genuine qualities (Tewari, 2022) [3].

According to several studies, there is a negative association between religion and substance abuse, social functioning, quality of life, and appointment attendance (Khan, 2019) [6]. The Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) program is an addiction therapy. The *Gita* and AA are both spirituality-based programs. The *Gita* invites reflection on one's own behavior as well as on how much control one has over their senses. Additionally, it gives rise to the promise of sensory control (Bhatia *et al.*, 2013) [2].

The *Gita's* lessons can be used to motivate patients to move forward in their grief processes. By realising that "the supreme being carries off all things," guilt towards the departed can be lessened by putting the blame on a higher power. Before adding *Gita* extracts into grief treatment, it is crucial to take the patient's beliefs into account and respect them because these ideas have spiritual and religious overtones. This is explained in the *shlokas* below (Bhatia *et al.*, 2013) [2]:

For bereavement (grief on death)

**श्रीभगवानुवाच |
अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे |
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः || 11||**
(Bhagvad *Gita*, chapter 2, verse 11)

Translation: *While you provide words of wisdom, you are grieving over things that are unworthy of sorrow, the Supreme Lord remarked. The wise do not weep for either the*

live or the dead.

The *shloka* means that there is no benefit of grieving on someone's death. Further in the process of grief treatment, the concept of reincarnation is explained which is given in the *shloka* below:

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च |
तस्मादपरिहार्यं ते न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि || 27||
(Bhagvad Gita chapter 2, verse 27)

Translation: For those who have been born, death is a given, and for those who have passed on, rebirth is unavoidable. As a result, you should not cry about what will happen.

One of the most traumatic life events is losing a loved one. According to the widely held notion that it aids in the grieving process, listening to a talk on the *Bhagavad Gita* is a customary practise at a Hindu funeral. The *Gita's* reincarnation doctrine is one important feature in this context. The fact that the actual soul, the essential component of the departed, is eternal and only the body, a carrier of the soul, is destroyed, brings comfort to the bereaved's family. The *Gita* also discusses the process of reincarnation and the inevitableness of death, which helps to lessen the severity of mourning (Bhatia *et.al.*, 2013) [2]. Now the patient is prepared for the role transition which is explained below:

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् |
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः || 35||
(Bhagvad Gita chapter 3, verse 35)

Translation: It is much preferable to do one's natural designated task imperfectly than to flawlessly accomplish another's prescribed duty. It is better to pass away while carrying out one's job than to take another's risky course of action.

Role transition is a crucial method in interpersonal therapy (IPT) to overcome issues with accepting new roles. By encouraging action without attachment to rewards and refraining from assessing one's responsibility based on its apparent value, the *Gita* offers advice. This way of thinking facilitates smooth role transfer. The *Gita's* emphasis on identifying and emphasising one's qualities can be used to help IPT's focus on regaining self-esteem (Bhatia *et.al.*, 2013) [2].

The *Bhagavad Gita* places a strong emphasis on the concepts of *yoga*, which means "to unite," to promote resilience on a variety of levels. Individuals, organizations, and society can develop resilience and fortitude in the face of difficulties by putting the three tenets of yoga into practice (Keshavan, 2020) [1].

Conclusion

The ancient texts have provided a lot of information and knowledge about how to maintain mental health. *Bhagavad Gita* has proved to be beneficial for it in a great extent. So, one should try to learn lessons from it. More attention should be paid on improving mental health.

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