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• Health Services • Life Skills Education • Healthy School Environment

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*The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program*

*Healthy Schools ..... Healthy India*

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Education is not preparation for life...  
Education is life itself

- John Dewey

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## Submission Guidelines

- All submissions should follow the APA 7th Edition style
  - All submissions should have an abstract summarizing the main points.
  - The submission should have a clear and informative title
  - The submission should be original and should not be in the process of consideration by any other publication at the same time.
  - The submission should have rigorous and reliable information and provide a deeper level of understanding.
  - Submissions should be engaging and accessible to non-expert readers as well.
  - Submission emails must contain an inline declaration stating that the research work is the author's original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for publication.
  - Initial acceptance of any submission does not guarantee publication. The editorial board shall do the final selection.
  - If necessary, the editors may edit the manuscript in order to maintain uniformity of presentation and to enhance readability.
3. Case Reports: These should contain reports of new/interesting/rare cases of clinical significance or with implications for management. The word limit is 1500 words and an abstract of not more than 150 words.
  4. Review Articles: These are systemic and critical assessments of the literature which will be invited. Review articles should include an abstract of not more than 250 words describing the purpose of the review, collection and analysis of data, with the main conclusions. The word limit is 5000 words excluding references and abstract.
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2. Brief Research Communication: These manuscripts should contain short reports of original studies or evaluations and service-oriented research which points towards a potential area of scientific research or unique first-time reports. The word limit is 1500 words and an abstract (structured format) of not more than 150 words.
7. Commentaries: These papers should address important topics, which may be either multiple or linked to a specific article. The word limit is 3000 words with 1 table/figure.
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9. **My Voice:** In this section multiple perspectives are provided by patients, caregivers and paraprofessionals. It should encompass how it feels to face a difficult diagnosis and what this does to relationships and the quality of life. Personal narratives, if used in this section, should have relevance to general applications or policies. The word limit is 1000 words.
10. **Book/ Movie reviews:** Reviews of books or movies relevant to school mental health and wellbeing may also be submitted. The word limit is 1000 words.
11. **Announcements:** Information regarding conferences, meetings, courses, awards and other items likely to be of interest to readers should be submitted with the name and address of the person from whom additional information can be obtained (up to 100 words).

**Faculty members are invited to be the guest editors of the journal on a theme relevant to school health and wellbeing.**

*The Manuscripts for publication in the peer-reviewed and refereed Indian Journal of School Health and Wellbeing (IJSHW) are to be submitted via e-mail to [journal@expressionsindia.org](mailto:journal@expressionsindia.org) along with a copy of the email to the editor.*

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**SPECIAL ISSUE:**  
*PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING IN  
THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN  
SOCIETY*

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## Message from the Editor

### Philosophical Counselling in the Context of Indian Society

Contemporary life is characterised by rapid changes, uncertainty, complexity, diversity, and pluralism. Hence, people face many difficulties and dilemmas in their personal and professional lives, such as stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, alienation, conflict, violence, injustice, oppression, and more. Moreover, in the era of globalisation, people encounter many conflicting values and worldviews that can create confusion and doubt about their beliefs and choices.

These conditions hint at the need for a kind of counselling that does not focus on abnormalities. Instead, it can explore the 'pathology of normalcy' and prepare humans to be saner. It requires a movement that addresses fundamental dimensions of human existence, often neglected or ignored in fast-moving lives. This movement should re-emphasise that human beings are not only biological or psychological entities but also spiritual or metaphysical beings who seek transcendence and ultimate meaning. Philosophical counselling has the potential to become this movement which acknowledges that human problems are not only caused by external factors or internal dysfunctions but also by existential crises or spiritual conflicts that arise from one's relation to oneself, others, nature, and the divine.

Philosophical counselling is a form of counselling that focuses on exploring existential and philosophical issues that an individual may be facing. It is founded on the idea that philosophical concepts and ideas can help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives. Philosophical counselling aims to help individuals better understand themselves and their place in the world.

### Significance of Philosophical Counselling

Philosophical counselling can help people explore their spirituality and religion, or their lack thereof, and find ways to integrate them into their philosophy of life. Moreover, it can help people deal with existential issues, such as meaning, purpose, identity, morality, freedom, responsibility, death, and more. Philosophical counselling can also help people develop critical thinking skills, logical reasoning, creativity, and self-awareness.

It can be seen as a form of education or enlightenment that can enrich one's life and enhance one's well-being. It can help people address these challenges and find clarity, coherence, consistency, and confidence in their philosophy of life. It can also help people appreciate the richness and diversity of human experience and cultivate tolerance and respect for others. Philosophical counselling can be seen as a form of empowerment or liberation that can enable one to live authentically and responsibly in contemporary society.

One of the main reasons philosophical counselling is relevant in Indian society is the culture's deep roots in philosophy. India has rich philosophical traditions with a long history of exploring the nature of existence, the meaning of life, and the role of spirituality and morality in personal and social life. Many concepts central to philosophical counselling, such as mindfulness, meditation, and self-reflection, are already deeply ingrained in Indian culture and philosophical discourses.

For instance, ancient Indian philosophers such as Patanjali and Buddha have laid the foundation for mindfulness practices now widely used in Western psychological counselling. However, it remains a prodigious task to grasp the nature of counselling in Indian philosophical traditions and evaluate whether it is appropriate to call it counselling because Western thinkers use this term.

It is true that despite the challenges concerning the nature of philosophical counselling, it is relevant in Indian society because of the increasing mental health issues and growing alienation in the country. According to the National Mental Health Survey, around 150 million Indians suffer from mental health problems. Philosophical counselling can provide a much-needed alternative to the traditional psychological counselling practices often based on Western theories and concepts. Yet, it is necessary to concretise its methodologies and forms concerning Indian culture and society. In this regard, we must also identify our tools to understand Indian society, which will help us develop our methodologies accordingly.

Philosophical counselling is a field that has gained increasing recognition in India, with more individuals seeking it as a proactive way to deal with these issues. Undertaking philosophical counselling involves exploring philosophical concepts, ideas, and beliefs to help individuals deal with life challenges, deepen self-awareness, and foster personal growth.

### **Thrust of the volume**

Ancient Indian philosophies such as Yoga, Srimad Bhagavad Gita, and Buddhism are significant. These philosophies have laid the foundation for mindfulness practices and discourse on moral dilemmas. Many contemporary psychologists and counsellors have adopted philosophical concepts in their counselling practices to help individuals explore existential and philosophical issues.

There is a constant need to propound and explore the nature of Indian philosophical practices in the context of the contemporary needs of Indian society. In this regard, exploring the nature of philosophical counselling will be fruitful for two purposes: first, it will help us understand the nuances of our culture and society, and second, it will provide an opportunity to revisit Indian traditional practices in the context of counselling. Moreover, we aim to begin churning on the volume of the theory-practice divide in the contemporary Indian philosophical tradition by discussing philosophical methods in counselling and other philosophical practices.

Hence, this volume aims to: first, grasp the nature of counselling in Indian philosophical traditions and evaluate whether it needs some redefining; second, to identify prospective tools and methods to understand Indian culture and society to develop methodologies for philosophical counselling accordingly; and finally, to revisit Indian philosophical practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and self-reflection in the context of counselling but not limited to it.

There are eleven papers in this volume; the first paper, 'Nature, Modes and Purpose of Philosophical Counselling', written by Dr Prashant Shukla, explores the nature of Philosophical Counselling. It tries to define philosophy in the light of PC and analyses questions such as what a philosopher does (and how). Why do we need Philosophical Counselling? And some case studies in Philosophical Counselling. After that, the paper 'In Search for 'Good Life': Understanding through Philosophical Counselling' by Dr Nibedita Priyadarsini traces some philosophical counselling in the history of Western and Indian Philosophy and equates it with the broad spectrum of ideas on how life should be understood and lived. It argues that PC can help clients clarify, explore, and comprehend different philosophical aspects like epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and logical issues in life. The third paper, 'Ethicality and Spirituality in Kathopaniadic Philosophy', written by Dr Nandini Mishra, tries to analyse how the idea of Atman can be philosophically illuminating. This paper argues that the concept of Atman and its realisation becomes more comprehensible from the ethical perspective instead of theological rendering. The following paper, 'Unveiling Philosophical Counselling in India: Navigating Post- Pandemic Challenges' written by Madhulika Sharma, tries to explore philosophical counselling in the Indian context, shedding light on its essence, necessity, and applicability, particularly in the post-pandemic era. It provides a nuanced perspective on PC, emphasising its grassroots relevance and potential to address mental health challenges. Then, the fifth paper, 'Meditation and Self-Awareness: In View of Heartfulness', suggests the importance of meditation and self-awareness in counselling. It studies Heartfulness meditation with its four basic practices to regulate the mind and create balance in life.

The following three papers analysed the significance of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita for Philosophical Counselling. The first is 'A Dialectical Understanding of Philosophical Counselling' by Dr. Pramod Kumar Dash. It investigates Gita from a dialectic perspective to understand and resolve conceptual conflicts of different value paradigms. In another paper, 'The Bhagavad Gita: A manual of philosophical therapy technique based on ancient knowledge,' Dr Rashmi Mishra tries to illustrate how Indian culture and spirituality inform the origins of counselling and psychological sagacity. She argues that Vedas and Upanishads obtained many original ideas and concepts helpful for psychology in seed form. The third paper in this series, 'Philosophical Counselling in the Bhagavad Gita: Counselling Problems of the Modern Indian Society', explores Gita as a powerful tool of Philosophical Counselling to address the multifaceted challenges of contemporary Indian society.

The following two papers, i.e. 'Poetry as a Prospective Tool in Philosophical Counselling' and 'Understanding Indian Psyche and Philosophical Health through Hindi Cinema' respectively, written by



Dr Richa Shukla and Ms Iram Tasleem, explore art and literature as effective tools for PC. The first paper reflects on the various notions of poetry and their interconnectedness with the theories of philosophical counselling. It also endeavours to develop an understanding of the metaphysical identity of humans, their social or scientific identity and how both concepts are linked together with the aid of literature. The second research paper attempts to study films based on Indian philosophical underpinnings, the portrayal of themes, and their narration on the silver screen. It further addresses specific aspects, themes, or questions related to portraying and exploring philosophical themes within the narratives, characters, and motifs of Hindi cinema.

The last paper, ‘Sufism and Philosophic Counselling: An Analysis of Kashmir Valley’ by Ahmad Mir, attempts to understand the role of the philosophy of Sufi saints in the history of Kashmir. It highlights that Sufism has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining the legacy of peaceful co-existence and infusing the qualities the land has been known for, like hospitality, equality, and brotherhood. On the other hand, it assesses the present situation in the valley to see how far this philosophy needs revival to pull together the scattered threads of the longed-for Kashmir ethos.

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## Message from the Patrons

It is a matter of great happiness to note that the latest issue of the Indian Journal of School Health & Wellbeing, published by Expressions India, is being released. It is a well-known fact that Research publications and Journals, in particular, are the most authentic sources of verified knowledge and experiences. The sharing of such knowledge and experiences not only amongst the researchers, scientists, policy planners, and implementers but also among the activists working in the concerned area and persons having a special interest in that area benefits all. It is our privilege to reiterate that Expressions India has been doing pioneering work for a long in the field of Health Education under its banner of “Holistic Health and School Wellness Programme” to enable the school education and teachers holistic facilitation in realising the goal of Health Education in Schools. The present publication is a momentous indicator of this initiative.

The major bottleneck in achieving Health Education's objective has been the particularistic conceptualisation of its transaction process. The goal of developing holistic health and well-being of young learners cannot be attained by making them gather certain information and rote-learn it. It can be attained only by a transaction process focused on experiential co-scholastic methodology that ensures the active participation of learners and substantially contributes to the development of life skills, enabling young children to manage their lives more competently and grow as truly empowered human resources of the nation and human society at large. To facilitate this process, it is critical to encourage and empower the teachers to act like facilitators and mentors.

The formal school education system needs to look towards interacting and taking support from initiatives like the one taken by Expressions India under its National Life Skills Education & School Wellness Programme aimed at realising the Goal of “HEALTHY SCHOOL.....HEALTHY INDIA”. It is pertinent to state that the Schools and other educational institutions associated with such endeavours have strongly felt the need for such programs to be adopted by all schools, including the Higher Education System.

In this context, the Journal of School Health has the potential to reinforce the process of realising the vision of Health Promoting Schools getting integrated into the education system in India. We are more than confident that the present issue of the Journal will strengthen this grand endeavour and empower all those who are creatively engaged in promoting Health Education in Schools. With immense pleasure, we would like to express our gratitude to the Advisory group, Editorial Board and Members of the Executive Editorial Committee for their valuable contribution, ungrudging cooperation and a keen interest and also for making available the benefits of their rich experiences and knowledge.

“If there is a will, there is a way, and if enlightened path-breakers reinforce the will, the way will lead to the destination at the earliest “.

**Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, M.D., D.N.B.**

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## Nature Purpose and Modes of Philosophical Counselling

Dr Prashant Shukla

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### Abstract

The discipline of philosophy assists an inquisitive mind to think in an impartial, neutral, yet critical manner. To call philosophy merely a ‘love of wisdom’ gives an over-arching definition which, though it may provide a fair enough idea about the nature of this subject, won’t help us to distinguish philosophy from other related disciplines. It can be rightfully claimed that no definition of philosophy can be appreciated without acknowledging familiarity with the distinct methodology of the concerned school of philosophy. Once identified, this methodology provides an exclusive and distinct nature to the concerned school of philosophy and helps understand the multiple ways philosophy may be used in counselling. The following discussion has been presented in three distinct sections: What a Philosopher does (and how)? Why do we need Philosophical Counselling? And some case studies in Philosophical Counselling.

**Keywords:** *Analytic, Aporia, Ataraxia, Continental, Counsellor, Counselee, Facilitator, Speculative*

The discipline of philosophy assists an inquisitive mind to think in an impartial, neutral, yet critical manner. This quite agreeable description of the discipline may give an adequate exposition of how philosophy operates but does not define the subject per se. A generic definition of the discipline as ‘love of wisdom’ may serve sufficiently at the entry-level. Still, as we delve deeper into the complications of any philosophic discussion, it becomes evident that such a definition may not clarify this subject's exact nature and purpose. To call philosophy merely a ‘love of wisdom’ gives an over-arching definition which, - though it may provide a fair enough idea about the nature of this subject, won’t help us to distinguish philosophy from other related disciplines (such as Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Education etc.). This is why, compared to any other subject, constructing a concise yet precise definition of philosophy has remained problematic since its inception. The contingencies involved in defining philosophy are put overtly in the words of W.T. Stace, as he says:

“...it is not as easy to give a concise definition of philosophy, as it is of the other sciences. In the first place, the content of philosophy has differed considerably in different periods of history...” (Stace, p.1)

Stace gives an appropriate explanation for this remark immediately in the next line as follows:

“What chiefly militates against the effort to frame a definition is that the precise content of philosophy is differently viewed by different schools of thought... (thus) a definition of philosophy which a follower of Herbert Spencer might frame would be unacceptable to an Hegelian, and the Hegelian definition would be rejected by the Spencerian.” (Ibid)

Considering a workable definition of philosophy as ‘the knowledge of the Absolute’ won’t serve the purpose either. As Stace further adds:

“If we were to include in our definition some such phrase as ‘the knowledge of the Absolute’, while this might suit some philosophers, others would deny that there is any Absolute at all. Another school would say that there may be an Absolute, but that it is unknowable, so philosophy cannot be the knowledge of it. Yet another school would tell us that, whether there is or is not an Absolute, whether it is or is not knowable, the knowledge of it is in any case useless and ought not to be sought.” (Ibid)

In “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man”, Wilfrid Sellars lays out a bit clearer idea of philosophy as:

“The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.” (Sellars, Wilfrid, pp.35-78)

He further says:

“To achieve success in philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to ‘know one’s way around’ ..., not in that unreflective way in which the centipede of the story knew its way around before it faced the question, ‘how do I walk?’, but in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred.” (Ibid)

At this juncture, it can be rightfully claimed that no definition of philosophy can be appreciated without acknowledging familiarity with the distinct methodology of the concerned school of philosophy. Once identified, this methodology provides an exclusive and distinct nature to the concerned school of philosophy and helps understand the multiple ways philosophy may be used in counselling.

For the sake of clarity and precision, the following discussion has been presented in three distinct sections as follows:

- What does a philosopher do (and how)?
- Why do we need Philosophical Counselling?
- Some Case Studies in Philosophical Counselling.

Let us take them one by one:

### **What does a philosopher do (and how)?**

As we have already seen (in the opening discussion) that any workable definition of philosophy demands familiarity with the concerned method of philosophising, it has to be accepted that any further discussion would presuppose adherence to some exclusive philosophical methodology. In *Philosophy in India: Traditions, Teaching and Research*, K. Satchidanand Murty (1924-2011) suggests that

philosophy may be approached (practised) in three different ways. These three ways are often called the three ‘modes’ or ‘methods’ of doing philosophy. These approaches characterise different ways a philosopher may engage with perennial questions, concepts and dilemmas (leading to *aporia*<sup>1</sup>). While these modes can be described in various ways, here is a common categorisation:

**Speculative philosophy:** Speculative philosophy involves exploring abstract concepts and ideas through rational speculation and logical reasoning. Philosophers in this mode aim to build up theories, frameworks, and systems of thought that elucidate the nature of reality, existence, and knowledge. They often engage in thought experiments, hypothetical scenarios, and logical deductions to reach conclusions. Speculative philosophy seeks to uncover fundamental truths about the world and human experience through careful reasoning.

**Analytic philosophy:** Analytic philosophy is characterised by its emphasis on clarity of language, logical analysis, and rigorous argumentation. Philosophers in this mode focus on dissecting complex issues into smaller components and then analysing each part systematically. The goal is to clarify and resolve conceptual confusion by breaking down problems into their most basic elements and addressing them through precise language and logical inference. Analytic philosophers often prioritize linguistic analysis and formal logic to solve philosophical problems.

**Continental philosophy:** Continental philosophy is known for its emphasis on existential, subjective and interpretive approaches to philosophical questions. Philosophers in this mode often explore topics related to human experience, culture, society, and personal identity. They engage with literature, art, history, and social context to gain insights into the nature of human existence and meaning. Continental philosophy is often associated with

<sup>1</sup> In philosophy, an *aporia* (Ancient Greek: ἀπορία, romanized: *aporía*, lit. 'literally: "lacking passage", also: "impasse", "difficulty in passage", "puzzlement") is a conundrum or state of puzzlement. In rhetoric, it is a declaration of doubt, made for rhetorical purpose and often feigned. ("*Aporia*", *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1989)

phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, and critical theory.

It is important to note that these modes are not rigid categories, and many philosophers integrate/overlap elements from different philosophical approaches in their work. The distinction between these modes can sometimes be blurry, and different philosophers might emphasise different aspects of each approach.

At this point, at least this much minimal understanding may be reached (among philosophers) that studying philosophy would be conducive in the public sphere only if such an inquisitive mind is prepared to look into the philosophical problem through its own lens, i.e. think 'by itself' or 'for itself', and straddle these modes to get out of aporia (dilemmas leading to perplexity).

A person may be fascinated with his/her issues (such as relationship issues, societal insecurities, professional uncertainties or the meaning of one's life) or perennial dilemmas (such as mind-body relation, personal identity, the problem of induction, the existence of evil, is-ought dichotomy or the nature of liberation), but a proper comprehension of the exact nature of the problem cannot be acquired unless the same person struggles with some foundational questions (and their complementary dilemmas). A person may be fascinated by what the great philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Sankara, Gotama, Descartes, Kant, Wittgenstein, etc., have said but will not be able to appreciate what they have meant unless he/she has thought some of their thoughts by and for himself.<sup>2</sup> This won't happen if the person wishes to learn what philosophers have said and comprehend their main philosophical theories but doesn't want to do some 'real thinking'.

<sup>2</sup> You may just want to get good grades in a philosophy course. The sad fact is that people with brilliant minds and amazing memories sometimes do not get the top grades in philosophy courses because they have not tried to 'think for themselves'

<sup>3</sup> What has been said about poets is also relevant for a Philosophic Counselor. As T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) says: "When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless, the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum."

With this submission, let us come to the second section of this paper.

### **Why do we need Philosophical Counselling?**

It may be said, thus, that to get out of aporia (dilemmas leading to perplexity), a person needs not only to learn and comprehend the philosophical theories but also to apply them to his/her own exclusive circumstances and, thus, search for a probable philosophic explanation as a remedy. This is something that the person has to pursue by himself/herself, though a philosophical counsellor may act as a catalyst for the entire process.<sup>3</sup>

The role of a Philosophical Counsellor must be seen as a facilitator and not merely an initiator of the process. A person may wish to resolve his aporia but doesn't want to accept that some of his/her deep-seated beliefs/convictions may be challenged; he doesn't want to get puzzled by the questions for which no final answers can be established; he doesn't want to take the risk that (at the end) he may feel that he knows less than he did before. Perhaps the person has firm convictions and just wants philosophy to prove that these are the only beliefs an intelligent person could have. Or perhaps he believes that science answers all questions, and he wants philosophy to prove that anyone with less than total faith in science is a fool. There may be umpteen possibilities here.

In broad, there are four fundamental and perennial questions of concern to us all:

- Who am I? (The philosophical question of 'Personal Identity' poses a dilemma here)
- What do I really know? (The philosophical question of 'Epistemic Justification' poses as dilemma here)
- Where am I going? (The philosophical question of 'Telos' poses a dilemma here)

- Where should I go? (The philosophical question of ‘Normativity’ poses a dilemma here)

More than thirty of the most important philosophers, from Pythagoras to the present, tried to tackle these questions in their own way (Howard, Alex, p. xiv). Their elaborate discursive attempts may be considered by a person undergoing aporia to understand the difference between good thinking and bad (leading to thoughtful-appropriate decision-making). Good thinking is sharp, creative, and careful; it aims to find the truth rather than winning arguments or impressing people.<sup>4</sup> This entire process, where a philosopher acts like a Counsellor to the person (hereby referred to as the counselee), may be conveniently referred to as ‘Philosophical Counselling’.

Indeed, in the end, some philosophers, encouraged by this interest in philosophical knowledge and skills, accepted the challenge and began helping people to reflect on everyday issues (Sulavikova, Blanka, p. 13). At the end of this process, the aporetic person emerges as a clearer, more careful, and more creative thinker.<sup>5</sup> This will also lead to a sincere appreciation for the efforts and problems of philosophers who have tried to refine our understanding of the most difficult problems human beings can think about. Finally, it would lead (hopefully) to ataraxia- a good life.<sup>6</sup>

This process called ‘Philosophical Counselling’ may be explained much more easily with some classic examples. In the next section, we shall take some cases where philosophical Counselling may prove more effective than other forms of (such as psychiatry and social/career/legal/financial) Counselling.

### Some Case Studies in Philosophical Counselling

Some classic issues (from various domains of philosophy) may be taken as case studies of Counselling here. This would help us to understand the precise methodology of philosophical counselling and thus pave the way for us to enter the field. These are as follows:

1. **Emphasising the relativity of judgments:** Different blindfolded people may define an elephant in diverse ways, and all of the given definitions may clash with each other; some may call it a pillar, or rope or (maybe) a box depending upon the specific organ of the elephant they have come in touch with. It is a philosopher acting as a Counsellor who may act as a facilitator/catalyst for the counselee to realise that all judgments may simultaneously be equally true or false. This realisation serves well in the dissolution of the counselee’s problem.
2. **Emphasising correcting the religious approach:** Christians believe that when people die, their souls live on in heaven. But this becomes very perplexing when we gaze at a person's entire life and wonder which part of it is continued in heaven. Let us suppose that someone is a good-tempered person and then has a car accident and spends the last years of his life with a changed personality. For the last few years, this person has been short-tempered and violent. Is it the earlier or the later personality that has an afterlife? One answer might be that both do. If God can give a person one afterlife, he can give them many. So, it is possible that after our deaths, our lives continue not from where they stopped but from all our living moments.
3. **Emphasising questioning the basics:** Scientific theories, believed to bear objectivity, constantly change. While physicists swear by Newton’s Laws of

<sup>4</sup> As is aptly put by French essayist Joseph Joubert: “The aim of any argument or discussion should be not victory, but progress.”

<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon may be clearly observed in Plato’s Dialogues, such as Protagoras, Theaetetus, Charmides, Laches, Timeus, Pheado, Phaederus, Meno, and so on.

<sup>6</sup> It must be mentioned here that Plato’s Socrates used the term *ataraxia* for the first time in response to the question, ‘What is the purpose of doing philosophy?’ Kindly note that instead of saying ‘Knowledge’, ‘Happiness’, or ‘Success’, Socrates prefers a ‘good life’.

Motion, the first law may not be able to explain the nature of the first mover (or the unmoved mover). The science of the next century might go back to thinking that Newton's first law may not be as perfect as it seems today.

4. **Emphasising the approach to Justice:** We value justice and think an unfair society ought to be changed. But then, it is usually seen that our understanding of justice prefers a 'reformatory approach' in others' cases but transforms to a retributive one in any personal scenario.
5. **Emphasising the origin of moral codes:** Most of what we believe in our moral codes has been picked up unquestioningly from our parents. But there is very little evidence that any of these things are true. Most of the beliefs and morality of our time may seem to be superstitious nonsense.
6. **Emphasising Cosmo-centrism as a remedy:** We understand the significance of the earth's ecology and the life it supports. But one of the main problems for the earth is the human race. There are so many humans that they exclude other species, and industrial societies cause ecological disasters. Humans are intelligent enough to love the earth and to see the harm they are doing to it. So, humans can understand the duty to reduce the damage to the planet. This will mean an earth with far fewer humans on it. It may mean that the earth would be best without humans.

Here, a counsellor facilitates a counselee to comprehend certain philosophical theories and apply them to his/her case. The counselee may get rid of the aporia as he/she realises (over a while) that:

- The Counselee is not the only person suffering from such a perplexing scenario. There are others, too, who understand and have already discussed elaborately on the issue.

- The counselee is not the only person responsible for such a perplexing scenario. Rather, it is a circumstantial issue that may dissolve, provided the roots of the problem are identified clearly, neutrally, and critically. Several philosophers have already addressed the issue.
- The counselee needs an empathetic environment conducive to the dissolution of the problem. The role of the counsellor-philosopher is merely that of a catalyst/facilitator in the entire process.

At the end of the sessions, a counselee may want to reconsider his existing situation, though in a refined manner (parishkaar). It is to be noted here that a counsellor-philosopher will not tell whether the existing scenario is correct. This is vital. People often think that as they study philosophy, they will find some argument by some philosopher that will confirm what reality is really like, and they would suddenly realise, making sense of their lives. This may happen. Some people find Plato or Sankara such a philosopher, while others may seek solace in Bhagwadgita, Stoicism, Epicureanism, or Existentialism. But that is not the main point.

The main point is to find out how to think about these and other important questions- the main concern should be philosophy's methodology. Thinking about the dilemmas may tell that they have no answers or that there are more important questions to ask. But as one's thinking becomes stronger and more confident, the counselee will hold on to the powers to think and discuss more than the answers they give you.

We may remain uncertain about questions of life, but at least we will be certain that we think clearly, argue persuasively, and see through other people's bad reasoning. This refined understanding (Parishkaar vidya) may dissolve the aporia and lead to ataraxia.

Here, in case the philosophical acumen and activity are to be applied to a field like that of



Counselling, it seems necessary, at the very outset, to divide between its two types:<sup>7</sup>

1. Narrow Sense of Philosophical Counselling.
2. Broad sense of Philosophical Counselling

The term 'Narrow' is used not with reference to the mentality/approach but to the scope of the Counselling. Here, the concerns (and, therefore, the scope) are immediate (with reference to the client). We may use the Wittgensteinian sense, where he says that what he does in philosophy is "to show the fly out of the fly bottle" (Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*). In the Indian context, the Krishna-Upadesa to Arjuna may be taken as the classic example of this. Here, the indecisive warrior doesn't want to fight with his relative. Still, the Counsellor provides various alternatives to solve the perplexity: firstly, by the binding of duty (*purusārtha*), then by the direct show of the inevitability of events in the cosmic space (*Virāt Swarup*) and finally by asking for complete submission (*Māmekam Sharanām Gatam*).

In a 'Broad sense', the concerns are not immediate but rather of a 'perennial nature'. It may, again, be of two types:

- A. The counsellor helps the counselee develop clarity of larger/deeper/general concepts by taking them (counselee) back to the alternate courses of history or introducing them to the multiple ways of resolving the perplexity. Here, the counsellor stands by the counselee in the entire process of resolving the issue. The entire Bhagwadgita discourse may also be understood in this context. Along with this, the Yāgyavalkya-Gārgi Samvād or the Yam-Nachiketā Samvād may be an appropriate reference to Philosophical Counselling: It helps the counselee to

somehow get out of the 'perplexity' (*Duvidhā*).

- B. To imagine that the individual's specific problem can be related to a larger philosophical issue and may be solved in a particular way with their (Counsellor and Counselee's) joint effort. Quite interestingly, the Prasthān-trayi (*Brahma Sutra*, *Srimad Bhagwadgita* and the *Upanisads*) may be considered an apt example in this case.

In the end, the quote from Ludwig Wittgenstein seems appropriate:

"When most people ought to engage in philosophical investigation, they act like someone who is looking for an object in a drawer very seriously. He throws papers out of the drawer- what he is looking for may be among them- leafs through the others hastily and sloppily. Throws some back into the drawer, mixes them up with the other, and so on. Then one can only tell him: Stop, if you look in that way, I can't help you look. First, you have to start to examine one thing after another methodically, and in peace and quiet; then I am willing to look with you and direct myself with you as model in the method."

As the concluding remark, it may be rightfully said that the author, at no point, intends to assert that 'Philosophy' and 'Counselling' are one and the same. Neither of these two is considered to overlap. The author, at the end, merely intends to conclude that Philosophical Counselling should be seen as the application/practicality of the theoretical discipline called Philosophy.

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## In Search for 'Good Life': Understanding Through Philosophical Counselling

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### Abstract

Philosophical counselling is regarded as a field of practical philosophy. One could say it is a philosophical practice that has been rediscovered over the ages. Such a form of philosophical practice was common in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, where philosophers were often counsellors and consultants to common people and royalty. If we talk about the history of Western philosophy, it can be observed that philosophers have discussed issues that have concrete applications, and they have worked and developed a broad spectrum of ideas regarding how life should be understood and lived. Different methods and theories of philosophers like Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans in ancient Greece and Rome, religious philosophies in Indian philosophical systems, and social philosophies such as Socialism, Communism, and Anarchism are found to have discussed and practised different techniques and methods to deal with daily mental issues and how to orient and shape the lives of individuals and societies. So, a philosophical practitioner can help clients clarify, explore, and comprehend different philosophical aspects like epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and logical issues. German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach, who founded the first association of philosophical counselling, believed that philosophising could give direction in its own right. In this paper, an attempt has been made to explore the application of Philosophical counselling for understanding and helping people achieve a good life, a life worth living.

**Keywords:** *Philosophical Counselling, Therapy, Good Life, Positive Psychology*

“Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with philosophers' problems and becomes a method cultivated by philosophers for dealing with men's problems.”

-John Dewey

What is “the good life”? This is one of the philosophical questions that everyone asks for. It can be asked in other ways, like how one should live. What does it mean to live well? But the question isn't as simple as it sounds. After all, everyone wants to live well, and no one wants a bad life. We also ask different questions concerning ourselves and others, our issues and everybody else's, the wide world and the vast universe, and the meaning and purpose of our existence. We inquire about the past, present, and future. And all these thoughts happen with the hope that something will give pure happiness and lead a good life. Many thinkers have discussed this moral conception of the good life in the past. For Aristotle, the good life includes happiness and engagement, where happiness is

defined as authentically expressing one's excellences or virtues. Expressing one's true self, making deliberate choices and taking responsibility for them, now commonly called authenticity, gives a sense of well-being and engagement in life.

Socrates and Plato prioritised virtue over all other supposedly good things, such as pleasure, wealth, or power. For Aristotle, acquiring intellectual and character virtues created the highest good, which he identified with the Greek word eudaimonia, often translated as happiness (Aristotle, 350 BCE/2004). Aristotle believed a person achieves eudaimonia when they possess all the virtues; however, acquiring them requires more than studying or training. External conditions beyond the control of individuals are needed, especially a form of state governance that permits people to live well. Plato's view of the good life was presented in *The Republic* (Plato, 380-375 BCE/2007) and supported the thoughts of his teacher, Socrates. *The Republic* examines virtue and the role of philosophy, community, and the state in creating the

conditions needed to live well. For Plato, a good life involves and defines living in harmony with one's inner nature and understanding the true nature of reality. To attain this, one must overcome negative emotions like anger and greed and embrace truth and knowledge.

Now, while dealing with the question of leading a good life, it has also been seen that many young or older adults live in an era in which material things are more meaningful and valuable. People fail to fill up their lives with true content and meaning. While dealing with this question, many people face difficulty in answering the question related to the meaning of life or the good life. This is where philosophy helps. Philosophy can be helpful to ordinary people through the application of useful ideas to their concrete problems of living. I have discussed some of the theories of philosophy which help define and clarify someone's thoughts and who is facing any discomfort. But before that, it is necessary to know some of the goals of philosophical counselling.

### **Objective of Philosophical Counselling**

Philosophical counselling aroused the interest of philosophers in the late twentieth century, as it brought to mind, among other things, the idea that philosophy, through its practical dimension, can be a path to a better life. Philosophical thinking involves pursuing knowledge and searching for truth, true knowledge. It also allows us to understand our values. Philosophical thinking involves the evaluation, criticism, and defence of a particular society's values. Therefore, philosophical counselling has been received as an alternative to other types of counselling (psychological, pastoral, spiritual, etc.).

It is important to note that philosophical counselling has several approaches, methods, and techniques that can be helpful in the counselling process, depending on the problem the client is facing. The multitude of approaches, methods, and techniques is immediately due to the transdisciplinary nature of this field—either ideas from different subfields of philosophy are borrowed, methods from psychological counselling are borrowed, or general methods of

problem-solving are adapted to the specifics of philosophical counselling.

There are two major goals of philosophical counselling. One is the philosophical self-understanding or acquiring of wisdom, which is an end in itself, and the second is to overcome personal problems, which may arise out of wrong belief systems and unethical lifestyles. Here, the aim is not to find an answer, solution or mode of treatment but to attempt to attain philosophical skills, attitudes and knowledge. Philosophical counselling is useful to the extent the dialogue partner becomes more philosophical in word and action. In philosophical counselling, the counsellor and the counselee are not limited by a counselling method or directed by the counsellor's therapeutic aim. There is a place for various discussions, in which both practitioner and client may think about and discuss the nature of their communications during the sessions. Such a form of "thinking about thinking" creates an open, equal relation while reaching the final point. So, this will be more often a philosophical investigation rather than a philosophical therapy.

### **Tools for a Good Life through Philosophical Counselling**

Philosophy seeks life's wisdom, drawing on philosophical knowledge and methods to do so. Philosophical counselling can be considered an approach for addressing dilemmas, predicaments, and life issues through philosophical questions or self-examination. This form of counselling involves philosophising, and they indeed philosophise with their counsees. The role of the counsellor here is to lead a philosophical self-examination and to help counsees develop their philosophical understanding of themselves and their world, ready to empower themselves to deal with their problems and lead a life in their own way. So, the difficulty is how and to what end the philosophising is conducted during the counselling session. The counsellor uses philosophising certain basic things primarily to help counsees overcome their problems by analysing their beliefs about the situation they are going through or their attitudes towards it.

So, it is an approach that aims to assist people in dealing with life events effectively.

Earlier, many philosophical practitioners were influenced by Socrates. The Socratic method assigns a fundamental role to conversation in the thinking process. Thus, it is a way for someone to think individually. Conversation as a form of philosophical contemplation conforms to Socrates' intersubjective understanding of truth. Through the proper use of conversation, the Socratic method strives precisely to ensure unity in the intersubjective relationship with the subject, thereby guaranteeing critical thinking.

From a Socratic perspective, philosophical counselling can be viewed as a conversational process guided by dialectical reasoning aimed at reflecting upon the concerns and issues that normally arise through living one's life—as well as upon the meaningfulness of one's life as a whole. This method involves question-and-answer style reflection, where the individual enters into dialogue with others in a friendly and supportive way in search of the truth, knowledge, insight, wisdom, virtue, and happiness—whatever these are. In this way, philosophical inquiry can help a person live a more fulfilling, productive, meaningful and happy life. Ultimately, philosophical inquiry in the Socratic tradition is the habitual, daily practice of reflecting upon, clarifying, coming to see, and making sense of one's values, beliefs, ideas, judgments, desires, emotions, intuitions, feelings, goals, commitments, relationships, and, generally, all the actions and experiences that constitute a person's life (Walsh, 2005).

Tim LeBon, author of *Wise Therapy* (2001), defines philosophical counselling as using philosophical knowledge and methods to help people think through important issues to live wisely (Evans, 2011). For LeBon, there are two different ways in which philosophy can become part of counselling. These correspond to two approaches to philosophy discussed by Purton (1993). The first is the attempt to create favourable outcomes, for instance, how to live, and the second attempts to clarify and raise different questions. The first is performed by providing answers to questions relating to the

goals of the therapy, for instance, 'What is a good life?' and 'How can we strengthen the meaning of life?'

LeBon considers both existential and practical answers to the question of the "good life" to have appeal. He thinks the second method to be less controversial and extremely promising. In this philosophy is used to unrestrictedly clarify, ask questions and explore insofar as the topic is concerned. Counsellors can use clients' life philosophy to simplify their view of the world by asking them questions about their premises and other potential alternatives. This kind of philosophical counselling involves working on oneself by examining key points in one's conceptions. In this way, the counsellor can help the client 'examine life'. This examination may relate to premises such as those above and values, options and actions.

However, present-day philosophical counselling is different from most of these traditional approaches. The philosophical counsellor offers different thinking tools. Different approaches can be looked upon while dealing with certain cases or as philosophical counselling. Each approach uses different tools to achieve the client's objectives, though there is some overlap. However, it will be more convenient and acceptable if philosophical understanding grows from the individual without imposing any pre-conceived solution. In this respect, the philosophical counsellor is like Socrates, who regarded himself as a midwife who helped others give birth to their ideas. Instead of aiming at finished products, i.e., theories, it values the process of searching, and rather than constructing general and abstract theories, it encourages the unique expression of the individual's concrete way of being there in the world.

So, another basic idea in philosophical counselling is to help the counselee investigate his or her life or world. Here, it would not be wrong to call it philosophical self-investigation, a kind of philosophical self-understanding. To count as philosophical, an investigation must deal primarily with ideas in the public realm. That means it must have concepts, conceptions,

assumptions, theories, etc., rather than exposing concrete events or processes cognitive, emotional, etc. More accurately, philosophical counselling deals with the contents of the person's understanding of the world. A philosophical self-investigation seeks to examine the person's understanding in terms of ideas and to investigate their logic, structure, and implications.

Another tool in philosophical counselling is critical examination of basic principles. A philosophical form of investigation is one that critically examines concepts. This implies that in philosophical counselling, self-investigation is concerned not just with describing somebody's understandings but mainly with critically uncovering their basic elements and structure, analysing them, and examining their consistency, implications, and acceptability.

Linda Elder (2007) defines critical thinking differently. People who think critically try to live rationally, sensibly and empathetically. They recognise that human thinking is inherently faulty and try to eradicate their egocentric and socio-centric tendencies. They use the intellectual tools critical thinking has to offer—its concepts and principles—to enable them to analyse, assess and improve their thinking. They work diligently to develop the intellectual virtues of intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, intellectual civility, intellectual empathy, intellectual sense of justice, and confidence in reason. They realise that, regardless of how skilled they are as thinkers, they will always improve their ability to reason, and sometimes they will make mistakes while doing so; nonetheless, they will rid themselves of their human irrationality, prejudices, biases, distortions, uncritically accepted social rules and taboos, self-interest, and vested interest. They attempt to improve the world in any way and also can contribute to a more rational, civilised society. They embody the Socratic principle: *an unexamined life is not worth living* because they realise that an unexamined life results in an uncritical, unjust and dangerous world.

Now, philosophical self-investigation, in general, is based primarily on non-empirical

considerations, that is, on 'pure' thinking that is relatively independent of data collected empirically from the world. It focuses on the 'logic', the analysis, and the ideas in question rather than on contingent states of affairs. If investigation is philosophical, it cannot focus on tracing the person's unconscious thoughts, which may or may not exist and can only be discovered through empirical observations such as psychological tests. So, it can be said that a philosophical self-investigation, in the context of philosophical counselling, is a critical, non-empirical investigation of the fundamental principles underlying the person's world-view. It seeks to deepen one's understanding of the situation, the processes, and the network of basic ideas which compose the landscape of the person's world and to examine their structure, implications, and tenability.

Another approach that can be taken here is Virtue. For Kant, a capacity for virtue is unique to human beings because the ability to resist bodily desires requires the exercise of reason. Kant claims that human reason makes us worthy of happiness by helping us become virtuous (Kant, 1785/2012). Philosophical counselling is, therefore, “a process of fostering virtues” (Tukiainen, 2011). Virtues are associated with self-understanding. Tukiainen distinguishes between cognitive and practical virtues, although the distinction is unclear. Cognitive virtues include self-knowledge, which is very important and enables people to follow their goals and understand their fears and emotions. Our knowledge of the external world, which enables us to lead satisfactory and morally acceptable lives, can also be seen as a virtue. This knowledge is very important since the success of our actions depends upon it, and it affects our ability to make decisions based on our awareness of the value, feasibility and appropriateness of the various actions that lead us to make our judgment. “Openness to new ways of understanding ourselves and our world is a cognitive virtue” (ibid, 2), for sometimes we have to adopt radically new perspectives and concepts that cannot be derived from our ideas thus far.

Existentialism emerged in late-nineteenth-century Europe, based on the idea that the material existence of a thing precedes its immaterial essence. This reverses Plato's position that intangible essence precedes a thing's material existence. For example, according to Plato, goodness is an eternal idea. What makes a deed "good" is the extent to which it contains the essence of goodness. So, to do good, you need to understand goodness and capture its essence in your deeds. The existentialists, on the other hand, reject Platonism. They suppose you choose to do a given act according to your deliberations and preferences. Once you've done a deed, then we can determine from its existence your essential idea of goodness (Marinoff, 2002).

Existentialists think that authenticity is important and that people should acknowledge the givens in life—for example, they must acknowledge that their meaning is their mortality. Hence, they defend a certain way of existence, a way of life that corresponds to the values of existentialism. Van Deurzen-Smith (1994) says counsellors should 'investigate and rigorously apply the laws of existence'. By contrast, utilitarians think the good life maximises happiness. From this perspective, the philosophical counsellor should encourage the client to examine the consequences of their actions, look at the alternatives and be aware of what it means to be happy.

E. D. Cohen describes Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) as "a variant of the theory of psychotherapy known as Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). It is also a leading modality of 'philosophical practice' (or 'philosophical counselling')" (2013, p. 2). It works by helping the client overcome unrealistic conclusions derived from irrational premises. Logic-based therapy, therefore, provides the critical thinking tools designed to correct the client's erroneous reasoning, identifying and refuting its irrational premises and building philosophically grounded premises, guided by a corresponding amount of 'transcendental virtues', such as respect (of oneself, others and the world), metaphysical principles, courage and

temperance. It concerns behavioural change to overcome irrational tendencies and cultivate virtuous habits (ibid., p. 2). personal problems by analysing their beliefs about or attitudes to their situation. For him, this approach reduces philosophical counselling to a tool for promoting client satisfaction. The motive of philosophy here is helping the client feel better regardless of how intellectually rich, conceptually grounded or spiritually deep it is. Whether counsellors' philosophising is deep or shallow, coherent, or a pile of isolated clichés is irrelevant; what is important is that the client's problem is solved and that he or she becomes happy.

Philosophers are deeply interested in belief systems. Many philosophers, from Plato to William James, have noted the vital role our beliefs play – for better or worse - in getting us through the day. Hobbes observed that the human world is governed by opinion. The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts, as described by Marcus Aurelius.

Another Philosophical theory that can also be considered is the Deontology Theory. This comes from the Greek word *deon*, which is related to the notion of duty. In practice, it means following a rule book of morality. The rules themselves are predefined as "good." Following them is therefore treated as "right." If most people followed them, society would appear "just." In secular contexts, some philosophers adhere to a rule of Kant's known as the "categorical imperative." This is something which is an unconditional moral obligation that is not dependent on one person's inclination or purpose. Another theory is Teleology. This also comes from a Greek word, *telos*, meaning "purpose" or "end." Teleology (or consequentialism, as it is often called) asserts that no act is right or wrong in and of itself but that its rightness or wrongness depends on the goodness or badness of the consequences it brings. In other words, if you get a good outcome, you do the "right" thing. If you get a bad outcome, you do the "wrong" thing. One of the more prevalent forms of teleology is called "act- utilitarianism." It would say, "Act in such a

way as to produce the greatest good for the greatest number." So, there are different philosophical approaches that can be used as an approach in philosophical counselling for leading a good and favourable life.

### Conclusion

Philosophical counselling is a search for a means of broadening and deepening life. Its role is not to help counselees become happier but wiser; it is not to overcome problems in the workplace or marriage but to explore the domain of ideas and grow towards wisdom.

It can be rightly pointed out that philosophical counselling plays a great role in people's lives in many different ways. Its goal is hinted at by the Greek meaning of 'philo' and 'sophia' means love of wisdom. It expresses a vision which (though not unprecedented) is especially significant in our technological and problem-solving-oriented society. Unlike traditional philosophy, it does not think that the role of

philosophising is to churn out theories, solutions to problems, or finished philosophical products. It regards philosophising as a process of growth, an individual quest in the landscape of meanings or ideas. The positive mindset in every approach plays a bigger role. Positive psychology began as an inquiry into the good life to establish a science of human flourishing and improve our understanding of what makes life worth living (Lopez & Snyder, 2011). Yet, to be happy, one must gather all physical and mental powers and organise and plan life because the search for happiness is a task we accept voluntarily. And this is not easy. We need to think about what makes us happy.

It can be concluded with a note that the greatest potential benefit of positive psychology is that it can teach or lead the power of shifting one's perspective because a small change in someone's perspective can lead to outstanding shifts in well-being and quality of life.

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## Ethicality and Spirituality in Kathopniasadic Philosophy

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### Abstract

The concept of Atman is central to the Vedantic religious-philosophical thought. Vedanta Darsana is also regarded as Atmadarsana. The Upanisads, also known as Vedanta Sruti, impart the teaching of Atman (Atmavidya). Among the principal Upanisads, Kathopniasad is the most prominent one so far, as far as Atman and its realisation are concerned. The concept of Atman has been elucidated through the anecdote of Yama to Nachiketa. Also, there is the exploration of Atmajana or Atmopodobdhi while exposing the Upanisadic concept of Atman in the background of the Advaita perspective. I have tried to mention how the idea of Atman can be regarded as philosophically illuminating and how the comments of the Upanishadic concept of Atman are all with obscure mysticism and thus transcendent to a minimum sort of rational scrutiny can be avoided. By way of discussion, it seems to me to be entirely plausible that the concept of Atman and its realisation becomes more comprehensible through an ethical instead of theological rendering.

**Keywords:** *Atmajana, revelation, Upanisads, Atman and Vedanta Darsana*

The expressions 'Brahman' and 'Atman' give the impression that Brahman is different from Atman. But Brahman is the same as Atman because both the terms represent the same reality. Hence, Brahman is not different from Atman. The word 'Atman' is defined as moving constantly and pervading everywhere. It is noteworthy that the ultimate, eternal and intelligent principle, when studied from the subjective point of view, is called Atman and that reality, from the objective point of view, is called Brahman. To Sankara, Brahman is also the same as Atman. The Kathopniasad is regarded as one of the perfect specimens of the mystic thought and poetry of the ancient Hindus. Kathopniasad is mainly devoted to answering Nachiketa's third question, whether something survives after death. Yama explains Nachiketa by stating that the individual self is the same as the universal self. The individual survives death and takes up another body according to his deeds and knowledge. Considering the ultimate reality is one of the most critical aspects of Upanisadic philosophy. It is also said in the Upanisads that Brahman is absolutely real. The expressions 'Brahman' and 'Atman' give the impression that Brahman is different from Atman. But Brahman is same as Atman. There are more than one hundred Upanisads. But Atma-jnana is singularly

focussed on the Kathopniasad. Here, Nachiketa, while asking for the third boon, requests Yama to instruct him about Atman's knowledge. And Yama, after carefully testing the sincerity of Nachiketa's request, imparts him the necessary instruction regarding the knowledge of Atman.

The objectives:

- The nature of Atman
- The concept of pure knowledge
- Attainment of Pure knowledge
- Realisation of Atmanjnana

Yama also describes the true nature of the Individual self and his relation to the supreme self. He prescribes a few means by which the mystic principle of total identity or tadatmya between Jiva and Brahman can be realised. Yama tells Nachiketa that a being neither lives by breath nor by Apaṇa. Man lives by something else, which is none other than the self. He is the final substratum and the highest goal (Sa katha sa paragatih). The intelligent or the all-pervasive principle, which Yama professes as the ultimate, is not an object of demonstration or empirical verification. Brahman can neither be grasped by a theoretical knowledge of the Vedas nor by average intelligence or reasoning.

Revelation or direct intuition (Aparokhsha anubhuti) is claimed to be the source of the knowledge of Atman or the supreme self. Atman is difficult to realise. It is very subtle. It cannot be obtained by arguing (atarkyam). A self-realised Guru is necessary for the aspirants on the spiritual path. There are paramatma and jivatma. The former is the light; the latter is the shadow. The pure Atman is actionless (Nishkriya). It is a non-doer (Akarta). When Avidya is destroyed through the Atmajnana, one becomes identical with Brahman or Paramatman. Control of the senses is also required to attain the goal of moksha. Nachiketa, having acquired this knowledge imparted by Yama, attained Brahman. He becomes free from all impurities and free from mortality. Atman cannot be divided into parts by any sword, and it cannot be affected by water or fire. It is eternal and ever-present. Here, Atman is supposed to be spiritual. It is consciousness. It represents the intelligence of the being. The being may die, but the spirit of the being is unaffected. It need not be confused with the capacity of knowing.

After the death of man, it cannot be said that he knows or he is having knowledge. That means after death, the individual is as good as Jada (unconscious) and cannot acquire further knowledge. But when it is said that Atman is conscious, it does not refer to the mere knowing capacity of the being. It relates to the consciousness itself. But it may be asked what itself. If it is understood as the consciousness about the consciousness of the being, then it will further lead to the notion of consciousness. In this way, it will lead to an infinite regression. Hence, consciousness itself is to be understood as the universal consciousness. The individual jivatman has consciousness, and thereby, it is conscious. But the universal consciousness that is paramatmam is said to be pure consciousness as such. Through universal consciousness, the individual appears to differ because of a lack of proper discriminative wisdom; eventually, both do not differ and hence, they are non-different or identical. Here, too, Kathopanisad advocates in favour of Advaitism in identifying the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. In Kathopanisad, Atman is sometimes

considered as the knower and, as the knower, it is the master of the body. Atmanam rathiram viddhi sarira ratha meva tu.... (i, iii,4). In the above-mentioned and following verses, Atman is described as the knower with consciousness. It is described with the help of a metaphor. That is, the organs of the being are the horses. Atman controls the sense organs in the sense that Atman is the charioteer who holds the bridle of the different horses of the chariot (body).

In Kathopanisad, the mind (mana) and the intellect (buddhi) are considered Atman's close associates or the chariot's controller. It has been said that if the charioteer is associated with a restrained or balanced mind, the horses are in good control, so liberation becomes more accessible for him. The being with an uncontrolled mind faces problems like a charioteer having unruly horses. At this explanation stage, Kathopanisad seems to have a touch of personalism. It has been said that being controlled with a restrained mind and having complete control over his senses, passion, etc., obtains the highest place of Vishnu. That means liberation has been considered as getting shelter in the holy feet of Vishnu. Again, it has also been said that Purusa is at the highest state and is the goal. Purusa is the same as Brahman or the supreme self. The being who realises that he is the supreme self, with the help of his finer intellect, is glorified in the region of Brahman (Brahma loka). He has the knowledge of Brahman, who understands that it is Aditi, comprising all the deities, takes birth as Hiranyagarbha, is manifested in association with the elements and is seated in the heart's core. (II.1.7. KV). But, on close study, it becomes evident that the impression of personalism attributed to Brahman /Atman is only apparent and can never be construed as real. Because Atman, as already indicated before, is neither an object nor a subject (na visaya na visayi). It transcends the subject-object dichotomy. The moment it is thought to be only conscious (cetana as distinct Jada), it becomes limited and can be described. But Atman is indescribable and not limited to conscious or unconscious categorisation. Hence, the passages where Atman is explained in terms of mahapurusa or

paramapurusa or even Vishnu or Narayana need not be construed as referring to a transcendental spiritual Supreme Being. Such expression has metaphorical significance. Since the Atman is viewed at the root of all description and is regarded as value par excellence (parama sreya), it is addressed with a reverential adoration and, in that way, a personal touch is given to appease the mass of the initial stage. But for the jñani (a man of wisdom), this personal attribute is rightly understood as an unnecessary feature ascribed to Atman, devoid of all features and characteristics.

Certain expressions in the Brahadaranyaka and the Chandogya Upanidads emphasise the oneness of Brahman and Atman. Brahman is considered as the ultimate reality. Being is regarded as the ultimate reality. The significance of saying Being is the ultimate reality is that the Atman is the ultimate reality. This view is almost clear in the expression of Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, i.e., San matram hi Brahma. The conversation between Uddalaka and Svetaketu reveals the same view through the expressions: Tat Satyam, Sa Atma, tat tvam asi, Svetaketu, iti. (The Atman is the reality 'that thou art'). Thus, one can try to relate Brahman and Atman through the relation of identity. This view can be further strengthened if one considers the following few lines. In Katha Upanisad, it is maintained that Brahman is soundless, colourless, tasteless, eternal, odourless, beginningless and endless. In Isa Upanisad, the ultimate reality is described as bodiless, invulnerable, untouched by evil, etc. In Mandukya Upanisad, Brahman is considered unthinkable, ungraspable, etc. All these negative descriptions expose the transcendental nature of Brahman. Brahman is found to be nirguna, the featureless absolute ultimate reality.

On the other hand, in Svetasvatara Upanisad, Brahman is conceived as a bird, beast, and insect. Sometimes, Brahman has been expressed as the world-soul or world, which is the manifestation of the Brahman. These later descriptions expose the immanent aspect of Brahman. Thus, Brahman is viewed from two aspects: nirguna (without quality) and saguna (with qualities). While the Advaitins only

emphasise Brahman as the nirguna, visistadvaitins emphasise Brahman as the saguna. For the former, the Upanisadic expression of Brahman as saguna is only the mark of vyavaharika maya and thus devoid of the paramarthika stage. For the latter, the Upanisadic expression of Brahman as nirguna only refers to the devil of bad qualities (mandaguna), while Brahman is saguna endowed with good qualities.

In the Kabopanisad, the discussion starts with the distinction between preya (pleasurable) and sreya (preferable), and subsequently, sreya is approved. To Sankara, preya is rooted in Avidya, and sreya is Vidya. Since for Sankara Atmainana is the supreme goal (paragatih) it is nothing other than sreya. A question is raised as to why Upanisad Approves Atmadhana as knowledge proper and the craving for more and more pleasurable objects like wealth, sex, etc., is due to ignorance. What are the grounds to maintain such a point of view? The view widely spread in this connection is that worldly existence is illusory, and ignorance continues so long as one clings to this worldly existence. The very idea that this is the only world (ayam lokah) and there is no other world in a para lokah asti) is due to Avidya. For whatever is found in this world is transitory perishable and hence can never be taken as absolutely real. Accepting the self as eternal and imperishable is ultimately considered real (paramartha sat). Realising this ultimate reality, one becomes removed from this world of Prapanca, and this is entirely free from all sorts of sorrows and sufferings (vitosokah).

Upanisad, it is true, is not exclusively recognised as a philosophical treatise. A philosophical study of the Upanisad is undoubtedly different from a religious study. A philosophical study of a treatise is mainly concerned with a detailed unravelling of the reasoned thesis that the treatise in question attempts to establish and evaluate, if possible. These different arguments are advanced for justifying such a thesis. For a devout Hindu, the saying of the Kabopanisad is words of revelation. For spiritualists, this Upanisad may contain elements of the most significant spiritual wisdom since it deals with

such topics as spirit and its immortality. But, as already indicated, for a philosophical study, the exposition and evaluation of the rational basis of the subject matter dealt with in this Upanisad seems quite relevant. In this connection, Sankara's commentary on the Katha Upanishad is significant. This Upanisad does not directly deal with the concept of mukti or the supreme ideal. Self-knowledge is the direct and most fundamental topic with which this Upanisad is preoccupied. That's why it qualifies the knowledge of the supreme as 'Paramaṅghyan.

There are more than one hundred Upanisads. But Atma-jnana is singularly focussed on the Kathopanisad. Through the anecdote of Yama and Nachiketa, the conception here is to discuss in detail the issue of self-realisation in the background of Kathopanisad. Here, Nachiketa, while asking for the third boon, requests Yama to instruct him about Atman's knowledge. And Yama, after carefully testing the sincerity of Nachiketa's request, imparts him the necessary instruction regarding the knowledge of Atman. But it should be marked, in this connection, that the third boon regarding self-knowledge is relevant to the attainment of mukti. Sankara, in the course of his interpretation, clearly states that knowledge of the self has, for its object, absolute emancipation. The third boon is the means for the attainment of the highest goal. Here, the highest goal is construed as nothing but the attainment of Brahman (Brahmaprapti), which is possible, according to Sankara, not by the performance of any ritual or Karma but by pure knowledge (suddhajñāna) alone, maintains that knowledge of the self is possible only when there is the cessation super-imposition (adhyasa) of the self.

According to Katha Upanisad and Sankara, heavenly existence is never considered suitable for attaining the highest good. Sreya, in the sense of Atma-jnana, is not beyond morality. Of course, the concept of morality here should not be confused with the localised conception of morality. Mukti is attained only after the complete cessation of false attribution. In Katha Upanisad, it is said that the world tree is rooted in Brahman: 'That is pure, that is Brahman, and

that is called immortal. Tadeva Sukram Tad-Brahma Tadeva artanuchyate (2 III.). It is also said (in 2.2.15) that the supreme illuminates the whole world. The sun, moon, star, or other cannot be considered light sources. The proper source of the light is the supreme alone. And in the whole of the Upanisad, Brahman is considered supreme. Certain expressions in the Brahadaranyaka and the Chandogya Upanisads emphasise the oneness of Brahman and Atman. Brahman is regarded as the ultimate reality. Being is considered as the ultimate reality.

Here, one can understand how the Atman is gudham and guhahitam. The knowledge of Atman is not available at the surface level. One interested in knowing about it cannot get the knowledge of it. It is supposed to be placed in a cavity (Guha) However, the cavity is not a physical cavity with a hard covering in front of any outlet. Still, the cavity of the consciousness or awareness is supposed to be beyond the perceptual level. Thus, though the knowledge of Atman is hidden, it can be achieved. Kathopanisad, it is said that such knowledge is unavailable from external sources or outside of himself. In this sense, Atmajnana is not an impossibility. One who talks about Atman may not be one Atman-jnani. The description of Atman may be within his knowledge. In other words, he might have been informed about the various sayings about Atman found in different Vedic and Upanisadic sources. But he might not have realised it or might not have comprehended Atman. There is no difference between knowing and being so far as Atman is conceived. One Atmajnani does not differentiate between himself and Atman. There is the realisation of total non-difference (tadatayer). The knowledge about is the bare knowledge of information. It might have been acquired by reading a text or listening to some authority. However, knowledge of Atman is not obtained through some mediate source. It is more than bare information. It is the knowledge itself. It is the first-hand knowledge obtained directly through realisation or immediate awareness (asat). This view can be elaborated further by considering an example. Suppose a teacher is asked to give a talk on the Upanisadic notion of Atman. He prepares a good

note by going through various Upanisads and delivers the lecture on the Upanisadic notion of Atman. It is his knowledge about the Upanisadic notion of Atman. The person might not accept those statements. He has performed the act of reproduction without having any commitment to it. Here, it cannot be said that he has the 'knowledge of Brahman. The knowledge of Athan is not possible without having the realisation of Atman. The teacher has Atmajnana in the sense of learning, but he is not an Atmajnani. Atmainana, In the Upanisadic sense, is the realisation of Atman. It is not the knowledge about Atman. We can find hundreds of people who have mastered the verses and recite them at various places. In all those cases, one cannot deny that they are efficient at learning Atman.

Because they provide the correct answer to the question of what the view of Atman is according to Kathopanisad. But they are not Atmajnani in the proper Upanisadic sense. It is a case like that of a parrot who can recite the verses of Nyaya sastra by listening repeatedly to its master. The bare information or having the report is no knowledge in the Upanisadic sense. It is the realisation of Atman (Brahmi) or Anubhuti) that is duly emphasised in this context. While listening to the responses of Nachiketa, Yama was convinced that Nachiketa is the proper person, for which he says that consider you fit for emancipation, as the essence of the knowledge is wide open to you". Vivrtan Sadna Naciketam Manye (1 11 13).

A pertinent question may be raised: in what sense is Nachiketa Atma Jnani? The answer has been expressed clearly: Atman cannot be known through rigorous study, having sharp intellect, or listening a lot about Atman." The knowledge of Atman is not possible if the conduct, the senses and the mind are not in control."2 It is said that the nature of Atman is to be realised. Then the question comes: what is the real nature of the Atman? According to Kathopanisad, even though no sense organ can experience it, no mind can grasp it fully, but that exists or 'It is' has to be realised. Asti iti eva upalabdhyah 11, 111, 13), The Atmainani realises it as the only

reality Itattva bhavena). One who realises he attains Brahman Brahmajnana.

With regard to the knowledge about Atman, Kena Upanisad suggests that Atman, which is beyond speech and mind, is also "other than all that is known" and, in that way, it is beyond the unknown, 4th verse: anyadeva tat vidadat atho aviditat adhi....) Explaining this verse, it can be said that Atman is positively unknowable. It is unknowable in the sense that no sense organ can know it. However, a very common question comes up when accepting Atman as unknowable. If it is unknown, how can it be said the reality of Atman cannot be denied and that it is the only reality to overcome such a dilemma? Sankara has commented upon this point by saying that apart from the Atman, there cannot be any entity other than the known and the unknown; therefore, the Atman is Brahman.

Hence, it is known in one sense. In that sense, no other knowledge is possible if it is unknown. It is also unknown in another sense. In that sense, its knowledge is unavailable through the usual methods of knowing. Atman is not an impossibility. In the background of this Upanisad, one can find the following two recommendations regarding Atman's knowledge. The knowledge of Atman is hard to grasp. The knowledge of Atman is the subtle knowledge available to the finer intellect. It is not the case that knowledge of the Atman is confined to a selected few. The majority of the people do not possess adequate knowledge of Atman. When the knowledge becomes adequate, the being is identified with Atman. That is the test of the proper knowledge of the being. It is known through realisation neither through experience nor through argumentation (Atarkyam), One Atmajnani (knower of the self) has the realisation that I am that (Atman)".

In Kathopanisad, Atman has been described as *durdasam* because it is beyond the ordinary person's comprehension. It is too complex to be known and to be described. Had it been something to which physical characteristics or perceivable characteristics would have been ascribed, it would not have been difficult to know about it. The physical attributes are

ascribed to the object's shape and size (Sthula). But no physical characterisation is possible since Atman is highly subtle (Suksma). So, it is unknown through perceptual means that sense organs are helpless in acquiring the knowledge of Atman. It can be said that no knowledge is possible without Atman as Atman is the basic pre-supposition behind any knowledge; Atman represents the consciousness of awareness. No knowledge is possible without awareness of the knowledge. The very fact of awareness leads to the principle of awareness and, consequently, to pure awareness. As Atman is often defined as pure consciousness or pure awareness, the knowledge of Atman cannot be an Impossibility. Instead, it is the basis of the possibility of knowledge itself. This view has been expressed effectively in the Kena Upanisad in the following Hanner. It is accepted that without Atman. Perceptual judgment is impossible because Atman is behind all such activities (prati vodha viditam).

#### Conclusion

The non-deviation of Atman in any kind of knowledge-consideration shows the eternality of Atman. In this sense, Atman is eternal, or the eternal reality. The speciality of the Upanisadic

message is that there is no difference between individual awareness of the Atman and Atman itself. It is the transcendental presupposition of all-knowing to borrow the expression of Prof A.C. Mukharji (The Nature of Self). There is no difference between knowing and being so far as Atman is conceived. An Atmajnani does not differentiate between himself and Atman. It is said that if someone chooses the series, he is on the path of a moral choice. It opines the consideration of 'ought'. Here, one uses his inner voice, which is intuitive in support of morality. There has been no importance on immediate gains. The goals of life are not to run after pleasant acceptances. Rather, such pleasure cannot have a long-standing effect. Thus, for living a good life *sreya* is important.

From the discussion above, one thing at least becomes pretty straightforward: Atman cannot be ordinarily known using sense perception or discursive reasoning. The moral consideration is of prime importance. In this sense, it seems reasonable to hold that the concept of Atmajnana is of ethical significance and, in that way, becomes universally convincing and illuminating.

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## Unveiling Philosophical Counselling in India: Navigating Post-pandemic Challenges

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### Abstract

This paper explores philosophical counselling in India, shedding light on its essence, necessity, and applicability, particularly in the post-pandemic era. The author provides a nuanced perspective on philosophical counselling, emphasising its grassroots relevance and potential to address post-pandemic challenges.

**Keywords:** *Philosophy, philosophical counselling, philosophical practice, methods, psychiatry, mental health*

The global landscape has undergone profound transformations after the COVID-19 pandemic, reshaping social dynamics and catalysing shifts across various domains. The impact of the pandemic has been multifaceted, unveiling a heightened awareness of mental health issues and an imperative for digital transformation. Amid economic challenges marked by job losses and supply chain disruptions, the societal discourse has pivoted towards environmental sustainability and strengthened global cooperation (Kiran,2020, p.16). Concurrently, discussions surrounding culture have gravitated towards nuanced explorations of identity and diversity, contributing to a dynamically evolving global environment characterised by continuous change. This exploration seeks to illuminate these 'trends' interconnectedness and implications for our evolving world.

The catalyst for adjustments, exemplified by the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted individuals to make multifaceted adaptations across various dimensions of their lives. These adjustments include shifts in lifestyle choices (Gür,2022), alterations in work patterns such as the widespread adoption of remote work, adjustments in social interactions driven by social distancing measures, and fundamental changes in attitudes towards health and well-being. Economic adaptations, marked by responses to job losses and supply chain disruptions, further underscore the transformative nature of this external catalyst. This collective response reflects a dynamic and interconnected process of societal and individual

adjustments in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The acknowledged catalyst for adjustments in individuals, often attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been recognised as a critical factor influencing shifts in traditional values and norms integral to every individual. This transformation manifests as a fundamental change in individuals' core beliefs and values (van de Poel et al., 2022), traditionally holding substantial sway over various facets of daily life. Accepting these shifts implies a cognisance of the transformative nature of external events on the individual minds, subsequently contributing to broader societal changes.

The pandemic has forced a reevaluation of priorities, challenging the conventional markers of success such as money, profession, and relationships. The once-stable foundations of individuals' lives were shaken, prompting a collective introspection into the meaning and purpose of life. For example, the fear of infection and especially the severity of the disease itself and death has undoubtedly become the cause of generalised anxiety and fear in many people. This anxiety may be dictated not only by fears for one's health but also for the health and lives of loved ones. (Łaskawiec, et al., 2022). The concept of "covidian burnout" (Łaskawiec et al., 2022) describes a psychological disorder resulting from continuous exposure to stressors related to the pandemic.

The pandemic had deliberately or unknowingly evoked different disturbing considerations for

everybody. It tested people's emotional reactivity, it questioned one's identity by propagating questions about the self and body, and in conclusion, it left a quiet comment that 'everything is momentary.' The Coronavirus Pandemic, by influencing every human adversely, likewise gave space to another comprehension of human existence - demanding a modified awareness of the connection between the 'self' and the 'other.' There is a need to understand life from an alternate point of view

Philosophers have pioneered in comprehending, critiquing, and introducing valuable perspectives to enhance human lives. Philosophy, often seen as the pursuit of wisdom and a tool for comprehending fundamental aspects of life, offers a unique platform for individuals to delve into their beliefs, values, and existential concerns. In the continual growth of knowledge across various disciplines and perspectives, it is notable that the fundamental significance of Philosophy has yet to garner the attention it deserves consistently.

While the benefits of philosophy have historically been confined to philosophers and theologians, the current era presents an opportune moment for the insights of philosophy to reach and resonate with a broader audience. Devarakonda (2021) emphasises the diverse interpretations of philosophy, ranging from Hadot's view of it as a way of life to the Indian concept of 'darśana' as a way of seeing/conceptualising.' Philosophy is a theoretical subject and a potent tool for life transformation and problem-solving. In exploring various perspectives, philosophy serves as a domain of inquiry that allows us to delve into different ways of comprehending human existence. (Devarakonda, 2021, p.2603). Notably, philosophers like Epicurus and Stoics have portrayed philosophy as an intellectual exercise and a therapeutic and practical guide for leading a meaningful and well-lived life (Raabe, n.d). Different ways of applying philosophical knowledge are being innovated, including, but not limited to, Philosophy Cafes, Philo dramas, etc.

One such significant endeavour is Philosophical Counseling, which attempts to support those who need a philosopher to address their concerns. Philosophical counselling is a crucial endeavour contributing to an enhanced understanding of 'human existence and its relations.' This comprehension is notably influenced by the concrete challenges posed by the realities of lockdown, isolated living, and social uncertainties. In the midst of and beyond these circumstances, Philosophical Counselling holds profound significance for addressing the complexities of contemporary life.

Philosophical counselling is a redefined approach where the counselee's concerns are addressed via different philosophical tools and methods. It is an interactive process that works through an extensive exchange of dialogues and discussions about the other's beliefs, actions, values, purposes, and commitments, not only what they presently are but also whether and to what extent they can be evolved. According to Padin,

"Philosophical counselling refers to a process in which a counsellor works with a client to critically reflect on the ideas and worldviews associated with the specific life problems brought to the counselling sessions and preliminarily defined by the client. The process of philosophical counselling, therefore, involves the articulation of both the client's life goals and life problems, as well as the relevant aspects of their implicit worldview (understood to be the underlying source of the client's problems); the critical analysis of that worldview during which deeper philosophical problems might be discovered; the analysis of those problems; and the repair of the worldview" (Padin, 2013).

This practice aims to identify the problem, dilemma, inquiry, or puzzle with an insightful discussion about the issue, which eventually helps the counselee recognise incorrect, inaccurate, maladaptive, or impractical beliefs. According to Raabe (2000), one of the pioneer philosophical practitioners,

"The philosophical counsellor understands that most individuals live by many unexamined (rather than unconscious) assumptions and values that can affect thinking and behaviour in puzzling or distressing ways. Through dialogues, the philosophical counsellor helps the client become aware of hidden biases, unspoken assumptions, and conflicting values that may prevent an inquiry into alternative perspectives that could help ease the problem" (Raabe, 2000).

In philosophical counselling, paramount importance is placed on the concept of personal philosophy. This term refers to the deliberate and conscious expression of an individual's rational and empirical beliefs. Articulating personal philosophy is an intrinsic process wherein the counselee may possess an internal understanding of this philosophy but feels a disconnection. This detachment might have occurred over time, or the individual may need assistance recognising its existence. The ancient injunction to "know thyself" often goes unheeded, as individuals may question its value or remain uncertain about how to actualise it.

Professor Šulavikova, a trailblazing female philosophical practitioner, underscores the significance of personal philosophy in this field. She articulates the aim of philosophical counselling as guiding individuals through exploring their personal life philosophy. This process unfolds as a conversational journey, fostering dialectic thinking and delving into the fears and questions that manifest in everyday life. Furthermore, it grapples with inquiries about the meaning of life. In essence, philosophical counselling serves as a tool to facilitate a deeper understanding of one's philosophy, offering insights and guidance as individuals navigate the complexities of existence. (Šulavikova,2011).

This is where philosophical counselling differs from other well-established counselling practices. PC is an insight-oriented therapy, assuming the pursuit of wisdom is a valued ideal. Philosophical counselling presupposes that

people can exercise reflection and make choices by themselves. Psychological and psychotherapist counselling are more concerned with the problem at hand, i.e., what the client is currently thinking about, whereas philosophical counselling is concerned with how one thinks. It addresses any conceptual issues that one may have. Marinoff (1999) says,

"too much of psychology and psychiatry have been aimed at 'disease-ifying' (that is, medicalising) everyone and everything in sight, looking to diagnose each person who walks in the door and find what syndrome or disorder could be the cause of their problems" (Marinoff,1999, p. 28)

The critique captures a broader sentiment shared by some proponents of philosophical counselling that the medical model in psychology and psychiatry may have limitations. However, the general nature of the statement might need to pay attention to the diverse approaches within these fields and the ongoing debates and discussions about the appropriate balance between medical and holistic perspectives. While the statement raises a valid point about the potential drawbacks of overreliance on diagnoses, it would benefit from more specificity to make the critique more robust and credible.

Philosophical counselling is a valuable resource for individuals navigating challenges related to their sense of purpose, values, goals, conflicts, relationships, loss, gain, or career changes. Importantly, these issues stand apart from symptoms of mental illness. There is no imperative for individuals to delve into their childhood experiences to decipher the roots of their current challenges because the emphasis is on addressing existential and life-oriented concerns rather than pathologising them; in contrast to a diagnostic approach, philosophical counselling delves into life's intricacies through meaningful philosophical dialogue. Here, engaging in dialogue is a positive indicator of mental health. A formal diagnosis is not a prerequisite for clients who can maintain normal functioning but grapple with profound philosophical questions. The focus of philosophical counselling is not on curing

entrenched chronic diseases; instead, its scope encompasses individuals generally in good health. The overarching goal is to cultivate a sense of self-sufficiency.

The difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy could be understood by the methods adopted by some philosophical counsellors who are pioneers of the field and led the movement towards significant advancement. Prof Schuster addresses the work of the founder of the philosophical counselling movement, Achenbach, who advocates the "beyond-method," which ensures that counselling does not occur based on a single method and takes place outside any system. He describes a counselling process based on his approach to philosophical experiences. He believes that this process should take place in the context of scepticism towards "everything that can be considered to be true" to everything that is "established, clear, and indisputable" so that curiosity about everything that has been refuted, dealt with, and considered to be untrue is renewed.

He primarily focuses on

"1. Sincere communication between the philosophical practitioner (an academically trained philosopher) and the visitor or client, based on a "beyond-method" method. 2. The importance of dialogue as that which enlivens and flows from being. 3. "Auslegen" – looking for explanations – in which the practitioner becomes united with the problem, not by imparting his understanding of it, but by giving the visitor a fresh impulse to explain him or herself." (Schuster,2004)

Briefly, philosophical counselling works in two different stages. The first stage is a five-fold process of "Problem identification," "Expressing emotion," "Analysing options," "Contemplation," "Equilibrium (PEACE)" (Marinoff, 1999, p. 90), and the second stage is the stage of self-transcendence (Blass,1996, p. 277). The former seeks to clarify the misconceptions, confusions, concepts, and

outlooks that may cause hindrances to further life development. This stage helps to untangle the causes of distress arising from various interwoven factors. The latter stage is mostly concerned with the individual's growth and development after clarifying their doubts. The word transcendence is not used here regarding spirituality, but it is a guided medium to help the counselee practice their 'personal' philosophy to become a better-evolved person. Suppose the counselee has not firmly believed in any fundamental philosophies. In that case, the process of transcendence can also provide an alternative course of action that may extend beyond the network of thoughts that the counselee is currently living.

Philosophical counselling is not in competition with Psychiatry or other psychological approaches, as their purposes differ. Rather than delving into underlying psychodynamic, social, or organic processes, Philosophical Counselling focuses on the reasons behind problematic beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour. Padin highlights this distinction:

"Philosophical counselling cannot be interested in the causes of life problems if those causes are understood in terms of some underlying psychodynamic, social, or organic process. Instead, philosophical counselling must be interested in the reasons that lead to problematic beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour." (Padin,2013)

The primary aim is to make the counselee self-reliant, where the counsellor helps the counselee unravel implicit assumptions by revealing hidden patterns and structures. As a result, the client can eventually apply the different philosophical tools and methods in any situation, making him independent instead of dependent upon the counsellor. Lahav (2001) writes that.

"The success aimed at by philosophical counselling, and examined in this study, is not just that of helping to reach self-satisfaction or to alleviate a particular distress, it is a much more ambitious goal, namely, that of philo-Sophia: the development of individual's capacity to

deepen and broaden her approach to life towards a more critical, rich and comprehensive attitude, that is to say, growth in wisdom." (Lahav,2001, p-13)

Finally, philosophical counselling can provide a fresh perspective on a problem. Beyond the issue, the counsellor can assist the counsellee (client) in getting to the root of the problem. The process of philosophical counselling may expose the counsellee to a refined meaning and purpose to their own life, which may improve social and cultural issues, thereby improving the counsellee's mental health. When the counsellee becomes self-reliant rather than dependent on the counsellor, the counsellee can use the tools taught by the philosophical counsellor during the session to combat the issue.

In summary, this paper introduced Philosophical Counselling as a valuable therapeutic tool, advocating for its broader application beyond traditional academic domains. The conclusion underscores its unique focus on addressing the underlying reasons behind problematic beliefs and behaviours by emphasising the non-competitive nature of Philosophical Counselling with other psychological approaches. The paper thus integrates philosophical perspectives into contemporary discourse, positioning philosophy as a practical and therapeutic guide for navigating the complexities of post-pandemic life.

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## Meditation and Self-Awareness: In View of Heartfulness

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### Abstract

Yoga is a balanced way of life, and Heartfulness (Sahaj Marg) is a natural path of meditation. Heartfulness traces its similarities to Patanjali yoga and meditation, as mentioned in the Upanishads, Balasubramaniam (nd). The Bhagwat Geeta explained the importance of inner awareness for mental and physical well-being. Meditation is viewed as a path to enhancing self-awareness. This paper discusses meditation, self-awareness, and the importance of self-awareness in counselling. The source of data for this study is secondary. This study explains the importance of meditation for self-awareness and counselling, especially in modern society. Meditation develops self-awareness, compassion, and empathy in the heart and mind. The objectives of this paper are 1. To study Heartfulness meditation and self-awareness and 2. To explain the importance of self-awareness in counselling.

There are various approaches to counseling that focus on dealing with life issues. Counselling is a type of pure awareness. Meditation is an effective method that develops knowledge of oneself and decision-making power. From this perspective, Heartfulness meditation has four basic practices that regulate the mind and create balance. The uniqueness of heartfulness is its Pranahuti technique. Since ancient times, meditation has been mentioned in the human lifestyle. Singh (1986) stated that the best tool for mental health promotion is yoga.

**Keywords:** *Heartfulness, Meditation, Yoga, Self-Awareness, Counselling*

### Introduction

In the modern era, people struggle with various issues and try to overcome them with their unsuitable ways and roots. Few of them consult counselling experts to get proper advice, which is for a temporary period. Since ancient times, various permanent methods have been suggested and practised. The sage Patanjali clearly explained the importance of yoga for a balanced life by connecting the highest inner potentials and creating harmony within. According to him, individual strengths will be realised and utilised, and weaknesses can be recognised and solved only when self-awareness is developed. Meditation is the easiest and most practical method to cultivate self-awareness. When meditation is universally accepted and clearly understood throughout all cultures and climates, it will benefit many individuals. Different types of meditation are used in practice. One of the most widely practised types of meditation is heartfulness. A study has been conducted on meditation, including heartfulness and its benefits. According to Krishna et al. (2022), the potential therapeutic and preventative benefits of

meditation for mental health and psychosomatic issues have been recognised because of its ability to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Even recently, most people have been practising, benefiting from, and appreciating its benefits.

As per Iyer et al. (2022), The Heartfulness program is a simple, heart-centred approach to developing a caring, compassionate learning atmosphere that fosters personal well-being and strengthens social-emotional competencies for a healthy lifestyle. The purpose of Heartfulness meditation is to cultivate and develop pure awareness, which is called self-awareness, among its practitioners through regular practice. In integrative health approaches, meditation is one trend that impacts well-being by developing self-awareness. The individual can understand his or her strengths, weaknesses, and emotions and be able to deal with them properly by developing self-awareness. Self-awareness is also helpful in understanding one's surroundings to function effectively. Self-awareness is a key element in counselling; it is more important to the client and the counsellor. By having self-awareness, a client can express his or her

situations and problems, and a counsellor can effectively understand the client's needs. Hence, from a philosophical perspective, meditation is an ancient traditional practice for developing self-awareness, which could facilitate counselling. The source of data for this study is secondary.

According to Kalaiyarasan (2017), self-awareness is the capacity for introspection and self-recognition. A person's development is adversely affected if they are unaware of their identity. Subjective and objective self-awareness are the two forms of self-awareness described by Aliksieieva (2022); the capacity to objectively and realistically assess one's behaviour is known as self-awareness. A psychologist specialising in diagnosis typically works with clients to help them understand their circumstances and identify various contributing elements. While therapy is being implemented, psychological help should be obtained in addition to mobilising one's resources to solve the issue. For an efficient counselling procedure, the client can provide accurate information about the circumstances and their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. Both the therapist and the client must be self-aware during this process.

According to Mytsko (2011), counselling includes helping the client identify themselves, helping him or her resolve issues, and providing support so that the client may get through a crisis. Thus, the client should be conscious of his/her beliefs, principles, and behaviour.

### **Understanding Heartfulness Meditation**

As per Patel (2018), the natural route of Sahajmarg, also known as Heartfulness, is a way of reaching people's doorsteps and offering them free meditation. This is the system of ancient times. There is acceptance and use of heartfulness meditation. Pranahuti (Pranasya Pranaha) is what makes it special. Many people are encouraged to practice heartfulness techniques daily because they are simple to learn and provide immediate results. Fundamental techniques include bedtime prayer and heartfulness meditation with relaxation, rejuvenation, and inner connection. Ramachandra Ji Maharaj (Fategarh)

rediscovered the antiquated system. Ramachandra ji Maharaj, affectionately known as Babuji, strengthened the system internationally by officially registering it and expanding its services to other countries. Parthasarathi Rajagopala Chari Ji extended this system's global reach.

**Relaxation:** 5 to 10 min of relaxation reduces tension in all parts of the body and maintains balance

**Meditation:** By practising a regular minimum of 30 min of meditation, a regulated mind will be centred and shift to a deeper level of feeling and intuition.

**Rejuvenation:** Regular practice of rejuvenation creates lightness, joy, and a care-free attitude

**Inner Connection (Prayer):** Inner connection (Prayer) is the connection of the inner and listening heart's voice.

### **Heartfulness Meditation and Self-Awareness**

As per Hornostay (2001), "self-awareness is the capacity of an individual to reflect upon themselves, to perceive themselves from the outside, to reflect upon their capacities for successful personality formation, development, and improvement." According to Abolin's Encyclopaedia of Modern Ukraine (2019), morality is a spiritual and ethical force that governs behaviour and consists of generalised rules, values, behavioural patterns, and principles of approach toward others. According to Shkilna (2014), moral self-awareness is the awareness of one's moral traits, behaviour, actions, intentions, attitude towards the outside world, and one's activities towards oneself and society.

### **Heartfulness Meditation**

According to Patel (2018), heartfulness meditation attempts to assist people in connecting with their inner selves to achieve calm and a healthy state of mind. Many studies have been conducted to learn how heartfulness meditation might improve one's psychological, emotional, and social well-being. As per Kaniamuthan (2021), It has been observed that



the practice of mindfulness meditation directly impacts spiritual, psychological, social, cognitive, and physical advantages.

Heartfulness meditation, influenced by yoga and yogic traditions to foster self-awareness, has recently made scientific advancements. The impact of heartfulness meditation on psychological issues such as loneliness and poor sleep quality (Thimapuram et al., 2020), stress, anxiety, and depression (Singh, Mohan Kumar, 2011), as well as thankfulness. (Arya et al., 2018) was examined. Participants in a 24-week Heartfulness self-development programme showed improvements in psychological stability, moral reasoning, self-efficiency and positive attitude. According to Amarnath et al. (2023), students who participated in the heartfulness intervention reported feeling less stressed and more contented than those in the control group. The results highlighted the critical role that heartfulness meditation plays in reducing stress because it promotes emotional regulation, relaxation, and an optimistic outlook. Cortisol, a hormone linked to stress, was reduced in those who practised heartfulness. This shows that heartfulness meditation reduces stress by directly influencing stress reactivity through physiological means. Students receive complete assistance through the HELP program's heartfulness meditation and counselling services integration. It was mentioned in the study that students could address the underlying psychological reasons contributing to stress and build coping mechanisms by using counselling services as a platform.

### **Impact of Heartfulness Meditation**

According to Ranjani (2021), the self-care program dramatically lowered American high school students' levels of loneliness. The program focuses on self-care through guided practice of relaxation, meditation, rejuvenation, and self-observation. The guided tools from Heartfulness are the main component of the program. It is a program for cultivating self-awareness, finding inner peace, and enhancing social and emotional abilities.

Raja (2018) stated that meditation, a well-known method for reducing stress, fosters increased

perceptiveness and sensitivity to one's surroundings. One learns to balance work as one's mind becomes peaceful and in sync with one's heart and becomes more grounded and self-assured. Heartfulness meditation, which is specially tailored to the demands of contemporary life, offers a variety of advantages in addition to relaxation, such as clearing the subconscious mind of unwanted impressions that cause mental clutter and directing the mind toward the objective through an introspective prayerful attitude. People who have established a balance in their lives and are aware of their weaknesses, abilities, and interests in a way that supports managing their workload are free from work stress. One requires physical stamina, mental clarity, a happy mindset, and proper sleep to attain balance. Physical relaxation and mind regulation techniques in Heartfulness meditation address the burden of excessive thinking, which leads to mental and physical fatigue and lack of sleep. Since Heartfulness meditation involves tuning the mind to the heart, working in harmony and joy at work is brought about, leading to better empathy and compassion. Tuning into one's heart also improves intuition and creativity. With the development of these abilities, a person makes fewer mistakes and develops an acute sense of awareness of his surroundings.

### **Importance of self-awareness in counselling**

The activity of a consultant is "counselling," according to Osadko (2005), "aimed at providing services in the form of discussing issues raised by organisations and individuals.

According to Tsymbaliuk (2005), psychological therapy is a conversation between a person and a psychologist to help them resolve issues and build interpersonal relationships.

Dowden (2014) advises counsellors on conducting counselling in "stress-free zones" while also conversing with the client, meditating, and planning physical activity. The author suggests a three-step methodology to increase self-awareness. Each strategy enhances behavioural, emotional, and cognitive processes.

Andrea (2000) stated that vocational counselling includes various goals, including raising a client's level of self-awareness, expanding that client's understanding of the working world, and combining those two goals so that the client may make the best career decisions possible.

As per Raja (2023), Heartfulness meditation is useful for lowering students' stress levels. According to him, the Holistic Education and Life-skills Programme (HELP) now includes mindfulness meditation. Combining therapy with heartfulness meditation creates a holistic strategy that addresses both the psychological and physiological components of stress management.

### **Self-Awareness and the Counsellor**

According to Max (2012), knowledge of self-awareness makes it possible to practice counselling. Because it entails ongoing personal learning and development, self-awareness is highly appreciated. Knowledge counsellors make it possible to evaluate their efficacy continuously. Max further explained that we cannot be accountable or improve our efficacy in the selection and training for self-awareness without a more detailed understanding of how we evaluate this attribute.

### **Indian Approach**

The heart chakra is another name for the Anahata chakra, according to Sharma (2016). The three lower physical and emotional centres are connected to the three higher mental or spiritual centres in the heart. It is linked to the senses and air components. Heartfulness is a unique practice of meditating on the heart by subtle suggestion as divine light is present within the heart, which makes it possible for one to create feelings of love and compassion for others; hence, meditating on the heart is a unique opportunity to advance in love and create a balanced life.

### **Self-awareness and Genetic Counselling**

According to Laura (2023), many students recommend that self-awareness practices be promoted and made available frequently as part of the program's schedule, emphasising mental

wellness. There should be various self-awareness practices available.

### **Yoga, Meditation, and Counseling**

According to Peter (2008), many mental health professionals use meditation as a part of their treatments. In the end, meditation results in encountering higher states of awareness. There is ecstasy, joy, and calm. It is necessary to experience this transpersonal consciousness, in which awareness appears as intuition and wisdom. (Rama et al., 1976). There is ecstasy, joy, and calm because of the "witness consciousness." The experiences of global awareness, in which the line between subject and object (knower and known) dissolves, are what practices ultimately lead to. Finding that space and experiencing a very different self—a realm of pure awareness—is the goal of yogic meditation. This self was known as Atman, Chaitanya, or Chaitanyatman, and I refer to it as "the awareness self." The main goal is to assist clients in becoming more aware of and free from difficult feelings and experiences. Yoga is essential in counselling because it demonstrates how to recognise and attain oneness with self-awareness. Before teaching this new yoga to counselling clients, the counsellor must first master the most fundamental principle and practice of awareness. This is the idea and practice of separating everything we are aware of, whether it is something inside or outside of us, something pleasant or terrible, or something in between—from awareness as such.

The goal of meditation is to enter a state of pure consciousness. Meditation is the key link between therapy and yoga, provided that it is understood correctly as a practice of awareness rather than just standing or sitting in a particular way. Although "meditation" and "yoga" are frequently used, their benefits for counsellors and clients can only be understood in this context.

### **Self-awareness development for counselling**

As per Pieterse (2013), self-awareness training is for the therapist to have the capacity to recognise their emotional responses and to comprehend and perhaps use these responses within the

therapeutic relationship. Self-awareness is paying instant attention to one's thoughts, feelings, bodily reactions, and conduct. According to research on therapist self-awareness, an essential element of good psychotherapy is awareness of personal processes, such as unresolved conflicts, family dynamics, cultural biases, and worldview.

Many studies have emphasised the importance of self-awareness as a part of counselling training and ongoing development. Training programs and continuing education must expressly incorporate self-awareness training as the whole framework for the growth of self-awareness. According to the literature, self-awareness is key to successful counselling and psychotherapy (Edwards & Bess, 1998).

### **Counselling and Self Awareness**

According to Fayeze (2015), self-awareness is a higher-level cognitive ability to distinguish between self and others. Self-awareness is the capacity to perceive and comprehend oneself appropriately. One becomes aware of oneself by identifying, analysing, and storing knowledge about oneself in this condition. People must acknowledge and reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, emotions, thoughts, behaviour, attitude, and motives to live a good and balanced life.

According to Briere (2007), those who lack the capacity for self-awareness are characterised by a persistent sense of emptiness, confusion about who they are, vulnerability, contradicting ideas

and feelings, and a failure to set goals for the future. A prior study by Myers (2003) confirmed the importance of self-awareness in fostering personal development. Self-awareness encourages people to consider and analyse their strengths and weaknesses and learn more about themselves and others. This results in stronger connections with others.

Fayeze (2015) discovered that, when compared with the control group, the activity carried out in group counselling considerably increased the level of self-awareness and decreased the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

### **Conclusion**

This study discusses heartfulness meditation or Sahaj Marg, its effects on self-awareness, and its importance in counselling. It also emphasises that there is a strong relationship between self-awareness and counselling. Heartfulness meditation greatly influences self-awareness. As a basic principle, life is self-awareness. Sahaj Marg has had an impact on human lifestyles since ancient times. This study is unique because it presents important information about the relationship and impact between meditation and self-awareness. Heartfulness has a unique feature of transmission that is easy and fast, impacting the human brain and heart. Through heartfulness meditation or Sahaj Marg, self-awareness can be achieved, which is relevant and important in the counselling process and its outcomes in dealing with various human problems.

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## A Dialectical Understanding of Philosophical Counselling

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### Abstract

Dialectics helps us penetrate the opaque zone of reality. Dialectic functions as a remedy for mental rigidity and constructions in the flow of thinking. The force of reason initiates, sustains, and guides the dialectical process to a point of clarity. Due to the dialectical power, "negation" is essential to sustaining the discussion, leading to the clarity of the issue in question. To resolve divergent assertions in the areas of ontology, epistemology, axiology, ethics, aesthetics, and so forth, dialectic may be useful. As human thought is dialectical and the human mind is so programmed, man cannot transform from one level of perfection to another evolved level of perfection by only psychological therapy. But for total growth of human personality, man has to understand life itself and its various aspects and issues with dialectical and dynamic philosophical counselling. Mere psychological counselling is not sufficient for *Arjuna* as he had no psychic disorder on the battlefield. Rather *Arjuna* had conceptual conflicts regarding different value paradigms. To fight and not to fight was the moral dilemma for *Arjuna* because he was convinced of the viability of these two modes of action with equal weight of morality from different perspectives. This is the common problem with all of us when we are trapped by the crossed ethical paradigms at the crossroads of life. The healing of this problem is more philosophical than psychological, more ethical than logical. This healing is possible by the dialectical approach to the ethical paradigms .

**Keywords:** *Bhagavad Gitā, dialectics, counselling, synthetic personality, equanimity, stress management and self-transformation*

### Introduction

The *Bhagavat Gitā* gives a dialectical approach to the understanding of *Yoga* as both theory and practice. As a theory, it focuses on the discipline of every aspect of human life and as practice it is regarded as the treatise of practical living. The *Bhagavad Gitā* is not a *Dharma Sastra* or merely a religious book dealing with religious prescriptions, rites and rituals, and it is not confined to any particular religion. The *Bhagavad Gitā* is not limited to Hinduism. The *Bhagavat Gita* is not for any privileged people of any caste, creed, and colour. The *Bhagavad Gitā* is a treatise of mankind which preaches the ethics of humanity. Therefore, the *Bhagavad Gitā* is regarded as *Yoga Sastra*<sup>8</sup>, signifying *Yoga*

as the discipline of life of each and every man. *Yoga* is the principle of unification. *Yoga* never divides. Similarly, a *Yoga Sāstra* is that scripture which unifies the whole of mankind through the ethics of humanity. Both the client and the counsellor must be free from any religious formats. That means philosophical counselling must be secular in spirit, and both the client and the counsellor should have a secular mindset. The *Bhagavad Gitā* is to be understood as the scripture of righteousness and yoga. *Yoga* is the conscious effort to negotiate the gap between finite and infinite, manhood and Godhood. Every form of 'Yoga' presupposes a view of reality and the place of 'man' therein. It is evident from the fact that the *Bhagavad Gitā* starts with the

<sup>8</sup> The *Bhagavad Gitā* is called *Yogasastra*. The last part of every chapter of the *Bhagavat Gita* describes the *Gita* as *Yogasastra*. In this sense, the *Gita* is a scripture of righteousness and *Yoga* which seems to be secular in spirit as it gives universal message going beyond religious denominations

chapter named ‘*Visāda Yoga*’.<sup>9</sup> ‘*Visāda*’ or the state of disappointment is a natural existential state of each and every human being irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Similarly, the *Bhagavad Gitā* ends with the chapter named ‘*Moksha Sanyāsa Yoga*’.<sup>10</sup> *Moksha*, or the state of freedom, is the natural inner urge of each and every man. Though the notion of transcendence exists, there is no room for mystification in the *Bhagavad Gitā*. The *Bhagavad Gitā* is a manual of practical life. Almost all crises of human life have been addressed in the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gitā*. The practical life is a life of action and accountability. Human life is value-centric and context-specific. The contextual contingencies of human life determine the value paradigms. The universal and contextual application of ethical paradigms go hand in hand with the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gitā*. So, the controversy between the deontological and practical aspects of morality has subsided in the synthesis of both applications. This synthesis of the dialectical opposition has saved man from the crisis of life. We should have the basic idea that the *Bhagavad Gitā* model of philosophical counselling is not confined to religious and psychological limitations. It has its practical utility and impact on human personality, and it helps man grow and glow with gradual self-transformation.

### **Dialectical and Direct Approach**

Human thought is dialectical. It studies both the opposite possibilities and then comes to a synthesis. The process of critical thinking forces us to reevaluate previously held beliefs, opinions, and dogmas that have been held as self-evident. Dialectic acts as a remedy for mental rigidity and restrictive thought-flow. In essence, dialectic is a form of reviewing that involves discussion and disagreement. It involves using critical reasoning to clarify one's viewpoint. It becomes dogma when a position is upheld without supporting data or logic. Dogma is the restriction on one's ability to think.

Dispelling dogma, questioning what is already understood, and uncovering what was previously unknown are all achieved through dialectic. The dialectician should not have any preconceived opinions of himself, any established reasons in his favour, nor any a priori conclusion to draw. The force of reason initiates, sustains, and guides the dialectical process to a point of clarity. At the beginning of the war, Arjuna was biased by his pre-occupied thoughts and fond beliefs and therefore, he was reluctant to fight against his relatives. His thoughts were one-sided because he lacked dialectical thinking. He had no idea of the transcendental value of dharma beyond the opposites of success and failure, win and defeat, fame and defame, *ksara* and *aksara*, etc. Lord Krishna counselled Arjuna about the metaphysics of dialectical opposites of manifestation and unmanifestation showing the transcendental vision (*viswarupa darshana*). Lord Krishna advised Arjuna saying “He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, and who in prosperity does not hanker after pleasure, who is free from attachment, fear and anger is called a Sage of steady Wisdom”. (BG. 2.56) The *Bhagavad Gitā* is the only work that beautifully combines knowledge, action, and devotion. As a result, studying it may be helpful for broadening the scope of the dialectics by bringing knowledge, action, and devotion in an integral framework in the light of which *kāma* and *niskāma*, attachment and detachment, engagement and withdrawal, *dharma* and *swadharma*, and so on, are justified. However, context determines value paradigms. Every situation has a unique perspective under a value system. The knowledge of the dialectics from an ethical standpoint helps explain how the apparent disparities between the opposing value paradigms can be reconciled. Philosophical counselling should have a dialectical approach so that the client can reach a concrete conclusion.

<sup>9</sup> The first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gitā* is known as *Arjuna Visada Yoga*. The discourse starts with *Arjuna* being in stress and distress and reluctant to fight against his kin and kith.

<sup>10</sup> The last chapter of the *Bhagavad Gitā* is known as *Moksa Sanyasa Yoga*. This is the concluding chapter where we find the complete transformation of human mind has become possible.

The direct approach ensures strong connectivity and resolved counselling between the client and the counsellor. Counselling becomes effective if it is undertaken with direct communication between the client and the counsellor. In direct communication, the counsellor can read the psychological impacts of counselling on the client and the client also feels comfortable to share his issues with the counsellor. This direct communication can be made anywhere as per the convenience of both the client and the counsellor. Interestingly, in the *Bhagavad Gitā* counselling has been undertaken on the battlefield, which symbolises the most active and dynamic moment of human life. The classroom or official counselling is quite different from the counselling made in the practical field of human life, where man confronts the situation lively and instantly. Man struggles against diverse situations, confronting his own confusions and outside interferences. Man is not living in the paradise of happiness and perfection. He has to struggle hard to fight against the natural and social evils to attain perfection in life. In an individual, the subjective and the objective aspects of the mind work in unison. The split between the subjective and the objective aspects of our mind is mainly created by the layer of egoistic desires in the individual. The greater the distance between these two aspects of the mind, the greater is the inner confusion in the individual.<sup>11</sup> The ultimate goal of human life is freedom from suffering or attainment of the highest perfection. This inner urge to attain perfection inspires every one of us to guard against evil in our thoughts, speech, and actions. So, every situation in life is a war-like situation. The attitude of protesting against injustice (*adharma*) is the hallmark of human personality irrespective of caste, creed, colour and religion. In the *Bhagavad Gitā*, war is construed as *Dharma Yuddha*<sup>12</sup> or the protest against injustice. The civil war between the clans of *Pāndava* and *Kaurava* is only symbolic. The *Bhagavad Gitā*

has given more importance to the mental preparedness of the war than the real war. Understanding and feeling are the roots of all activities. *Karma* should be performed by the support of *jnāna and bhakti*. So war is not a mechanical reaction, rather a well-planned action backed by wisdom and dedication. Here the depiction of the war situation indicates the direct approach of counselling where all are ready for action-reaction responses. Counselling in such a moment is very difficult but it has been possible by the *Gitā* Model of counselling between *Arjuna* and *Lord Krishna*. It is suggested here that the counsellor be personal to the client so that the practical and real facts of life can be addressed and resolved.

### Freedom and Responsibility

Counselling aims at the free pursuit of thinking. Counselling does not restrict the freedom of the client. Man is free, but man is not condemned to be free. Being a self-conscious man is free to use his freedom in a righteous way. Misuse of freedom is the root of all evil in human life. After long counsels with *Arjuna*, *Lord Krishna* has not interfered with *Arjuna's* free choice by imposing His divine authority. *Lord Krishna* advises *Arjuna* to make decisions freely, either to fight or not. Hence, morality is a free choice, and moral consciousness is the root of human freedom. Man is freedom-seeking by nature. Freedom is the highest value-paradigm of human life.

A free man can make the right decision at the right time. One should not be duty-bound but rather a duty-creator. A duty-bound man is trapped by the bondage of his duty. But a free man thinks instantly what to do and what to avoid with a commitment that in his course of action, at any point, knowingly or unknowingly, he is not devoid of love, compassion, sacrifice, service, and perfection. One cannot simply live by the principles of living. One should know the art of living. The art of living consists in living

<sup>11</sup> Chinmayananda, Swami, 1996, *The Holy Gita*, Chinmaya Prakashan, Mumbai, p.2

<sup>12</sup> The battlefield of *Kuruksetra* is called *Dharmaksetra* as it is a ksetra of righteousness. This is mentioned in the very first verse of the *Bhagavad Gitā*.

*Dharma-ksetre kuru-ksetre samavetā yuyutsavah*  
BhagavatGitā., 1.1

with love, compassion sacrifice, service, and perfection. Such a lifestyle is possible through a sense of freedom, a sense of withdrawal, a state of fulfilment, and a state of *ānanda*. One should aim at perfection, well-being, and the benefit of our fellow beings. This practice automatically and gradually develops a sense of freedom. A free man can accept all contexts and, at the same time, can remain context-free. A context-free man can remain stable in all contexts, and therefore, he is free. For him, every *karma* is for *lokasangraha* and is an instance of *yajna*.

In the *Bhagavad Gitā*, Lord Krishna advises Arjuna that as the counsellor he explained everything in detail, but Arjuna is free to exercise his free will to decide what to do and what not to do<sup>13</sup>. This should be the attitude of an effective counsellor. The client should not follow the counsellor under any restraint or constraint. The *Bhagavad Gitā* gives us the message that even at the last stage of counselling, the client should be free to decide according to his own choice and mindset. If the mindset has not changed, then there is no meaning of counselling at all. The purpose of counselling is to reform the very personality of the client so that he becomes a free thinker with the ability of self-analysis and self-criticism.

Counselling is not only psychological but also ethical. Counselling must be value-centric. Psychological healing aims at prompt social activity and responsibility. One must be ready to be active further in life after proper counselling. The client must be infused with a sense of value and responsibility through counselling. The client should know that human existence is distinctive on account of rationality, normative awareness and free-will. Man has the innate ability to have a sense of ends and means, ought and ought-not, the pleasurable (*preya*) and the

preferable (*sreya*)<sup>14</sup>. No virtuous action goes unrewarded, and no vicious action goes unpunished. *Dharma* is the principle of righteousness, which is functional in the moral domain. Moral obligation is the noblest obligation, and the protection of morality is the highest duty. Those who protect dharma are protected by dharma (*Dharma Raksati Raksitah*).<sup>15</sup> *Dharma*, or moral order, is the root of our existence. As a universal principle, moral laws are the same for all. Whosoever commits *adharma* should be punished.<sup>16</sup>

In the *Bhagavad Gitā*, Arjuna felt reluctant to fight against his relatives as they were his kin. This was the dogmatic attachment of Arjuna to his blood relations. Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to fight against *adharma* only irrespective of who are the clients of *adharma*. Counselling aims to arouse a person from the dogmatic slumber to the state of impartial response for the duty that is expected in the real situation of life. The client is free to act, but at the same time, he is responsible for the consequences.

At the same time, it is declared in the *Bhagavad Gitā* that one should not have any attachment either for the action, or the agent, or the consequences. One should be responsible for the consequences without remaining attached to the consequences. This seems to be contradictory. But the client should understand that if the action is done in the sense of duty and for the welfare of all beings (*lokasangraha*)<sup>17</sup>, then there will be no attachment to the consequences and, at the same time, one will remain responsible for the consequences of his action. Responsibility is a part of doing duty. Whatever may be the purpose and whatever may be the field of counselling, the client should be inspired to rise to the occasion with the spirit of a *karma yogi*. Man is a social being, and being social, he is bound to

<sup>13</sup> The *Bhagavatgita.*, XVIII, 63

<sup>14</sup> Manusmriti – Verse -8.15

<sup>15</sup> The Katha Upanisad uses the term *Shreya* to refer to a consequence that produces a lasting benefit; whilst *Preya* refers to a consequence that provides immediate pleasure to the self; but not necessarily long-term benefit.

<sup>16</sup> The *Bhagavatgita.*, IV. 08

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 20 & 25



protect society by protecting moral orders. Man is responsible for both social order and social crisis. Social progress is rooted in the discipline of individuals. The collective psyche is enriched by the individual's pursuit of social harmony and discipline. 'Live and let live' is the hallmark of social concern. But this concern has been disputed by the psychic conflicts and confusions of the human mind. The *Bhagavat Gitā* begins with *Visāda Yoga*, representing the inner conflicts and confusions of man as a basic psychological disorder. Inner conflicts and confusions are natural to man but very unfortunate when such disorders take place in the field of battle. Here, the field of battle symbolises the field of readiness, where man should be action-oriented with wisdom and dedication. War-field is a field of detachment from the empirical attachments where one should not have any passion for personal relationship and any reactions of inner conflicts. But in the *Bhagavat Gitā*, it is shown that man is psychologically trapped even in the time of war and the place of war-field. This is the irony of human intellectuality and rationality. Man is always found at the crossroads of confusion and becomes indecisive about what to do and what not to do. Man suffers from this psychological battle throughout his life.

### Fearlessness and Confidence

Counselling aims at removing fear and infusing confidence in the mind of the client. Fear sprouts from confusion and fearlessness from proper counselling. Mostly, man fears the consequences of an action, constantly thinking if it would be favourable or unfavourable. This is purely imaginative by nature. Man imagines the consequences and develops a fear of psychosis, and goes through psychic distress, and finally lives with depression. Once the truth is understood that one should be duty bound, which gives us peace and tranquility, the problem of fear is removed, and confidence becomes

stronger. The predicament of *Arjuna* is one of intense dilemma: to fight or not to fight. To choose either of the courses was momentous for it had significant bearing on *Arjuna* as well as the society at large. The mind is as fickle and unsteady as the tip of a flame. Thoughts appear in the mind every second in a continuous stream, and these constant thoughts disturb the steadiness of the mind itself. When the flame is well protected from the fickle breeze, it becomes steady in its upward flight. In the same way the flame of the mind, flickering at the whims and fancies of the passing sensuous desires, becomes steadily equipoise. In ignorance, when one conceives oneself as the ego, one has a burning desire for sense-objects, a binding attachment with emotions, and a jealous preference for one's pet ideas. But when the ego is transcended, when the ignorance is transformed, when the finite ego stands face to face with the divine Reality in him, it melts away to become one with the Infinite. *Lord Krishna* advises *Arjuna* saying that "*Yogastha kuru karmāni sangam tyaktvā dhananjaya*".<sup>18</sup> That means *Arjuna* is instructed to perform action abandoning attachment, being steadyfast in *Yoga*, and balanced in success and failure.<sup>19</sup> Further, *Arjuna* is advised to have a mind of equanimity – "*Samatvam yoga ucyate*".<sup>20</sup> The one who is a stable being, whose heart is undisturbed in sorrow or joy, who is unattached, fearless and free from anger (*Raga, Bhaya, Krodha*) is called a *Yogi*.<sup>21</sup> For a *Yogi* there is no fear and no lack of confidence. The purpose of counselling should have this orientation which is highly beneficial for the psychic development of the client.

### Stress and Equanimity

Proper counselling gives two basic benefits to the man who is under stress and distress. Stress is the feeling of being under too much emotional and mental pressure. This emotional and mental pressure leads to a moral dilemma. The mind becomes stressful when it is found unstable,

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., II. 48

<sup>19</sup> Chinmayananda, Swami, (1996), *The Holy Gita*, Chinmaya Prakashan, Mumbai., P. 136

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., II. 48

<sup>21</sup> Chinmayananda, Swami, (1996), *The Holy Gita*, Chinmaya Prakashan, Mumbai., P. 183

losing its proper balance. Almost all inter-human conflicts are to be traced to their intra-human roots or what we call human nature. We all have a peace instinct, *ahimsa* in us, despite our occasional aggressive temper and action. What we can achieve in the realm of peace depends on what we are. Our inner peace is lost due to our inner conflicts and confusion. The disturbed man becomes a man of calm and serenity after proper counselling. That happened to *Arjuna* on the battlefield when he was counselled by *Lord Krishna*. The reluctant warrior became ready to fight after attaining the mind of equanimity. Human existence is more psychic than physical. Man is endowed with a highly evolved mind distinct from other species. The mind has a dual ability of involvement and withdrawal. Attachment of the mind is natural because it is the tendency of the mind to be absorbed by its desirable objects. The mind becomes identified with the object focused on by the mind itself. But the same mind can be cultured to withdraw from the senses and sense-objects. This is verily known as the art of *Pratyāhāra*.

Besides the theoretical understanding of the art of *Pratyāhāra* it is very important to practice *Pratyāhāra* in our practical life. Without the practice of *Pratyāhāra*, the mind cannot be useful for any proper reflection and action. This leads to the state of equanimity. In the *Bhagavad Gitā* it is called the state of *Sthitaprajna*.<sup>22</sup> *Pratyahara* is the withdrawal of senses from the desired objects and attachments thereof. When the mind is restrained from outside allurements, it finds nothing to be distracted and disturbed. This leads to the state of equanimity. There is no spark of stress or distress in the mind of *Sthitaprajna* or steady wisdom. Counselling should help transcend our mind from a state of stress to a state of equanimity because it is the native nature of the mind to come back to a state of peace and tranquillity. Mind cannot stay idle for a moment without being attached to any *vastu* or *visaya*. By counselling, we can provide a higher *visaya* to the mind so that automatically the mind gets detached from the lower objects of

attachment. In this sense counselling is the best way to stress management and equanimity.

### Self-transformation

Counselling must have an optimistic approach. The client should hope for self-transformation. Self-transformation is the process of making significant changes or improvements in one's thoughts, behaviours, beliefs, or overall identity for personal growth and development. This can encompass various aspects of life, such as improving physical health, developing new skills, enhancing emotional intelligence, or working on personal values and character traits. Self-transformation is a deeply personal journey that can lead to increased self-awareness, fulfilment, and a meaningful life.<sup>23</sup> The synthesis of *jnāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* leads to self-transformation, which is the most significant value-paradigm. Mere leading a life according to social prescription and prohibitions amounts to a slavish mechanical living. Striving for a value-paradigm is a natural urge of human beings. The value-paradigm is to be sought through a system of education, training and counselling.

However, knowledge gained through formal scientific education is not enough for the integral growth of human personality. Real education lies in self-transformation. The fifth and sixth verses of chapter six and the twenty-fifth verse of chapter thirteen of the *Bhagavad Gitā* speak about the possibility of self-transformation and that has been demonstrated by the character of *Arjuna*.

The *Bhagavad Gitā* asserts:

*u d d h a r e d ā t m a n ā t m ā n a m  
nātmānamavasādayet*

*ātmaiva hyātmano bandhurātmaiva  
ripurātmanah* <sup>16</sup> B.G VI. 5

Let a man lift himself by his own Self alone, and let him not lower himself;

for, this Self alone is the friend of oneself. And this Self is the enemy of oneself.

<sup>22</sup> The Bhagavatgita., II. 54

<sup>23</sup> The Bhagavatgita., VI. 5

Man suffers from a split personality. The mind is the only instrument gifted to us through which we are attached to different activities and, at the same time, get detached from our attachment. This double role of the mind is performed well when the mind is disciplined and groomed through rigorous spiritual yoga. Factual experience is a rival to mind. When we experience anything, the mind intervenes. Mind interferes because of its attachment to the factual experience. So, the judging mind becomes captive of its own cage of attachment.

This is the secret of bondage and suffering. *Jnāna*, *Karma* and *Bhakti* are three independent disciplines through which man tries to groom the mind but fails because there is a need to synthesise all disciplines. The discipline of anyone cannot substitute for the other. *Arjuna* was mentally disturbed, frustrated (*visāda*), and indecisive about his duties. But after proper counselling by *Lord Krishna*, *Arjuna* was transformed into a better personality. Thus, counselling begins with confusion and depression but ends with self-transformation. The client becomes a highly evolved personality after the course of effective counselling.

### Conclusion

The Dialectical model of counselling by the *Bhagavad Gitā* has its own merits, better than other counselling models. Dialectical understanding not only removes the stress and distress of the client but also inspires him to be free to make his own decisions and hope for self-transformation. It helps transcend the confused mind to the state of equanimity and calmness. The direct approach to counselling has an effective impact on the client. Counselling becomes effective if it is undertaken with direct communication between the client and the counsellor.

Freedom is a basic postulate of morality. The counsellor and the client both should have a free mind and a sense of responsibility. Freedom is the highest value-paradigm of human life. A free man can make the right decision at the right time. Freedom leads to responsibility. A free man can hold responsibility for the consequences of his actions performed by any ethical paradigms.

Cultivation of devotion does not deny the role of free-will. It does not negate rational thinking. Rather, devotion is said to be the result of the righteous use of reason and will. It has been observed how true knowledge leads to the right action and right action becomes an instance of devotion. *Lord Krishna* does not impose His will and His ways on *Arjuna* and having explained everything asked him to decide by himself.

Philosophical counselling should inculcate a sense of fearlessness and confidence in the mind of the client so that the client should be free to share his thoughts and problems with the counsellor and remain responsible for his own decisions. Man imagines the consequences and develops a fear psychosis, goes into psychic distress, and finally lives with depression. The individual is the root of social progress and prosperity. So, the synthetic personality of a man groomed with knowledge, action, and devotion leads to the formation of a beautiful synthetic society, which has been the focal concern of the counselling paradigm. The counsellor should have a mind of equanimity groomed with the synthesis of knowledge, service and emotion. Mere knowledge is not enough. Mere action is not enough. Knowledge and action should be moulded with loving counselling. The *Bhagavad Gitā* has made a beautiful synthesis of *Jnāna*, *Karma* and *Bhakti* with regard to the complete personality of an individual. Action, knowledge, and devotion are three distinct disciplines that directly impact the conative, cognitive, and affective aspects of human life. The *Bhagavad Gitā* admits and admires both the dialectical oppositions between these three faculties and their synthesis. Despite the dialectical opposition, action, knowledge, and devotion complement each other in shaping the perfect human personality in its fullest transformation. Knowledge directs devotion because, without knowledge, devotion may take the form of dogma. It is an action that gives content to devotion. Devotional sentiment has to be expressed in and through action. The highest devotee is said to be a *Sthitaprajña*. The *Bhagavad Gitā* has synthesized *Jnāna*, *Karma*, and *Bhakti* into spiritual practice or *Yoga Sādhanā*. These three *Yogas* are not independent

of each other. Rather, they are interdependent and complementary to each other. The complete personality (*Purna Byaktitwa*) of a person flourishes and glorifies like a *Yogi* if he is perfect in all three faculties of knowledge, action, and

devotion. Thus, counselling would be effective if it aims at moulding human personality with proper synthesis of knowledge, action and devotion.

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## The Bhagavad Gita: A Manual Philosophical Therapy Technique Based on Ancient Knowledge

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### Abstract

Since the beginning of time, counselling has existed in some form. Our sages in India have been comprehending and managing mental processes since the Vedas. Therefore, no school of Indian philosophy has avoided making a substantial contribution to psychology. In light of this, the current research tries to illustrate how Indian culture and spirituality inform the origins of counselling and psychological sagacity.

The first significant writings on counselling in India are found in the Vedas and Upanishads. Because Vedic hymns are primarily poetic and symbolic, they contain many original ideas and concepts helpful for psychology in the seed form. However, because they are not easily accessible to researchers and scholars, their significance is not immediately apparent unless one delves deeply into the symbolism, as many scholars have done. Those initial concepts have been elaborated to a great extent in the Upanishads. India's ancient epics are full of representations of counselling. The proverb "Mata, Pita, Guru, Deivam" (Mother, Father, Teacher, God), which is frequently repeated, served as a reminder to the youth not only of the counsellors but also of the order of importance for whom to provide counselling at different phases of life. The conversation between Krishna and Arjuna on the Kurukshetra battlefield is the most well-known example of counselling in the epics.

Various Indian schools have aided the development of scientific psychological theories that improve human well-being; these are illustrative models. Psychology first emerged from India's extensive philosophical and theological literature, namely the Vedic and Epic literature. Indian texts, specifically the Vedas, Yoga Sutras, Bhagavad Gita, and other treatises are used to analyse and theorise about human nature and behaviour. Indian philosophical schools offer fresh perspectives on psychology. Early Buddhists carefully considered a wide range of human behaviour elements, including morality, wisdom, the mind, suffering, perception, sensation, and cognition-consciousness, to concentrate on the possibility of human growth and improvement. Buddhism is a faith that is also a philosophy and an ethical code.

The Bhagavad Gita focuses on building inner resources to deal with and conquer stress. Using theological ideas and ancient oriental knowledge to strengthen one's mind under pressure becomes the most valuable and efficient strategy. Krishna succeeds in achieving this with Arjuna. Arjuna is filled with agony as he looks out into the battlefield. Arjuna is facing overwhelming odds; his relatives and gurus are siding with the adversary, causing him to become stressed and worried. Krishna gives Arjuna a few basic concepts to help him gain self-control and overcome his fear. After a few hours, Arjuna emerges as a victorious and self-assured warrior. This is one of the best examples of psychotherapy or cognitive behaviour therapy effectively used in our nation's collective psyche

**Keywords:** *Bhagvada Gita, Philosophical Counselling technique, Philosophical therapy*

### Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita is a scripture of the Indian tradition that teaches us how to live. It is an existential treatise which is to be carried all through one's life. The Gita presents several archetypes a philosophical practitioner can use in the Indian context. Though the Gita begins with

an account of the state of despondency of Arjuna, who is the main character of the paper, to explain the Gita as a psychological treatise will be as good as limiting its philosophical depth dimensions. **The philosophical import of the Gita finds manifestation through the eight archetypes discussed in this article, which are:**

**1. The method of self-correction 2. Freedom and choice 3. Building up Self-confidence 4. Equanimity (samatvam) 5. Emotional stability 6. Steadiness of wisdom (sthithaprajna) 7. Integrity of mind and intellect (Buddhi yoga), and 8. Skill in action (karma kausalam). They are the best models based on Indian wisdom that a philosophical counsellor can use.** The author, Vyasa, chooses a battlefield as the context for conflict resolution to impart the principles of philosophical counselling. Arjuna expresses his mental conflicts and emotional anguish, which Krishna addressed most endearingly through interpersonal dialogues. The methodology for psychological cure is rooted in philosophy. Krishna tells him about the fundamental nature of a human being and the importance of discharging one's duties most selflessly. The weakness of the mind is only a temporary aberration which the power of will can strengthen. Arjuna can choose his course of action at the end of the discourse. The Gita helps us to learn lessons for philosophical practice.

In India, counselling, in its broadest sense, has existed in one form or another for aeons. Our sages have contributed substantially to psychology and have been interested in comprehending brain processes since the Vedas. In light of this, the current research tries to illustrate how Indian culture and spirituality inform the origins of counselling and psychological sagacity. The first significant writings on counselling in India are found in the Vedas and Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most well-known counselling scenarios in the epics. It is also one of the best examples of psychotherapy or cognitive behaviour therapy successfully applied in our nation's collective consciousness. With varying degrees of success, Ayurveda, the Vedic science of health, has tried to analyse every aspect of the qualities of the mind.

In contrast to modern psychological discourses, Ayurveda views health as encompassing the physical and mental components and the spiritual domain. The science of yoga and meditation profoundly alters the body and mind

of the practitioner. It reduces tension and conflict, improves emotional regulation, and fosters optimistic thinking. The Vedic Astrologer's spiritual guide and counsellor position is beneficial in psychotherapy and counselling settings. One significant factor influencing the effectiveness of counselling is culture. The Indian academic and professional associations would like to lead by example in creating a psychotherapy and counselling ethos appropriate and palatable to global societies.

### Methodology/problem

The present study attempts to understand the various modifications in the philosophical practice of Classical Indian tradition. The three modifications identified for this purpose are from Vedic (scriptural/mythological), Itihasa-purana (historical/theological), and Darshanic phases (ancient wisdom/philosophical) in terms of cosmic, dharmic and rationalistic perspectives. I comprehend the limitations of choosing such a broad canvas. In tandem with India's classical Advaitic tradition (neti neti, not this, not this), let me specify what I am not doing here to prevent unwarranted expectations. To begin with, the presentation of a tradition of philosophical practice of more than 5,000 years, if not more, would often be endowed with sweeping generalisations of the sort that 'everything of human life is a philosophical practice' or it would often suffer from the dismissive attitude that 'there is no philosophical practice at all.' This paper moves beyond these extremes and avoids the shortcomings of both these perspectives. In addition, scholars who attempt such a broader canvas may present the historical evolution of philosophical practice. Such an approach may suit a descriptive account articulated for a lengthy research article more than a presentation. Such an approach will need more material on the vast periods of history and an epistemological impossibility of comprehending and presenting every aspect of evolution. Given the time limitations, I am not also not resorting to this approach.

Furthermore, contemporary perspectives, including the Western approach to philosophical practice, are the outcome of recent developments

in widening and deepening the praxis of Philosophy to enrich its outlook on the everyday life of human beings. Searching for such perspectives in Classical and Medieval Indian traditions would be a misplaced attempt. I am, therefore, not trying to make it such an attempt. To extract a distinct picture of philosophical practice in India, this paper will relate philosophical practice to the broader perception of human life in the Indian tradition and further identify the modifications during various phases of Indian history that have contributed to the changes in philosophical practice. The paper further attempts to illustrate the difference in the basic conceptualisation of philosophical practice in various phases of Indian history, such as Vedic (scriptural/ mythological), Itihasa-Purana (historical/ theological), and Darshanic (philosophical or ancient wisdom).

### **The modern approach**

Although one can see the introduction of Indian psychology within the context of this national revival, India is still recuperating from 800 years of foreign domination. If one does so exclusively, however, one is missing out on the more significant historical events that are currently occurring. Undoubtedly, the West maintains its dominance in politics, the economy, and the arts, but India continues to exert a significant cultural and spiritual impact on the West. Based on current trends, Eugene Taylor—who authored a superb book on the history of spirituality in the United States—argues that Indian psychology will undoubtedly significantly impact global culture, particularly as a novel epistemology. Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing awareness that utilising India's rich philosophical and theological traditions might improve the practice of psychiatry and counselling.

Indian philosophical and religious literature has inspired some Western ideas about personality theory. From an early age, the teachings of the East greatly impacted and drew in Carl Jung, the renowned personality theorist. "I remember a time when I was not yet able to read, but I pestered my mother to read aloud to me out of an antique children's book with beautiful

illustrations that described exotic relationships, especially that of the Hindus," Carl Jung writes in his autobiography.

Nonetheless, the Indian subcontinent has not historically had counselling as a recognised therapeutic approach. Even though psychology is deeply ingrained in India's ancient philosophical and religious traditions, understanding mental health and human behaviour is not well-articulated or consistently applied in day-to-day life. Even in modern times, many still prefer to seek astrological or religious solutions for mental health problems and blame bad spirits, the evil eye, or other supernatural forces for their problems. Ancient philosophical and religious books are the source of psychology in India. When the British educational system was introduced to colonial India, it not only proclaimed that Western knowledge was superior but actively supported this claim by undermining and suppressing indigenous knowledge systems. The 1950s and 1960s saw a significant development in higher education following the end of British colonial control in 1947. Over the past thirty years, psychologists in India and elsewhere have paid more attention to the significance of cultural factors in comprehending human behaviour and development. India has a distinct cultural ethos. With several castes, tribes, languages, faiths, and socioeconomic divides, including extreme poverty and deprivation, the nation is primarily rural.

As we approach 2000, the Indian psychotherapy community faces many unresolved issues and formidable obstacles. Much research has gone into creating therapy approaches with empirical support. Yogasana, meditation, Vedantic psychotherapy, sufi psychotherapy, the guru-shishya relationship, and opposites therapy are examples of Indigenous therapies used in clinical practice and their efficacy in treating different psychological disorders.

Counselling and guiding services have been established in the modern Indian context due to the demands of industrial globalisation and globalised education, which impact numerous industries. Except in a few urban areas, therapeutic therapy that emphasises a person's

overall development has yet to gain popularity, as it is acknowledged in many parts of the world. When considered holistically, counselling is most commonly linked to career assistance, academic advising, and performance counselling in the workplace. Although therapeutic counselling is gradually becoming more and more popular, there is still a need for local therapy models to provide suitable interventions and results. The fact that Indian subcontinental people's cultures and worldviews diverge from what Western ideas provide proves this. There are no indigenous counselling models that define distinct counselling settings and stages, culturally-specific theoretical underpinnings, and modes of practise that impact the process and outcome of counselling for Indian clients, even though some Indian therapists incorporate yoga and meditation practises into the counselling and psychotherapy process.

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing awareness that utilising India's rich philosophical and theological traditions might improve the practice of psychiatry and counselling—Bangalore's Prof. N.C. Surya was among the first scholars to raise this point. Another trailblazer who popularised the use of yoga for the treatment of neurotic and psychosomatic problems in India was Prof. N.S. Vahia of Bombay wrote numerous studies on the subject. Prof. A. Venkaba Rao has written eloquently on multiple occasions regarding the importance of the Srimad Bhagwad Gita for psychotherapy and comprehending the workings of the mind. Regretfully, there has not been much discussion on how Indian mythological tales might be used.

### **Importance of the research**

A philosophical and spiritual work known for centuries, the Bhagavad Gita offers advice on leading a purposeful life. It is a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in which Lord Krishna gives Arjuna advice on how to get over his concerns and uncertainties and carry out his military duty. The Gita has been interpreted in various ways, and one application is as a manual for philosophical counselling.

Behaviour problems, mental health problems, and disruptive behaviour are becoming more prevalent in Indian society. Non-compliance, uncontrollable rage, a lack of accountability, and the recurrent "I do not" Care" attitude are more prevalent among people of this modern era. This study aims to resolve these intricacies of life and show the path to the entirety of humanity.

### **Discussion**

India has a rich history of educational, therapeutic, and philosophical systems centred on the complete well-being of individuals. In the Indian setting, counselling is not a new institution. The education system in ancient India was known as the Gurukul system, a residential system in which students lived with their teachers and only returned after graduating. Here, the student could choose his instructor and continue as an intern the entire time. These historic features, however, offer concepts and frameworks with a wealth of potential applications within the Indian cultural context. Thus, it is accurate to say that psychological ideas are not new in India.

According to the authoritative texts and treatises that these ancient Indian seers and sages wrote on a variety of subjects, including astronomy and mathematics, law and politics, grammar and literature, medicine, philosophy, and so forth, they had a demonstrated interest in the technical and critical goals of knowledge development. They also possessed an emancipatory interest, the cornerstone of Indian tradition, though not of the Marxian kind but of a transcendental nature. Indian seers envisioned emancipation from all the constraints of human existence, not from the bourgeoisie. Thus, rather than being consumed with studying the maze of the mind, Indian seers and sages were and are more interested in the means and strategies of escaping the constricting factor.

### **Counselling in the Upanishads and Vedas (scriptural)**

The earliest significant works on counselling phenomena are found in the Upanishads. Vedic hymns contain many novel ideas and concepts that are helpful for psychology in the form of



seed ideas. However, researchers and scholars need help accessing them because they are mainly poetic and symbolic. As a result, their significance is only immediately apparent if one delves deeply into the symbolism, as many scholars have done. Those initial concepts have been elaborated to a great extent in the Upanishads. The Upanishads, often called "Vedanta" since they were composed towards the end of the Vedic era, represent the pinnacle of Vedic knowledge.

They are one-on-one talks between several Rishis (sages) and their pupils about the ultimate essence of reality, the self, and awareness. The Upanishads are a treasure trove of information for psychology and counselling. There is discussion of the nature of the mind, its functions, and many psychological phenomena, including pathological, paranormal, spiritual, aberrant, and routine. The ancient literature places a great deal of significance on counselling circumstances. Several powerful examples are:-

- A. In the Ramayana, Sri Rama (yogavasishtam) receives advice from Sage Vasishtha.
- B. Krishna gives Arjuna (Bhagavat Gita) advice in the Mahabharata.
- C. The dialogue between Yudhishtira and Yaksha (in Vanaparvam) in the Mahabharata.
- D. The interactions between Lord Yama and Najiketas in Kothopanishat, etc.

#### **Ancient Indian Healing Customs (historical)**

In India, three main healing traditions fall into two categories: a) regional and folk traditions, b) mystical traditions and c) Customs in medicine.

Good mental health is defined as the restoration of equilibrium of the three components of the human psyche known as gunas, Vata, Pitta, and Shelshma or Kaph, according to the Atharva Veda, the source of the Indian System of Medicine Ayurveda. Ayurvedic practitioners, often known as Vaid, hold that imbalances in gunas are the primary cause of a wide range of ailments, including mental health issues. Traditional Ayurvedic healers believed that improper food intake, harmful behaviour, thoughts, etc., caused an imbalance in body

humours, which in turn caused patients to suffer. The Law of Karma has influenced Hindu psychology for ages. According to this deterministic viewpoint, we will either pay a price for our deeds in this life or the next. Crimes are never pardoned.

#### **The entirety of the Indian heritage (philosophical)**

Much of the rich Indian heritage of social connection analysis and interpretation dates back to the Vedic and post-Vedic periods, more than 1500 B.C. Discovering ideas and theories that have continuously shaped social life up to this point can be found in abundance at this treasure trove. One thing that all of these academic endeavours had in common was that they all examined social conduct, which included every aspect of human existence, without making a boundary between psychology, philosophy, and religion. It covered every part of life and every stage of human growth.

The idea of dharma is central. Dharma, which is first stated in the Rigveda and then further developed in Gautam's Dharma shastra (about 600 B.C.), is roughly translated as "right action," "moral duty," or "the law of human nature" in English. "In its social implications, dharma is an inherent force in the human being which holds the individual and society together, or going one step further, the force which makes 'individual and society hold each other together.'" The majority of Indians share Dharma, and it has endured with remarkable continuity. It has significantly impacted ways of thinking, perceiving, and categorising experiences. It is thought that a person's Dharma depends on four things:

Desh (nation, area), kala (historical era), shrama (labour, vocation), and guna (bio-mental qualities) are the first four.

The Hindu philosophy of the life cycle and developmental stages, known as Ashrama dharma, includes the notion of Dharma. Social integration serves as both a process and a mechanism to preserve harmonious relationships throughout society. Unlike in the West, where contracts and responsibilities are the basis for

legitimacy, most social institutions find their validity in the Dharma.

It is assumed that all societal turmoil and conflicts stem from the transgression of Dharma. The epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata offer a comprehensive analysis of the mutually beneficial relationship between humans, society, and the supernatural in many respects. These are the most reliable sources for studying Hindu social life over time. The indivisibility of the cosmic and material self, the individual and nature, and the individual and community is another significant feature of Indian tradition. According to this mental model, the individual is essential to the universal cosmic reality. All living things—plants, animals, and humans—are thought to share a standard cosmic energy and are constrained by the same cosmic laws. Every living thing and every non-living object operates by a single universal law. Every living thing and non-living operates in harmony and natural rhythm per one universal law. "The individual function of the one blends with the individual function of the others and results in a collective immanent balance of a living combined organism" (Heimann). Life's ultimate purpose is to achieve the ideal balance between society and the natural world. It is said that the complexity of human existence can only be fully understood by an organismic and holistic approach, and as such, any attempt to break it apart is opposed.

The interconnectedness and interdependence of people and society are essential concepts in Indian philosophy. Humans cannot exist outside this web of ties since they are social beings. One's existence and ego-identity are shaped by countless relationships (based on caste, class, family, community, and even gods) that each one has with the other. It is assumed that there is a hierarchical, intricate interaction between society and humans that goes beyond the confines of the physical world.

In this view, the ego-identity is regarded as a social creation, dependent on one's social background and life experiences. As a result, a person's social self only exists in their imagination. Realising this impermanent existence and carrying out one's dharma without

attachment are the keys to self-development. This understanding of Dharma addresses prescriptive social behaviour by offering "ideal images" of existence in the sense that Plato understood them. Throughout history, the traditional Indian social systems have mainly endured unaffected by external factors such as the West or the Muslims, who dominated the nation for six centuries. Essentially, Indian society persisted as Indian until the 18th century, when British administration over India began. Throughout history, Dharma has been a guiding principle in social life, giving social structures and traditions a feeling of permanence.

### Case study

All the characteristics of consciousness and all the dynamics of natural law are expressed in the Vedic literature, which is the literature of consciousness and natural law. No matter how advanced a person's consciousness is, the Vedic case studies are evolutionary, inspirational, and life-sustaining since they were presented by people who personally understood these natural law processes at the most significant degree of consciousness. The meaning of the Vedic records extends to all stages of an individual's evolution. Therefore, as consciousness increases, the same explanation will be understood on ever-deeper levels until its significance is understood on the level from which it was initially expressed: oneness consciousness. As a result, the Vedic case studies offer life lessons across the spectrum of various states of consciousness described in Vedic Psychology. Emotions and mental aberrations are described in the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagwad Gita also provides a lovely explanation of mastering the fluctuating mind and what happens if you cannot. The Gita teaches that a person can be their master and provides a path out of worldly worries. The conversations and exchanges in Bhagavat Gita are regarded as a perfect instance and a great illustration of a counselling process gone well.

The Bhagavad Gita introduces Lord Krishna as the first counsellor, offering guidance for all ages and all periods. All combined, Krishna was a statesman, philosopher, warrior, and humanist. Above all, he stood up for morality. Whenever

he perceived evil, he combated it. The current happenings in India compelled him to have a role in determining the nation's future. It seemed as though he was pushed into the role of leadership. If ever a single person's intervention altered the course of a nation's history, this was it. He was merciful but harsh when needed.

However, he always had the same goal in mind: maintaining virtue. He was not an idealist who just spoke; he was a man of action, and his actions were always taken to defend justice and the truth.

When faced with a situation outside of our control or realm of understanding, such as a crisis or bewilderment, we must comprehend the Bhagavad Gita and consult it. We may make our lives prosperous and serene on both a material and spiritual level by doing our best to adhere to the principles of the Bhagavad Gita. Merely reading the Bhagavad Gita without comprehending its meaning is insufficient. It only functions if we apply Krishna's lessons to the situations that arise in our daily lives. Thus, to benefit significantly from the Bhagavad Gita verses, we must study them with comprehension and then put them into practice in our daily lives. The ideal time to put the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita into practice is when we are facing a crisis, facing problems or challenging circumstances, going through a difficult period in our lives, or facing a great deal of doubt over what to decide and do.

The Bhagavad Gita's strength gives us the inspiration and motivation we need when we need it most. Nowadays, when we lead faster lives, we require appropriate direction to address daily issues. We need to refer to the Bhagavad Gita as a "true instructive and practical life manual" since so many things happen in our lives that are necessary for us to live correctly. Many people have reported using the techniques found in the Bhagavad Gita to see significant improvements in their lives and enjoyment in all areas. The Gita is a text that is incredibly helpful in today's fast-paced, technologically sophisticated world. It is a very short scripture that covers everyday life issues. The Bhagavad Gita imparts life lessons to humans.

**According to the Bhagavad Gita, "good and bad" and "positive and negative" exist inside us;** therefore, people should not think this is the case without the other. This thought is so deep that only being close prepares people for good and evil, thus philosophically leading them to positivity. It aptly answers most parents' questions today when they wonder why their child was getting sick and having behavioural problems when they gave everything to their child. Offering everything to the child on the plate becomes problematic because the child needs to learn to take no for an answer. He starts demanding and expecting everything at the push of a button. Some parents do everything possible to make their child prosperous in whatever the child does. It is a scandalous error again. Teaching your child to accept and deal with failure is as important as learning to manage success. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that failure is also a step forward. Again and again, a profound thought empowers people to face failure and look to the future with hope and optimism. It is the beauty of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, which can primarily be interpreted and applied in different life situations. It is one case to demonstrate how the philosophical therapy technique, wholly based on ancient knowledge scriptures, has a positive influence. In building character strengths, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita lead effortlessly to those strengths and more.

### **Submission**

The Bhagavad Gita is a component of the epic Mahabharatha, one of the most well-known Hindu philosophical myths. The Gita, which is a section of the Bhishma Parva, is essentially the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, the Pandava prince, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra during the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, the cousins, for control of the kingdom of Hasthinapura. About 702 verses are divided into 18 chapters, the first of which is titled "Arjuna Vishada Yoga" (Sorrow of Arjuna) and the last of which is titled "Moksha Sanyasa Yoga" (Nirvana and Renunciation). The procedure and content of the discussion, its worth as a counselling model, and

its potential modern application value to psychological therapies, particularly but not only in the Indian setting, are all covered in the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Gita.

The Bhagavad Gita is a scripture that transcends all national and religious barriers. The Bhagavad Gita contains the core ideas and teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads. The phrase "The path shown by the Lord" is what the Bhagavad Gita means. Gita means song, and Bhagavad means divine. Lord Krishna, the Yoga Master, sang this song to his devotee Arjuna, who is supposed to carry out his tasks to the best of his abilities and without looking for any particular outcome. God bears the fruit of our deeds, and we have no say. The best advice that Bhagavad-Gita can provide us is to lead an active life. The Bhagavad Gita is all about studying and practising the great message of that holy song.

Krishna guides Arjuna (or for all ages and all times) in the Gita. Arjuna does nothing except

listen. Nonetheless, Arjuna's opinions could have been altered by these suggestions. It might also cause Arjuna to behave differently. Thus, it is possible that Krishna's counsel in the Gita can act as advising.

Today, the world is becoming increasingly global with much cultural exchange. People want familiarity when making something a part of their lives and existence. It gives them a sense of belonging and security that no one gets, thus giving spontaneity and ease to the assimilation and internalisation of the familiar. It can explain why people from Indian societies showed better results by implementing the Indian approach to interventions in an individual's life instead of the Western approach. However, this conclusion also offers opportunities for further research in the field. Does Culture affect outcomes? Positive philosophical interventions need to look at this in a specific way.

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## Philosophical Counselling in The Bhagavad Gita: Counselling Problems of the Modern Indian Society

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### Abstract

Contemporary Indian society faces many intricate challenges encompassing complex relationships, career pressures, existential dilemmas, and psychological distress. The transformation of family and society, the ascent of individualism, and shifts in the socio-economic landscape contribute to these challenges. Consequently, issues such as anxiety, uncertainty, mental health problems, and work-related challenges have become the norm.

Addressing these contemporary dilemmas requires a deeper exploration of Indian philosophical roots. The Bhagavad Gita, a revered Indian epic, offers profound wisdom that can be applied to address these modern issues through Philosophical Counselling. The approach entails engaging individuals in philosophical discussions about their emotions, behaviours, and worldviews, fostering personal growth and change. The Gita is a revered Hindu scripture, part of the (Bhishma Parv of the) Mahabharata. It is the longest epic ever written in the world. The Mahabharata is an epic comprising over 100,000 shlokas (verses). It qualifies as an epic, just like Homer's Iliad or Odyssey, because the Gita (as part of the Mahabharata) contains the heroic deeds of characters, primarily Shri Krishna and Arjuna. It is an extremely lengthy text written in a poetic style with complex philosophical ideas.

The Gita's teachings are not confined to religious or historical contexts but encompass a broader spectrum of Behavioural Science because the Gita is deeply rooted in religious and historical contexts. Yet, its teachings have been interpreted and applied in various ways, including within Behavioral Science. They offer insights into emotional control (Gita 2/4), managing thoughts (Gita 4/42), leadership (Gita 3/21), harmony with nature (Gita 15/7), maintaining detachment from outcomes (Gita 2/47), making rational decisions (Gita 3/25), and achieving balance in life (Gita 14/22). This wealth of wisdom transcends religious boundaries and remains applicable to contemporary issues in Indian society.

The Bhagavad Gita is a powerful tool for Philosophical Counselling to address the multifaceted challenges of contemporary Indian society. Its timelessness and universality make it a valuable resource for individuals seeking guidance in their everyday lives, reflecting the influence of its teachings on figures like Robert Oppenheimer, Einstein, and Mahatma Gandhi. Through its principles, the Gita offers a path toward personal growth and empowerment, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of modern life with clarity and purpose.

In this paper, I attempt to show ways in which the teachings of the Gita can be used in Philosophical Counselling for the modern problems that people face today. Hence, the title of my paper is "Philosophical Counselling in the Bhagavad Gita: Counselling Problems of the Modern Indian Society."

**Keywords:** *existential dilemmas, philosophical discussions, Behavioural Science, empowerment.*

"The task of a philosopher is to show the fly the way out of the bottle."-Ludwig Wittgenstein

### Introduction

A myriad of challenges characterises contemporary Indian society. Relationship

complexities, career pressures, existential dilemmas and psychological distress have become the 'new normal.' Factors that contribute to these changing dynamics are the changing nature of family and society and changes in the socio-economic landscape. This has led to a rise

of anxiety and uncertainty like relationship problems, mental health issues, work-related problems and social capriciousness.

To address these issues that plague our Indian society, we should delve deep into our roots because the Bhagavad Gita addresses fundamental and universal themes that transcend time and cultural boundaries. It explores the nature of existence, duty, righteousness, and the path to self-realisation. These themes are enduring and continue to be relevant to individuals seeking guidance on navigating life's intricacies. The Gita delves into the complexities of human nature, the struggle between good and evil within oneself, and the challenges of making ethical choices. These aspects of the human experience are timeless and apply to people across different historical periods.

The Gita delves into the human psyche, discussing concepts such as desire, attachment, and the importance of mastering one's mind. The Bhagavad Gita can be read as a metaphysical text, as a political text, or even as an ethical text.

The psychological insights provided in the Gita are timeless and applicable to understanding and managing the challenges of the mind in any era. The philosophically relevant analysis, applied with counselling, can be drawn from the teachings of the great Indian epic, the Bhagavad Gita (Jeste & Vahia, 2007).

The Gita is an excellent manual for providing Philosophical Counselling to address our current issues in Indian society. I have stated two examples to show how the philosophy of the Gita can be used as Counselling, citing the examples of social media addiction and conflicting thoughts.

**My paper aims to show the philosophical relevance of the Counselling found in the Gita for addressing contemporary issues in Indian society. Therefore, my paper explores the relevance of Gita's guidance as a philosophical tool to address present-day challenges in Indian society, such as issues like social media addiction and conflicting thoughts.**

One could analytically question why we should delve deep into our roots. What is the need to seek answers from the past? Such questions would be inevitable to some.

We should delve deep into our roots and learn from the past to address problems that plague our Indian society because teachings and lessons of value should be revered. While the Gita is a book written in the past, its teachings remain relevant for several reasons:

**Reason 1:** The Bhagavad Gita addresses fundamental and universal themes that transcend time and cultural boundaries. It explores the nature of existence, duty (dharma), righteousness, and the path to self-realisation. These themes are enduring and continue to be relevant to individuals seeking guidance on navigating life's complexities.

**Reason 2:** The Gita delves into the complexities of human nature, the struggle between good and evil within oneself, and the challenges of making ethical choices. These aspects of the human experience are timeless and apply to people across different historical periods.

**Reason 3:** The Gita provides profound philosophical insights, presenting different paths to spiritual realisation, including the path of devotion (bhakti), knowledge (jnana), and selfless action (karma yoga). The teachings offer a comprehensive guide to leading a purposeful and meaningful life, irrespective of societal or technological changes.

**Reason 4:** The Bhagavad Gita offers practical guidance on how to live a balanced and harmonious life. It addresses the challenges of maintaining equanimity in the face of adversity, dealing with conflicts, and fulfilling one's duties with dedication and detachment.

**Reason 5:** The Gita delves into the human psyche, discussing concepts such as desire, attachment, and the importance of mastering one's mind. The psychological insights provided in the Gita are timeless and applicable to understanding and managing the challenges of the mind in any era.

**Reason 6:** The teachings of the Gita focus on spiritual evolution and the journey toward self-

realisation. The quest for inner transformation and the realisation of one's true nature are timeless pursuits that resonate with individuals seeking personal growth and spiritual development.

**Reason 7:** For many people, the Bhagavad Gita is integral to their cultural and religious heritage. It is a source of inspiration, moral guidance, and a touchstone for ethical decision-making. Revering the Gita is a way of connecting with one's cultural roots and drawing wisdom from past traditions.

### **Coming to Philosophical Counselling:**

Philosophical Counselling can be characterised as an approach aimed at helping counselees interpret the worldview expressed by their way of life. The Philosophical Counsellor helps Counselees uncover various meanings expressed in their way of life and critically examine those problematic aspects that express their predicaments. This enriches Counselees to develop worldviews and may also facilitate change. Therefore, it can be rightly said that Philosophical Counselling is a means to show 'a' way, not show 'the' way.

Gerd B. Achenbach, the forerunner of Philosophical Counselling, believed that the essence of Philosophy is in open conversations. Their contemporary Dutch group of Philosophical Counsellors said that the essence of Philosophy is critical or logical thinking (Hagiu, Bortos, & Tamaş, 2023).

Both have the same aim: to find solutions to problems of ordinary people in their everyday lives. Thousands of years of Indian 'Darshan' and Western Philosophy show that Philosophy deals with mundane everyday life issues and addresses major life issues by constructing a network of ideas and theories.

Philosophical Counselling aims to help find possible solutions to ordinary people's problems and empower them. Marinoff highlights the practical aspects of using philosophy to address life's challenges (Marinoff, 1999).

So, it can be said that Philosophical Counselling has two aims: -

- i. Helping to find various probable solutions to the problems of ordinary people
- ii. Empowering a person to face the realities of life

Similarly, 5,000 years ago, a warrior named Arjuna faced a moral dilemma: whether to fight his kin and uphold dharma or choose not to do so. We interpret the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita as a form of Counselling that holds philosophical significance and guides individuals toward action. Consequently, the Gita serves as Counselling directed towards action for an individual confronting moral dilemmas. It addresses the aporia that Arjuna faces on the battlefield.

The Bhagavad Gita's recognition of the universality of human suffering, as exemplified in Arjuna's inner turmoil on the battlefield, forms the foundation for Philosophical Counselling. Acknowledging the depth and diversity of modern challenges, one can apply the Gita's timeless wisdom to illuminate a path towards resolution.

### **Philosophical Counselling of the Gita to address contemporary problems in Indian society**

The Bhagavad Gita is a Sanatan Hindu text which has 700 shlokas and is a part of the Indian epic, The Mahabharat. It encapsulates the 'samvaad' or discourse between the warrior, Arjuna and Lord Krishna. The philosophy of the Gita is a Counselling to resolve a moral dilemma.

The Gita is not just a religious book or dharma shastra but is akin to a behavioural science manual. Its teachings are so universally relevant that people of any religion and yuga can practise it. The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are deeply rooted in the Indian context and can be applied to contemporary societal challenges, corroborating the fact that we can apply the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to our lives to address problems through Philosophical Counselling (Zaehner, 1973). However, one might inevitably question how this age-old



scripture can solve our contemporary challenges and guide our present-day Indian lives.

The philosophy of the Gita is not outdated. It holds timeless value. Maybe that's why the most influential people of history, like Robert Oppenheimer, Einstein, Gandhi Ji, and many more, have been charmed by the teachings of the Gita. While the Bhagavad Gita is more commonly associated with Eastern philosophy, it has garnered interest and respect from Western scholars, scientists, and philosophers. It's essential to note that interpretations may vary, and not all Western scholars explicitly endorse the Gita as a manual for philosophical counselling. However, some have explored its philosophical and practical dimensions in a Counselling context. The Gita has tremendous philosophical depth which can delve into not only dharmic philosophy but also issues of contemporary relevance (Ingalls, 2006).

Therefore, it can be said that the Gita does not only talk about dharma but also deals with contemporary issues like:

- How to be a leader? (Gita 3/21)
- How can we control our emotions? (Gita verses 2/14 and 6/26)
- How do you manage wavering thoughts? (Gita 4/42)
- How can we live in harmony with nature or sustainable living? (Gita 3/14)
- How do you diligently perform your duties while maintaining a sense of detachment from the outcomes? (Gita 2/47 and 2/48)
- How do you make rational decisions, even while facing problematic situations? (Gita 2/50).
- How to live a balanced life? (Gita 6/16-17).

The list is endless!

By this, we get a glimpse into the idea that the Bhagavad Gita acts as counselling to help us address and solve the problems that arise in contemporary Indian scenarios. For this, I would state two relevant examples.

### Case 1: Social media addiction

Consider an example of a youngster who is a social media addict. He comes to a Philosophical Counsellor, complaining that despite seeking the help of a Psychological Counsellor, he is unable to control his internet addiction. So much so that it is affecting his health, his relationships and his entire life. In his translation and commentary, Eknath Easwaran emphasises the practical applicability of Gita's teachings in navigating life's challenges, making it a valuable resource for counselling.

In such a case, the counselee can use the practical applicability of Gita's teachings to provide counselling. Taking inspiration from chapter 6, verse 17 of the Gita, which states the following:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु |  
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्ययोगो भवति दुःखहा || 6/17

This shloka of the Bhagavad Gita suggests that a person must live a balanced life. To be temperate in eating and recreation, balanced in work, and regulated in sleep. This can mitigate all sorrows by practising Yog or 'samatva', equanimity. Shri Krishna emphasises the importance of moderation and balance in all aspects of life.

He who is temperate in his eating, sleeping, working, and recreation habits can mitigate all material pains by practising the 'yog' or equanimity. Thus, the counselee can be guided along the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, which encourages individuals to adopt a balanced and moderate lifestyle in terms of daily activities, work, rest, and recreation. It reflects the Gita's broader theme of moderation and equilibrium as essential elements in the path to spiritual and personal growth.

### Case 2: Conflicting thoughts

In India, considering our present life, we all are so caught up with complexities and aspirations that despite having the internet and an ocean of limitless information, we are still unable to make decisions sometimes. Our minds get so shrouded in confusion that we are left struggling with emotions but cannot make informed decisions due to the restlessness of the mind. We can take

the example of a person struggling with career choices.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय |  
सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते || 2/48||

In 2/48, the Bhagavad Gita states that we should strive for equanimity, that is, to maintain a calm mind in difficult situations and be self-reflective. Shri Krishna tells Arjuna to be steadfast in victory, loss, happiness, or pain. This equanimity is called “samatva”, or yoga. This enables a person to transcend the confusion emanating from the thoughts.

For instance, if a person comes to a Philosophical Counsellor and tells them that despite taking the help of a Career Counsellor, they are confused as to which career choice to make. Then, in this scenario, the Counsellor can refer this shloka of the Gita to the Counselee and put it into perspective.

The counselee should be made to collect their thoughts and calmly think, irrespective of momentary gain or loss. By delving into philosophical questions such as "What is the purpose of work?" or "What kind of legacy do I want to leave behind?", the client can gain clarity and make choices that align with their true selves.

By incorporating the teachings of the Gita, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of themselves and make more informed choices that align with their authentic selves (Ranganathananda, 1988, pp. 8-10).

The Bhagavad Gita is a scripture of the Indian tradition that teaches us how to live. It is an existential treatise which is to be carried all through one's life. The Gita presents before us a number of archetypes which can be effectively used by a philosophical practitioner. Though the Gita begins with an account of the state of despondency of Arjuna who is the main character of the book, to explicate the Gita as a psychological treatise will be as good as limiting its philosophical depth dimensions (Iyer, 2010).

The philosophical import of the Gita finds manifestation through the eight archetypes which are:

1. The method of self-correction
2. Freedom and choice
3. Building up Self-confidence
4. Equanimity (samatvam)
5. Emotional stability
6. Steadiness of wisdom (sthithaprajna)
7. Integrity of mind and intellect (buddhi yoga) and
8. Skill in action (karma kausalam).

They are the best models that a philosophical counsellor can use. The author, Vyasa, chooses a battlefield as the context for conflict resolution to impart the principles of philosophical counselling. Arjuna expresses his mental conflicts and emotional despondency, which Krishna immediately addresses most endearingly through interpersonal dialogues. The methodology for psychological cure is rooted in philosophy. Krishna tells him about the real nature of a human being and the importance of discharging one's duties most selflessly. The weakness of the mind is only a temporary aberration which the power of will can strengthen. Arjuna can choose his course of action at the end of the whole discourse. The Gita helps us to learn lessons for philosophical practice.

### Conclusion

In the labyrinth of moral dilemmas, the Gita stands as a beacon, offering guidance akin to Arjuna's struggle on the battlefield. It serves as a manual for Philosophical Counselling, addressing human suffering's universal nature and providing timeless wisdom for navigating contemporary challenges in Indian society.

Beyond religious and historical contexts, the Gita embodies behavioural science principles, offering insights into emotional control, leadership, and sustainable living. It teaches detachment from outcomes, rational decision-making, and balanced living, transcending religious boundaries to offer practical guidance for modern issues.

In an era of rapid technological advancement and societal complexity, the Gita's profound

philosophical wisdom offers invaluable insights into addressing contemporary predicaments through Philosophical Counselling. It illuminates pathways to emotional equilibrium and strategies for navigating the complexities of modern life.

As we grapple with our collective destiny, the Bhagavad Gita urges reflection and action guided by wisdom and compassion, providing solace and insight amidst uncertainty.

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## Poetry as a Prospective Tool in Philosophical Counselling

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### Abstract

The present paper attempts to understand poetry as a powerful tool to address emotional problems among human beings. It reflects on the various notions of poetry by English and Indian thinkers and how their notion of poetry resembles the theories of philosophical counselling. The researcher also endeavours to develop her cognition of the metaphysical identity of humans, their social or scientific identity and how both concepts are linked together with the aid of literature. The researcher proposes poetry reading and writing as important tools to analyse one's inner world, explore the real cause of the problem, and contemplate and find a solution with the help of analytical arguments. This paper also attempts to reflect on poetry's contemplative and transformative values and significance in developing a positive health and worldview for a counsellee.

**Keywords:** *Poetry, Recollection, Contemplation, Tranquility, Counselling.*

The present paper attempts to understand poetry as a powerful tool to address emotional problems among human beings. It reflects on the various notions of poetry raised and explained by English and Indian thinkers and how their notion of poetry resembles the theories of philosophical counselling. The researcher also endeavours to develop her cognition on the quest for the metaphysical identity of humans, its relationship to their socio-cultural or scientific identity and how both concepts are linked with the help of literature. The researcher proposes poetry reading and writing as important tools to comprehend and analyse one's inner world, explore the real cause of the problem, and contemplate and find a solution facilitated by analytical arguments. This paper also attempts to reflect on the contemplative and transformative values of poetry and its significance in developing a positive health and worldview for counsellee.

Poetry has always been used to communicate the 'incredible unsaid'. Since the Vedic period, when most of the teaching-learning process is claimed to be based on rote learning, poetry has been used as a powerful tool. Many modern educationists could question the reason behind the rote-learning process because teaching content and the age of literacy are not well synchronised. Still, as far as I understand, this process was a sort of preliminary foundation

building for coming generations. Although Vedic hymns (*richas*) were being used as content of the gurukul syllabus, it should not be forgotten here that rigorous practices of skill education and religious and social exposure were also an inseparable part of their education. So, questioning about rote learning can be addressed on two grounds as education in the Vedic period focused on two different poles:

- Firstly, it focused on making children aware of their religious and socio-cultural requirements and fulfilment. The development of senses was also significant. So, this was a well-calculated strategy of the Vedic Education system to develop a socio-scientific identity for children.
- Secondly, it was fostering students with various mantras and poetic pieces on the grounds of cultivating morality, purity of character and a positive worldview. So, this was how Vedic Education developed a spiritual and metaphysical identity among children.

In this way, it may be rightfully asserted that a student's physical, mental and spiritual world was pivotal to the Vedic educators. It is to be noted here that Vedas, the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism, are composed in various poetic meters. The *Rigveda*, for example, is a collection of hymns, and its verses are written in a specific meter known as *Trishtubh*. Vedic hymns'

rhythmic and melodic qualities are integral to their poetic form. The *Upanisads*, ancient Indian philosophical texts that explore the nature of reality and the self, often contain poetic expressions. Ramayana and Mahabharata, two of the major Sanskrit epics, are written in a mix of prose and poetry and their narratives are often adorned with poetic descriptions, similes and metaphors. Here, the question arises: why are all the scriptures written in poetry? The response to this vital question paves the way for further discussion on the prospects of poetry as a tool in philosophical counselling.

In the second chapter of his renowned work, *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh seems to satisfy the quest of scriptures being written in poetic form. In the chapter *The Essence of Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value, a quite immaterial element, its significance or thought value, and both of these again, its sound and its sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing about them.” (Aurobindo, Sri, 1997, L 13)

Aurobindo considers poetry as “... the highest form of speech available to man for the expression whether of his self-vision or his world-vision” (Aurobindo, Sri, 1997, L 14). Comparing poetry and prose style, Aurobindo finds poetry as the finest degree of expression because:

“It expresses not only the life soul of man as did the primitive word, not only the ideas of his intelligence for which speech now usually serves, but the experience, the vision, the ideas, as we may say, of the higher and wider soul in him. Making them real to our life soul as well as present to our intellect, it opens to us by the word the doors of the Spirit.” (Aurobindo, Sri, 1997, L 16)

Technique, on the other hand, can also not be ignored as it plays a decisive role in the manifestation of poetry, i.e., to create musicality

and to have an extra impact on the readers’/ listeners’ minds. Good poetry, once created, cannot be manipulated in terms of its technical structure (e.g. meter, rhythm, rhymes, dictions and conceits); otherwise, its inherent meaning may get lost. It is thus crucial to derive an intact meaning from it without influencing its consistent and technical structure.

Not only this, but our grand narratives, in the form of poetic didacticism, were available to everyone irrespective of caste, creed, or language. The rote-learning tradition of the Vedic period should be appreciated as the process of foundational activity, where knowledge was credited into the intellectual accounts of the young ones with the hope that when they grow, they will have enough resources to deal with their day-to-day dilemmas.

Another allegation on poetry ‘as the pure work of imagination’ should also be addressed to understand the power of poetry as a tool for counselling. The criticism of poetry begins from the very time of Plato when he, in his reputed work *The Republic*, expelled poets out rightly from the ideal state. Poets were accused of spreading wrong information and polluting the youth. To counter this argument of Plato’s, Aristotle has critically examined its nature and compared it with other disciplines like History. While comparing poetry with history, Aristotle, in his *Poetics* (Chapter 9), claims that presenting an event in its most truthful manner is the job of a historian. It has nothing to do with the poet. A poet, for Aristotle, should be concerned with “... what sorts of things might happen, that is, the things possible according to likelihood or necessity.” (Aristotle, 1451a36-8)

Aristotle, here, doesn't see the poet as a ‘fact-gathering’ individual like historians; rather, he prefers to compare them with philosophers. He believes that, like philosophers, poets also can see various possibilities in a given situation. And so, a good poet “tends to speak the universals”. He says, “...that is why poetry is more philosophical than and superior to history- for poetry tends to speak of universals but history particular.” (Aristotle, 1451b5-7).

To analyse the modern-day relevance of poetry, it is important to revisit some popular definitions of poetry (from various literary periods). As we have seen earlier, Aristotle not only finds the difference between a historian and a poet, he also defines poetry as the "...mimetic or imitative use of language, rhythm and harmony, separately or in combination" (Aristotle, *Poetics*). Emily Dickinson opines that:

"If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of the head were taken off, I know that is poetry, these are the only way I know it. Is there any other way?" (Dickinson, Emily, 1986, L342a)

A word painter like Emily Dickinson, here, seems to fail to define poetry technically because of the higher degree of communication in poetry. Her definition takes us back to Sri Aurobindo Ghosh when he says:

"What then is the nature of poetry, its essential law? What is the highest power we can demand from it, what the supreme music that the human mind reaching up and in and out to its own widest breadths, deepest depths and topmost summits, can extract from this self expressive instrument? and how out of that does there arise the possibility of its use as the mantra of the Real? Not that we need to spend any energy in a vain effort to define anything so profound, elusive and indefinable as the breath of poetic creation; to take the myriad-stringed harp of Saraswati to pieces for the purpose of scientific analysis is a narrow and barren amusement. But we stand in need of some guiding intuitions, some helpful descriptions which will serve to enlighten our search; to fix in that way, not by definition, but by description..." (Aurobindo, Sri, 1997, L 12).

Aurobindo Ghosh finds poetry indefinable. In other words, poetry for Aurobindo cannot be defined with the help of a few technical or scientific terms. Whereas 'reason and taste' for

him are "two powers of the intelligence, are rightly the supreme gods of the prose stylist, while to the poet they are only deities" (Aurobindo, Sri, 1997, L 16). Sri Aurobindo believes that:

"The privilege of the poet is to go beyond and discover that more intense illumination of speech that inspired word and supreme inevitable utterance, in which there meets the unity of a divine rhythmic movement with a depth of sense and a power of infinite suggestion welling up directly from the fountainheads of the spirit within us. He may not always or often find it, but to seek for it is the law or at least the highest trend of his utterance, and when he can not only find it, but cast into it some deeply revealed truth of the spirit itself, he utters the mantra." (Aurobindo, Sri, 1997, L 17).

Despite being an undefined genre, poets and critics have been putting their efforts into giving certain technical definitions. In 1798, with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth, a renowned romantic poet and critic, defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his work *Biographia Literaria*, describes poetry as "an activity of poet's mind" while a poem is "...that species of composition which is opposed to the works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure not truth."

In his work *The Study of Poetry*, Matthew Arnold defines poetry as 'the criticism of life'. Arnold is quite optimistic about the 'high destiny' of this genre with the belief that "mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us." (Ward, T.H., "General Introduction" to the English Poets, 1880, University of Washington)

Quite contrary to William Wordsworth's definition of poetry, T.S. Eliot, in his essay *Tradition and Individual Talent*, defines poetry as "...not a turning loose of emotions but an escape from emotion, it is not the expression of the personality but an escape from personality"

(Eliot, 1919, p. 73). Not only this, Eliot suggests that a poet's mind should work like a 'catalyst'. For the precision of his definition, Eliot presents the analogy of the reaction of Sulphur dioxide and oxygen where the platinum filament plays the role of a catalyst. He illustrates this idea by making poets aware of the imbalanced emotions and keeping them away from writing because the overflow of emotions might lead to complete chaos. For T. S. Eliot, "... the bad poet is usually unconscious where ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious". (Ibid)

In other words, we can say that Eliot has kept emotions on the second pedestal while thoughts and feelings are kept at a higher position. Despite all the above discussions, Eliot cannot deny that emotions, like thoughts and feelings, play a vital role in poetry. After all, no results will be found in the absence of an appropriate catalyst at a certain speed.

I.A. Richards, a well-known English educator and literary critic, also suggests a more scientific interpretation of poetry. For him, poetic truth is different from scientific truths that are purely based on facts. As he says, "The statements in poetry are there as a means to manipulation and expression of feelings and attitudes." Poetry communicates feelings and emotions. Hence, poetic truth is different from scientific truth. It is a matter of emotional belief rather than intellectual belief. (web: <https://drdevika.wordpress.com/2016/11/12/i-a-richards-practical-criticism/>)

Richards considers the human mind as a complete system of impulses or attitudes. Different impulses, for him, are nothing but contradictory instincts, desires and demands. Richards calls them 'appetencies' as opposed to 'aversions' in the human mind. These appetencies create restlessness and give birth to innumerable questions. The only way to attain solace is the process of adjustment and re-adjustment that keeps going, but they again give birth to other dilemmas. In such a situation, it is difficult to satiate all the impulses at the same time, so another possibility to attain peace is to satiate the

maximum number of impulses and to keep very few impulses frustrated.

According to Richards, poetry plays a significant role. It can enable human beings to achieve a state of 'poise'. Richards considers poetry as the best way to control such imbalances. He seems to consider poetry as the true solution to such uniquely ordered impulses of mind. Good poetry, on the one hand, satisfies the poet's unique order of impulses and can play the same role for the reader (client). In this way, it may prove to be a relevant tool to attain emotional balance, mental equilibrium and, finally, serenity of mind.

Based on the above notions of poetry, we find the following conclusions:

- Poetry should not be understood as fact-revealing expression; rather, expression through poetry reveals a 'heightened truth' that is universal by nature.
- The subject matter of poetry is mimetic (imitation of some phenomenon) by nature; hence, its delineation and presentation are efficient in establishing a cordial connection with its readers. So, it can easily influence human emotions, attitudes and behaviour.
- Consistent storage of emotions can give birth to powerful poetry. Poetry, as an essence of life, offers a wide space to writers and readers for self-identification, contemplation, introspection and transformation.
- Poetry can be a powerful tool to systematise and order the imbalances of human desires, quests and cravings.
- Poetry might be helpful to fill the gaps, to find the state of equilibrium and finally, to attain peace of mind.

To understand the use of poetry as a powerful tool in philosophical counselling, one should be aware of the different stages of poetic creation and have a fair understanding of the nature of a 'philosophical discourse'. Philosophy investigates basic life issues such as what a meaningful life is, what true love is, and what is morally right or wrong. These issues concern not only philosophy professors but every person

capable of reflecting on their life (Lahav, Ran, 2013, p.83).

The term “philosophical counselling” is commonly used to include any counselling session between a philosopher-practitioner who serves as a philosophical counsellor and an individual counselee. Philosophical counselling can be seen as an attempt to revive those ancient philosophical traditions that sought to guide the individual towards ataraxia, i.e., a ‘good life’ (Ibid). In my opinion, the use of poetry becomes useful here because the stages of composition (based on William Wordsworth’s stages of poetic creation in *Preface to Lyrical Ballad*) have a close affinity with the PEACE model (Problem, Emotion, Analyses, Contemplation, Equilibrium) proposed by Lou Marinoff. These are:

1. Observation,
2. Recollection,
3. Contemplation,
4. Recrudescence or Renewal of Emotions,
5. Composition.

Let us understand these stages one by one:

**Observation:** In the first two stages of the PEACE Process, the problem and the emotional reactions that it triggers are identified. These emotions must be experienced authentically and expressed beneficially. This can be compared with the stage of sense perception in any poetic creation, where the beholder comes in touch with some phenomenon (stimulus) for the first time. Since she cannot create poetry immediately, the feelings or emotions aroused at the observation go deeper into the subconscious mind.

**Recollection:** In this stage, the poet recollects his emotions in tranquillity. The poet stirs his subconscious to discover what has been hidden for a long time. He encounters with the emotions and hidden questions. This stage of recollection is quite similar to the stage of Problem and Emotion given by Lou Marinoff. Marinoff claims that “most psychology and psychiatry never progress beyond this stage”. But having a close affinity with philosophy, a good poem is wider than these two stages.

**Contemplation:** In the third stage of the PEACE Process, options for addressing the problem are listed and weighed. In the stage of poetic creation, the poet analyses the emotion. Since the poet cannot recreate the problem or event, he revives the emotions subsequently roused during observation. Tranquility is critical in these three stages when the poet starts contemplating and analysing those emotions. These emotions are extremely personal for the poet, but if we examine Aristotle’s idea of the universality of poetry, these emotions have some resemblance with the readers’ emotions. This may serve the purpose in two ways: Either the reader will start contemplating and analysing his own emotions like the poet, or he will have empathy for the poet, which will also help him to analyse his own emotions.

**Recrudescence or Renewal of Emotions:** In the fourth stage of the Peace Process, the client obtains a ‘philosophical disposition’ through exploring, with the counsellor, the philosophical framework within which what transpired in the first three stages would make sense to the client. This can be compared with the phase of renewal of emotions of poetic creation. As Wordsworth says: “...the tranquillity of contemplation disappears after a time, and then the poet filters all his thoughts by eliminating some and keeping others so that the original emotion is recreated in a way that is more universal.” (Wordsworth, 1800, p.12)

At this stage, the stimulus of all the emotions becomes secondary, and the emotions in their abstract form are renewed.

**Composition:** In the last and fifth stage of the PEACE Process, the client reaches equilibrium, that is, “understands the essence of [his/her] problem and are ready to take appropriate and justifiable action” (Dirk Louw, 2013, p.62). Similarly, in the stage of poetic creation, the poet finally gives words to these emotions, which have become more universal than a personal one. It reminds us of Richard’s theory of poetry, which says that the poet attempts to adjust and readjust to his impulses, desires and wants during composition. This way of creating a poem helps him to restructure his previous thoughts.



The clients, who oscillate between the various questions arising in their subconscious, find a better scope to get the answers or make a decision. This might prove to be the culmination point for both the client as a reader and the client as a writer simultaneously.

Here, one may ask that the poet's context differ from the reader's, so their interpretation might also differ. Still, one must remember that any good poetic piece of literature must be handled carefully for therapeutic purposes. Poetry is a complete mental process, and the poem is one of the offshoots of this process. When poetry is offered to read and interpreted by the client, the counsellor has to understand that the emotions during the stage of recrudescence have nothing to do with the client's emotions. Rather, such poems will only play the role of a catalyst to let him think and analyse (as we see in the connection between poetry and the reader in general) his emotions. It doesn't provide any specific lenses to observe the phenomenon; it is more like a mirror representation of clients' thoughts.

On the other hand, when a client is asked to write a poem, he would have to go through all the stages of poetic creation. In this process, from observation to composition, he will put effort into systematising his impulses and desires. This process of adjustment and readjustment under the supervision of a professional counsellor might clear his doubts.

Using poetry for therapeutic purposes in psychotherapy has already started in many countries. These days, poems are written for therapeutic purposes. My attempt in this paper is to understand the philosophical nature of poetry and how it can contribute to the field of philosophical counselling. Many innovations in writing poetry, like contemplative poetry and transformative poetry, can make the client think about their problems with a more analytical and newer perspective.

Neil Korobov, in his article *Poetry as a Contemplative Pedagogical Practice*, says that *contemplative poetry may transform the whole worldview for life*. If someone is reading a good contemplative poem, he cannot undo its effects.

Korobov remarks that primarily if "you are stuck with it, and if you are open enough and ready enough for how the encounter with poetic resonance invites you to shift your perspective, it will transform you." (Korobov, 25)

Secondly, Korobov believes that poetry is "...a kind of language that disarms you whether you want it to or not. This suggests that most of the time, we are well-armored against various forms of revelation as well as incarnation. Poetry is the language that unblocks or circumvents the armour somehow and apprehends you. You suddenly find yourself confronted and incapable of fortifying yourself from the truth." (Korobov, 26)

Let's have a look at the poem 'Sweet Darkness' here:

"You must learn one thing  
 The world was made to be free in'  
 Give up all other worlds  
 Except the one to which you belong  
 Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet  
 Confinement of your aloneness  
 to learn  
 anything or anyone  
 that does not bring you alive  
 is too small for you"  
 - (Whyte, David, 1997)

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, it can be said that the poetic truth always differs from the scientific truth based on evidence. It is also different from a historian's fact-gathering skills. It is close to philosophy, which analyses and reflects based on possibilities. Writing a poem is not as simple as the overflow of emotions, but poetry is a complete process, or, I must say a philosophical process. It is not purely the result of imagination and speculation; it demands proper recollection, contemplation and analysis of emotions. Close to the philosophical venture of counselling and very close to the heart of readers, poetry is not just a piece of art. It can bridge a philosophical mind and a client's heart. It has got a divine soul.

It can drag you back to the past, show you the future and then bring you back to the present, dissolving the dilemma and establishing a logical equilibrium of state of mind. Here, a poet, like a philosophical counsellor, can play the role of catalyst to speed up the process of finding answers to the hidden questions of the human mind. Good poetry will be beneficial, whether some poet or some client writes it. A philosophical counsellor can also store these poems written by the clients for further use. In the five stages of creating a poem, a client might benefit by thinking about his problems from

various perspectives. My claim in this paper is not to establish poetry as an independent school of counselling; rather, it might be helpful for practitioners to include poetry reading and writing as tools in their daily philosophical practices. Not only English poetry but a good poem in any language may prove its relevance in philosophical counselling. It will certainly not show the right path to clients, but yes, it will open various windows of perspectives to choose and decide.

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## Understanding Indian Psyche and Philosophical Health through Indian Cinema

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### Abstract

Indian philosophy has a ubiquitous presence in all walks of our lives. From the Vedic age to the digital era, the footprints of Indian philosophy can be traced and perceived as one of the most deep-rooted characteristics of our cultures and traditions. Cornelissen, Misra, & Varma (2014) defined “Indian psychology as an approach to psychology based on ideas and practices that developed over thousands of years within the Indian sub-continent.” Philosophical notions in the country might vary in their approaches and ideologies but comprehensively indicate the same goal to make this world a better place to live in and to improve human life. The most captivating aspect of our Indian philosophy has been its subtle and unbridled transmission and its adaptation through generations, which speaks volumes about its relevance and significance in India. Hindi cinema has contributed to portraying Indian philosophical notions more poignantly and responsibly for a long time. It continues to disseminate information, knowledge, and awareness and revive philosophical concepts and practices worldwide. This research paper will attempt to study films based on Indian philosophical underpinnings, the portrayal of themes, and their narration on the silver screen. It further addresses specific aspects, themes, or questions related to portraying and exploring philosophical themes within the narratives, characters, and motifs of Hindi cinema.

**Keywords:** *Indian Philosophy, Indian Psyche, Hindi Cinema, Films, Themes, Audience.*

### Introduction

Literally speaking, philosophy\* involves two Greek words – Philo, meaning love and Sophia, meaning knowledge. Thus, literally speaking, philosophy means love of wisdom. This definition of philosophy differs from how the word Darshan has been taken in India. The literal meaning of philosophy shows that the philosopher is constantly and everywhere engaged in the search for truth. He does not bother so much to arrive at conclusions and continues searching for truth throughout his life. His aim is the pursuit of truth rather than its possession. Those who enjoy journeys do not care so much about the destination, nor are they perturbed when the destination is lost in sight despite a continued long journey. Films are the medium that captures people's instincts and tries to understand human psychology working at different levels in different social spheres. Films are one of the best mediums of mass communication for determining the prevailing dominant psyche and public opinion. Hindi films

also project the nation that is taking shape into the popular imagination. They discuss contemporary society's political, social, cultural, and psychological issues and issues regarding sex, gender, class distinction, and so on. It is a well-known fact that if one wants to know any nation, one must study history, literature, the education system and common modes of communication like television and newspapers. Now, in recent times, films should also be included in the list as films enable their audience to have an idea about prevailing mindsets, notions and practices in society. Films not only guide us into the future but reflect our past too in terms of the portrayal of history, traditional social practices, theories and knowledge in such a powerful way that its audience can connect to its roots and culture easily and accurately. This paper will attempt to highlight the films that made the effort to tie philosophical theories with cinematic art.

### Review of Literature

1. For a novice in film study, Bose (2008) in *Bollywood: A History* gives a detailed history of the arrival of films in India with Lumière brothers, its development as a new medium of communication and its progress into the recent form. The book is an excellent guide that shows the different phases through which films passed and reached their present mature form. It mentions the contributions of not-so-talked people who were responsible for being pioneers in the development of this visual form, as well as those directors, artists, actors, actresses, and producers who shaped the film industry as of today.
2. Viridi (2003), in *Cinematic Imagination Indian Popular Films as Social History*, has tried to advocate and establish Hindi cinema as an important mode for cultural study like history, education and literature. She reads popular Hindi films as a narration of the nation's social history. According to her, films represent the anxieties and threats to the nation through the characters of villains, vamps and anti-heroes. She has discussed how antiheroes of *Shri 420* speak of Nehruvian disillusionment, of C.I.D. - the corruption and crime of *Zanjeer*- frustration and angst of its time. In her Essay "The Sexed Body", she explains the transformation of female characters who have been victimised by the patriarchal society into vigilantes when they are humiliated by a rape.
3. *Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema*, ed. Joshi Lalit Mohan (2001) is a compilation of essays by renowned filmmaker Shyam Benegal, Lyricist Gulzar and film critics like Maithili Rao and Deepa Gahlot. It is a pictorial history of 100 years of cinema illustrated by rare images from film archives. It contains an in-depth review of classic and blockbuster movies, their star cast, music, themes and iconic actors and actresses. Elements like screenplay, songs, music and dance that make an unflinching impact on the audience have been considered for the discussion.
4. *Understanding Cinema: A Psychological Theory of Moving Imagery* by Per Persson analyses film from psychological perspectives. The author explains with illustrations from famous Hollywood films how cinematic techniques help the spectator to "perceive, think, apply knowledge, infer, interpret, feel and make use of knowledge, assumptions, expectations and prejudices" while viewing films.
5. *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema* is a collection of essays compiled by Ravi S. Vasudevan that discusses politics as represented through films. In his essay "Shifting Codes, Dissolving Identities", Vasudevan shows his discontent with the kind of melodramatic films made here; he wants movies to be more serious and reality-based. He disapproves of the tradition of inserting songs and dance sequences. He also expresses his opinion that the audience should be educated to interpret films for such a serious film.
6. *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* ed. by Gulzar, Govind Nihalani and Saibal Chatterjee (2003), a collection of 34 essays penned by experts of the craft of filmmaking, provides an insight into various aspects of a film: songs and dance, special effects, stunts and action, lyrics and sound etc. It is a high-quality reference book that is informative and entertaining. It also comments on the commercial potency of this industry and its business.

### Research Methodology

The present research paper interestingly traces the philosophical underpinnings of Hindi cinema. Since the subject is huge, the researcher has adopted a thematic analysis of films based on themes of philosophy, narrating their takeaways and messages films delivered. Due to the presence of so many films, selected films have been chosen to demonstrate their philosophical roots in Hindi cinema.

### Discussion

Films are primarily based on the themes and genres that guide their storyline and narration.

Still, some films here have been selected to illuminate their philosophical underpinnings, which inspires its audiences through their traditional takeaways that are even much more relevant and need of the time than they could have been. In the context of Hindi cinema, philosophical themes and insights are frequently intertwined with the films' narratives, characters, and motifs. Here's an exploration of philosophical health in Hindi films:

**Journey of Self-Discovery:** Many Hindi films revolve around characters embarking on journeys of self-discovery, seeking answers to existential questions, and striving for personal growth. Films like "Wake Up Sid" and "Dear Zindagi" touch upon self-realisation, inner peace, and finding one's purpose in life.

**Moral and Ethical Dilemmas:** Hindi films often present characters grappling with moral and ethical dilemmas, emphasising the importance of values, integrity, and righteousness. Movies like "Rang De Basanti" and "A Wednesday" confront societal issues, ethical choices, and the responsibilities of individuals towards society.

**Spiritual Awakening:** Spiritual themes and the quest for enlightenment are recurrent motifs in Hindi cinema. Films such as "P.K." and "Oh My God!" explore the intersections of faith, religion, and spirituality, challenging conventional beliefs and promoting a more inclusive understanding of spirituality.

**Interpersonal Relationships and Human Connections:** The importance of relationships, human connections, and empathy is a recurring theme in Hindi films. Movies like "Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna" and "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara" emphasise understanding, compassion, and emotional well-being in fostering meaningful relationships and personal happiness.

**Societal Reflection and Critique:** Many Hindi films offer critiques of societal norms, conventions, and prejudices, highlighting the need for societal change, progress, and inclusivity. Films such as "Article 15" and "Dil Se.." address societal issues, systemic inequalities, and the complexities of human relationships within the broader societal context.

**Philosophical Musings and Dialogues:** Hindi films often incorporate philosophical musings, profound dialogues, and reflective narratives that encourage audiences to contemplate more profound existential questions, ethical dilemmas, and the complexities of human nature. Filmmakers like Satyajit Ray and Guru Dutt and contemporary directors like Anurag Kashyap and Imtiaz Ali have explored philosophical themes in their works.

In summary, philosophical health in Hindi films encompasses a broad spectrum of themes, ranging from self-discovery and personal growth to moral dilemmas, spiritual awakening, and societal reflection. These films engage audiences in introspective journeys, fostering discussions and reflections on philosophical insights and existential questions. To arrive at the meaning of philosophy, we will have to discuss its problems, attitude, method, process, conclusions, and results. In brief, philosophy is a philosophical process of solving some characteristic problems through characteristic methods, from a characteristic attitude and arriving at characteristic conclusions and results

### **Stoicism**

“You can dance in the rain or sulk in the rain. It will rain regardless.” A philosophy that is very much in vogue today, Stoicism represents a possible answer to one’s search for structure and meaning in life. Rather than change the world, however, it seeks to alter one’s reaction to life’s random and haphazard events to attain true tranquillity. According to the philosophy, there is no point in getting worked up about things that you cannot control or burden your soul with such matters. The philosophy the present generation has been watching for a long time, and even in songs, the stoicism echoes loudly.

The song that captures this theory says, “Man re tu kahe na dheer dhare” from the movie “Chitralkha” (Chitralkha is the name of a courtesan in the period drama released in 1964. It is set in the Mauryan empire of roughly 300 BCE), lyrics by Sahir Ludhianvi.

Man re, tu kahe na dheer dhare

Wo nirmohi, moh na jaane, jinka moh kare

Is jeevan ki chadthi dhalti, dhoop ko kisne  
baandha

Rang pe kisne pehre dalle, roop ko kisne  
baandha

Kahe ye jatan kare

If there is one Hindi song that could be considered a prominent stoic song, it would be “Main Zindagi ka saath nibhata chala gaya” from the movie “Hum Dono” Written by Sahir Ludhianvi The song was filmed by Dev Anand.

Main zindagi ka saath nibhaata chala gaya

Har fikr ko dhueno main udata chala gaya

Barbadiyon ka sog manaana fazul tha

Barbadiyon ka jashn manata chala gaya

Suppose we turn back to “Dilwale Dilgir hua kya from the movie “Yatrik”, 1952 lyrics penned by Pt Bhushan. Another feather in the hat of stoicism is added by Shailendra’s “Kisi ki muskuraton pe ho nisar” from “Anari” 1959, which captures the spirit of generosity and justice beautifully. It goes like

Kisi ki muskurahaton pe ho nisar

Kisi ka dard mil sake to le udhaar

Kisi ke waaste ho tere dil mein pyaar

Jeena isi ka naam hai

It’s not that we get stoicism in the earlier films only, but films of the new age media also witnessed the movies on stoicism and will continue to do so due to its deep-rooted nature of Indian philosophy and thoughts.

Bhaag Milkha Bhag movie, released in 2013, is based on the real-life of the ‘Flying Sikh’, the late Milkha Singh, starring Farhan Akhtar. Rakesh Om Prakash Mehra directed the film; the film is all about dedication, discipline and hard work and gives us an important message to never give up against the odd circumstances; one should also strive to achieve their goal irrespective of the fact what society thinks about them, they should become indifferent towards the community and concentrate on one’s goal.

**Existentialism- A philosophy that took root in the 1940s and 50s, existentialism is more or less summed up in the quote, “Existence**

precedes essence.” This means that the purpose and meaning of one’s life are not something that one is born with or given by God (i.e. one’s essence) but what one’s deliberate actions lead one to create. Existentialism makes you the captain of your voyage, dispensing with superfluous external forces.

Existentialism was a radical departure from the notion of cosmic forces paving the path for individuals to follow, making the individuals responsible for the actions that they take and follow. Paan Singh Tomar is the story of a real-life athlete, Paan Singh Tomar, a gold medalist who became a dacoit after the world around him refused to acknowledge him for his accomplishments and kept pushing him down. The movie's strength lies in the stirring tragedy of Paan Singh Tomar’s life, which drives him to seek revenge from the system for his lost career and life. This one is history in motion. Here, Paan Singh Tomar took charge of his life and decided to be a dacoit to take revenge, so existentialism says an individual is responsible for his actions and destiny.

Udaan's movie tracks the journey of Rohan, who returns to his home after eight years of boarding school, only to be welcomed by a disciplinarian father and a half-brother. The beauty of *Udaan* lies in the way Rohan fights and aims for his dreams rather than being tied down by his father. The movie sends a strong message that we can become whatever we want; we only need to give our dreams a little flight. Rohan works hard to register his existence in the world.

Today’s youth fashioned existentialism in achieving their dreams. The film Gully Boy received massive applause from youths which is directed by Zoya Akhtar and stars Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhatt and Siddhant Chaturvedi; the film revolves around Murad (Ranveer Singh), who lives in the Mumbai slums and dreams of becoming a rapper. The film gives a strong message of how people are not allowed to dream because of society and its stereotyped mindset, but a little courage helps you fly. Existentialism can be seen reflected in one of its popular songs, “Apna Time Ayega.”

**Empiricism**

Empiricism is a philosophical theory that claims knowledge is based solely on what one's senses can experience and confirm. The approach indicates a pragmatic approach towards life. A film like *A Wednesday* tells about the importance of a wake-up call to our government to act towards the safety of its citizens. *A Wednesday* is a stirring message to all common men not to play vulnerable all the time and to come together and ask our system to be accountable to us.

Another popular movie translating empiricism on the silver screen is *Manjhi: The Mountain Man*, a biographical drama about a man who carves a path through a mountain to connect his village to the nearest town. This movie inspires its audience to think outside the box, take initiative, and work towards the betterment of the community.

*Dangal* is a film that wrestles with stereotyped societal notions and conveys that society can witness change for betterment with the will to break these notions. The film establishes that girls can be wrestlers, and no profession can be restricted by gender. *Iqbal* is a sports drama about a deaf and mute boy who dreams of becoming a cricketer and overcomes social and personal challenges to achieve his goal. This movie teaches students to pursue their passion despite their limitations and to stand as achievers. Directed by Gauri Shinde and starring the talented Sridevi, *English Vinglish* talks about where she meets a bunch of people just like her, and they make her realise that she must value herself and not think about the narrow perspective created by society. This film gave a great message about valuing yourself before anything else, and that's what touched the audience and gained so much love.

### **Rationalism**

Rationalism is a philosophy that relies on reason as the primary source of knowledge. It claims that truth does not come from the evidence of one's senses but instead is deductive. Combined with empiricism, these thought processes produced rapid scientific, mathematical, and political growth. In its most extreme form, rationalism is too theoretical and bound by the knowledge of its time, too much of an armchair

philosophy with few practical outlets. Rationalism is a vital philosophy which has attracted many filmmakers to make films on this subject for a long time.

*Mother India* in 1957, a legendary film in Hindi cinema by Mehboob Khan, tells the story of a poor village woman, Radha, who raises her sons on her own when her husband leaves his family and village as he's unable to pay his debts. This film is about woman empowerment and its depiction with cinematic excellence. The film talks about logic and philosophy of life guided by rationalism and speaks volumes about the Indian psyche and contemporary dominating public perception. *Peepli Live* in 2010, produced by Aamir Khan and directed by Anusha Rizvi, is a satire on farmer suicide. It talks in a very pertinent way that could make a strong impact on the audience. Another movie, *3 Idiots*, hits the chord of rationalism, which strongly gives a message to bring a change within yourselves before seeking a change in the system. We study to learn and not to understand, which needs to change. In the queue, another beautiful film is *Dear Zindagi*, which superfluously conveys that you should not let the past blackmail your present into ruining your future and leave the past in the past. Very boldly, the film advocates that it is ok to seek counselling in times of need.

### **Confucianism**

Confucianism is about correct behaviour, obedience to hierarchy, and ethics. It prioritised family over individualism and made merit and intelligence of paramount importance to the officials in positions of power over family name and wealth. It formed the bedrock of what many East Asian cultures and practices are derived from today. Most of Suraj Barjatiya's movies are classic examples of this philosophical notion, where films give messages like family comes first, stay together, stay happy, sacrifices for the family members as one of the pious rituals and obedience and respect for the elders. Films like *Maine Pyar Kiya*, *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun*, *Vivah*, and *Hum Saath Saath Hain* remind us of family values combined with modern values. Songs like *Yeh Toh Sach hai ki bhagwan hai, hai*

magar phir bhi anjaan hai dharti pe roop maa baap ka usmein data ki pehchan hai.

All these films give a clear message about how to deal with family problems, control ego, and develop let-go feelings within family members. A film like *Tu Jhuthi Main Makkar*, in which the protagonists Mickey and Tinni's parents agree to their marriage, but Tinni finds that Mickey's family is quite possessive about him. Tinni feels that she won't be able to adjust to his family as she wants her own space, and the film very poignantly narrates the value and importance of family when they are perceived as unwanted.

**Objectivism** Objectivism was Coined by Ayn Rand, author of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. Objectivism is a philosophy that envisions man as a heroic being, with his moral purpose being his happiness, reason at his core, and productive achievement as his highest form of expression.

Being aimless in life and careless about a career is a phase everyone goes through. Having a quarter-life crisis is not so bad, either. However, the magic lies in waking up at the right time. Forget everyone else; the real deal is to surprise yourself with your capabilities and do something you never expected. After all, this is what the film *Lakshya* taught us. Movie *Panga* is remembered for its famous dialogue: 'I am a mother, and the mother has no dreams.' This dialogue from the film indeed describes the life of every woman who forgets her dreams to take care of her family and kids. The story is based on the life of a national-level Kabbadi player who gives up her career to raise her family but decides to go back to living her dream with the help of her family. Directed by Zoya Akhtar and starring Abhay Deol, Farhan Akhtar, Hrithik Roshan, Kalki, and Katrina Kaif, the film *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* gives us the most important message to live life to the fullest without any regrets. Hritik Roshan (Arjun) realises that the most important thing he misses is to live every moment and be thankful for everything you have. The movie *Thappad* is a classic example of objectivism; it's a film that beautifully narrates a female's desire to seek

happiness and respect and her struggle to achieve them in her married life.

### Utilitarianism

Part of the Ethics doctrine of philosophy, utilitarianism is a theory that professes that the morally right action in a situation is the action that causes the most pleasure and happiness as opposed to the one that causes the most pain. Before this can be accused of being too selfish and hedonistic a mindset, utilitarianism regards the pleasure and happiness of others as equivalent to one's own and advocates trying to produce the greatest good for the greatest number. *Taare Zameen Par* breaks the stigma attached to differently-abled children and leads us to give them a fair chance. *Munna Bhai MBBS* portrays Sanjay Dutt in the lead role, telling the principles of Gandhiji for the betterment of society and disseminating the message nothing is more precious than love and forgiveness in life.

*Rang De Basanti* tries to create an environment of increased activism on matters of public interest and throws open a debate: do we want to take matters into our own hands or keep crying foul about the inefficiencies of the society, echoing the dialogue "Koi bhi desh perfect nahi hota use banana hota hai", making deep imprints in audience heart and soul.

*Padman* film tells us about Laxmikant (Akshay Kumar) and his journey of making pads for his wife, who uses unhygienic cloth during her periods. After that, he makes a machine which can make affordable sanitary pads and how he raises awareness about the same. The film did a great job of raising awareness of such an important and sensitive issue for the good of society. *Chhapaak* is a biographical drama about a young woman who becomes an acid attack survivor and fights for justice and awareness. This movie motivates students to fight against injustice, support survivors, and stand up for their rights. It is, again, an excellent example of utilitarianism.

### Conclusion

Philosophy has been present in every walk of life; hence, in Hindi cinema, the philosophical



underpinnings have been deep-rooted. The relevance and significance of philosophical notions in Indian culture have dominated Hindi cinema. In the context of Hindi movies, "philosophical health" can be understood as the portrayal and exploration of philosophical themes, insights, and reflections within the films' narratives, characters, and motifs. Indeed, it won't be an exaggeration that these

philosophical notions and theories inspire filmmakers to disseminate various subjects of public interest on philosophical bedrock, which not only serves to rejuvenate and revive our traditional knowledge system and heritage but acquaints us to the real meanings and manifestations of life

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## Sufism and Philosophical Counselling: An Analysis of Kashmir Valley

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### Abstract

The Kashmir landscape, globally known for its picturesque beauty, is thus rightly known as the "Paradise on Earth." The physical beauty of Kashmir is consciously maintained and highly amplified by some of its commendable qualities. Many scholars have mentioned that Sufism in Kashmir called attention to the peaceful co-existence of all faiths apart from its emphasis on increasing virtues, soul purification, and divine love. Their philosophy has strengthened the Kashmiri social setup by adding details to their hospitality, warmth, tolerance, equality, and generosity.

In this regard, the paper attempts to understand the role that the philosophy of these Sufi saints has played in the history of Kashmir. Employing secondary sources and the relevant literature, the paper highlights the fact that Sufism has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining the legacy of peaceful co-existence and infusing the qualities the land has been known for, like hospitality, equality, brotherhood, and, more importantly, it would be better to study that how these Sufis have influenced the economic life of people of Kashmir till now. However, assessing the present situation in the valley is food for the people and scholars to see how far this philosophy needs revival to pull together the scattered threads of the longed-for Kashmir ethos.

**Keywords:** *Sufism, co-existence, Kashmir, tolerance, hospitality*

### Introduction

Through the millennia, Kashmir's social system has portrayed itself as amenable to every religious appeal. However, Islam has been dramatically successful in attracting the people of the valley in general, and the *Sufi* traditions of Islam have been instrumental in teaching unique qualities like tolerance, egalitarianism, sacrifice, brotherhood, and hospitality. The historical records are interwoven with tales highlighting this particularity of Kashmir's state subjects. The effects have spread so far that several Sufi shrines are still highly valued and sought after. Thus, Sufism has significantly tightened the bonds between the many institutions of the social structure, giving the valley's residents a unique advantage in the stunning Kashmiri scenery. The study, highlighting this narration, will also attempt to assess the present-day situation in the valley in light of the great traditions of *Sufism* in the state.

### Meaning and Genesis of Sufism

Sufism has always had a significant fan following among Muslims and non-Muslims, as

seen in India, where Sufi saints laid the foundations of the Bhakti movement in Hinduism. Moreover, Sufism has always played a pivotal role in breaking down superstitions and has become all the more relevant in contemporary times of violence. The word Sufi has many derivations, but the most popular one is that the word 'Sufi' comes from the Arabic word 'Suf,' which means wool. Therefore, the Muslim saints who used to wear garments made of wool were termed "Sufis." Even though Sufism is a much later phenomenon associated with Islam, it is said to have its foundations in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

It is asserted that Islamic Sufism finds its roots in the life and personality of the Prophet of Islam, Hazrat-e-Muhammad himself (Rafiqi, 2009, p. 24), who is the role model for all those mystics, spiritualists, *Sufis*, *dervishes*, *faqirs*, *rishis* and *pirs* who had devoted their lives for gaining the knowledge of '*haqiqt* and '*tariqat* in the light of Qur'an and Sunnah to achieve the fundamental goal of Islam. Sufism is not something different or a new religion from Islam. Mystic spirituality also depends on the

five essential pillars of Islam, i.e., the Kalma (Shahadat), the Prayer (Salat), the Saum (Fasting during Ramadan), the (Zakat) the obligatory contribution towards the poor, and finally, the performance of Pilgrimage (Hajj) if the person could effort the expenses (Hamdani, 2009, p. 34).

"The Sufis would usually live in isolation, practice self-mortification, and were distinguished by a cloak of wool (*Suf*), a tradition of Muhammad, which is believed to be the origin of the word Sufi. A group of such devotees lived a life of poverty and continued prayer and fasting on a stone bench before Muhammad's mosque. These people of the bench (*Ashab-e-suffa*), 45 to over 300 in number, were given too much weeping and repentance and are believed to be the origin of Sufism. However, the name Sufi was given to such ascetics only around the second century after the death of Muhammad. The Sufis in the early period were primarily ascetics, and Sufism had yet to evolve into a fully developed system of theosophical doctrines, which became the core feature of the later Sufism. The companions of Muhammad, like Bilal, Salman Farsi, and Ammar bin Yasir, were the early mystics. Later, with the spread of Islam, Sufism flourished in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Persia, and Central Asia and gave birth to renowned Sufis like Rabia Basri, Hasan Basri, Junayd Baghdadi, Dhun Nun Misri, etc., around the 9th and 10th century (Nizamie. et al. p.216)."

### Sufism in India

In India, the early history of Sufis is most challenging to understand. Still, we may safely assume that Muslims with solid leanings towards mysticism were at work in this country from Islam's earliest contact with it. Historians tell us that it was by way of three open doors –the sea, the land route leading through Persia into Sind, and the Khyber pass- that Islam entered India. These same doors also must have come to these Sufis and wandering Dervishes, following in the

steps of peaceful Arab traders and military commanders (Subhan, 1999, p. 119). However, the severe or natural Sufi activities in India began in the last decade of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century. Outstanding Sufi personalities began to visit India one after another in quick succession. These Sufis organised themselves into various 'orders' called Silsilas up to the 16th century A.D. Sufi Orders (Silsilas) are numerous, crossing one hundred seventy-five. However, the most important among them are as follows:-

1. The Chishtiyyah Order.
2. The Qadriyyah Order.
3. The Naqshbandiyyah Order.
4. The Suhrawardiyyah Order (Masood, 2003, pp. 26-27)

### Sufism in Kashmir

The beautiful valley of Kashmir is now one of the great tourist centres of Asia. It is by the grace of its incredible mountain scenery. Kashmir is not only famous for its beauty but also for its fine artisans and hospitality. Kashmir is a so-called valley because it is covered by mountains from all sides, and that is why it is called the 'paradise on earth.'

The individuality of the culture of Kashmir survived the coming of Islam itself in new forms. The process by which Islam was introduced into the valley differed from that whereby it entered other parts of the subcontinent, for it did not come by conquest but by peaceful penetration. In his book 'Valley of Kashmir,' Walter Lawrence states that 'foreigners call the Kashmirias *Pir Parast* saint worshippers and that epithet is well deserved' (Lawrence, 1985, p. 286).

With the beginning of Muslim rule in Kashmir (720/1320), Sufism entered Kashmir. These Sufis poured from Persia and Central Asia into Kashmir. There were four Sufi orders in Kashmir – Suharwardi, Kubravi, Naqshbandi, and Qadri. Sayyid Sharaf-ud-din Bulbul Shah was the first Sufi to enter the Kashmir valley. He was a native of Turkistan and arrived in Kashmir during the reign of King Suhadeva. He belonged to the

Suharwardia order of the Sufis. His main contribution to the Islamization of Kashmir was the conversion of King Rinchin to Islam. His conversion helped Islam to go on a long way in Kashmir.

The Islamization of Kashmir was further developed at a faster rate by the influx of a host of Sayyids, well known among them are Sayyid Jalal-ud-din Bukhari, Sayyid Taj-ud-din, Sayyid Mas'ud, Sayyid Ali Hamdani. Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani flourished and extraordinarily influenced the spreading of Islam in Kashmir, also known as Shah-e-Hamdan in Kashmir. His other name is Amir-i-Kabir and Ali-i-Thani (second Ali) (Lawrence, 1985, p. 292). He belonged to the Kubravi order. After moving to Kashmir, he gained enormous influence over the ruler of Kashmir, Sultan Qutub-ud-din. The saint further confirmed the switchover of the masses of the valley to Islam with the help of his prominent co-workers.

From the Suharwardi order, a famous and significant Saint was Sheikh Hamza Makhdam, popularly known as 'Mahbulul Alam' in Kashmir. He was born in 900/1494 in the district Baramulla of Kashmir. He built various mosques in Kashmir in rural areas where Islamic teachings were propagated. He strongly disapproved of Sama (mystical music), prohibited in Islam and evidenced in the Qur'an & Sunnah (Yousuf, 2019). The other two orders of Sufi Saints, the Naqshbandi & Qadri saints, were fewer and did not leave lasting impressions in Kashmir.

### Impact on the social structure of Kashmir

These great *Sufi* traditions have greatly influenced the land and people of Kashmir. Some of the distinctive areas that the *zSufi* orders affected in the valley are discussed in the following sections.

- **Politics:** These Sayyids or Sufi saints who arrived with Syed Ali Hamadani linked themselves with the royal courts and participated in the state's political affairs. These Sufi saints not only engaged themselves in religious positions but also served as ambassadors.
- **Lifestyle:** It was Sayyid Ali Hamadan's teachings of which Sultan Qutub-ud-din was so influenced that he discarded the dressing style of Hindu attire and divorced his wives whom he had married before, against Islamic law. Sayyid Ali Hamdani and his team established hospices in the valley, which served as centres for the propagation of their religion. The doors of these hospices were open to all, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, and in the large kitchens, food was served to the needy, innates, and visitors.
- **Religious Education:** Another contribution of these Sayyids was the establishment of Madrassas (Educational institutions) where the knowledge of the Qur'an, Qur'anic commentaries, Hadis (sayings of the Prophet,) and *Tafsir* (commentary) was propagated. These Madrassas imparted religious education and moral and social equality knowledge, which helped the Kashmiris lead a disciplined and righteous life.
- **Economy:** Sayyid Ali Hamdani played a vital role in improving the Kashmir valley's economy by introducing central Asia's art and craft techniques. On his insistence, Sultan Qutub-ud-din started Karkhana (Shawl factories) in Kashmir on a main Asia factory pattern.
- **Monasticism:** It did not advocate monasticism as it is forbidden in the Qur'an and has no mention in the teachings of the Prophet. Some pseudo-Sufis practised this escapism or monkish austerity, which was their innovation and thus alienated Sufism from Islam. The Islamic abstemiousness (Zuhd), which means leading a simple life and not becoming a captive of wealth and rank, is in no way related to the issue of monasticism.
- **Conversions:** More than 30,000 people accepted Islam through the influence of Shah-i-Hamdan, mostly mass conversions. However, during Sultan Sikander (1389-1413), Sufism gained impulsion in the valley. It was by the teachings of Mir Muhammad, son of Sayyid Ali Hamadani, by whom Sultan Sikander was very impressed and who continued his father's mission in the Kashmir valley. Malik

Suhabhatta, prime minister and commander of the military force at that time, was impressed by Mir Muhammad's personality and simple way of life, so he embraced Islam. Then, under the influence of Mir Muhammad, he adopted the name Saif-ud-din and abandoned the evil practices widespread in Kashmiri society, like the sale of hot drinks, *sati* system gambling, and the dancing of girls. This Sufi saint, by removing such wicked practices from society, not only helped the welfare of Muslims but also the welfare of non-Muslims. These Sufi saints not only converted the lower caste Hindus but also Brahmans renounced their faith and accepted Islam. The fact is that their conversion was practically motivated, and the spiritual cravings have nothing to do with it. Jonaraja says, "Many Brahmans and people of other castes gave up their faith to obtain the favour of the king (Sikandar) (Dutt, 1898, p. 67)."

- **Women's Education:** These Sufi saints greatly emphasised Women's education. Baba Dawud Khaki, while highlighting the importance of women's education, says,

"It is obligatory on a husband to impart religious Education to his wife, and if he does not fulfil it, the woman has every right to move towards a teacher without the permission of her husband to acquire Iilm- i- Sharia" (Khaki, 1937, p. 135)

Apart from these pros and cons of the *Sufi* faith and traditions in Kashmir, the persistence of the impact can still be located in the Kashmir atmosphere. It has, without doubt, preached and propagated Islam uniquely, attracting the Kings, their courtiers, and the common masses. It recorded huge conversions and thereby successfully inculcated the great ideals of Islam by fostering unity and tolerance and pushing society toward the realms of justice.

Presently, the glory has been lost and eroded by the modernisation of societies and the introduction of religious fundamentalism in Islam. It may still have some standing in the rural locales but has witnessed a significant downfall. The need of the hour is to rest the society on the ideals that promote unity, foster a

sense of equality, augment tolerance to other people of other faiths, and make a person live like humans.

### Spirit of Communal Harmony

The traditional communal harmony that once existed in Kashmir enabled the peaceful co-existence of Muslims, Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus), and other minorities. The Kashmiri society became more open to various beliefs under the influence of Islamic Sufis and Saints of the Rishi order.

*"Shiva (God) abides in all that is everywhere, then do not discriminate between a Hindu and a Muslim. If you are wise, seek the Absolute within yourself. That is true knowledge of the Lord" – Lal Ded/ Lala Arifa.*

Some of the festivals in Kashmir originating in Hindu mythology attained a secular character. Pandits and Muslims celebrated them, the birthday of river *Vitasta* (Jhelum) being one such festival. The King, Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as '*Bud Shah*' (Great King), used to function as a high priest on such occasions, promoting a collective identity, often referred to as '*Kashmiriyat*,' which further evolved as a representation of religious tolerance, with saints like Lal Ded/Lala Arifa, Shiekh Noorudin/Nun Rishi helping the cause by spreading the message of oneness and sowing seeds of the concept of religious-humanism. The humanistic philosophy of Kashmiri Sufis and Rishis has played a prominent role in building the Kashmiri ethnic identity.

As times progressed, despite varied political leanings and conflicting attitudes to the history of Kashmir, Kashmiris (Pandits and Muslims) continued to have a remarkable degree of tolerance, respect, and concern for each other in day-to-day life. Pandits and Muslims celebrated the onset of spring by celebrating a festival called '*Badamwari*' (Almond festival) as flowers blossomed in almond gardens. In many areas, Muslim '*Asthans*' (shrines) and Hindu shrines stood facing each other while people made

pilgrimages to shrines and visited living Sufis. Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims attended gatherings where Kashmiri Sufi poetry was sung at the abodes of living Sufis.

### **Sufi Intellectual Affinity and Impact in Kashmir**

Sufism, a mystical and spiritual dimension of Islam, has had a significant intellectual affinity and impact in Kashmir. Sufism emphasises spirituality, self-awareness, and inner transformation and can intersect with various aspects of Counseling and psychology. Here are some modes or pathways where Sufism and Counseling intersect:

- **Spirituality in Counseling:** It explores how incorporating spiritual elements, such as Sufi practices, into Counseling can enhance individuals' well-being and mental health. This includes discussions on meditation, mindfulness, and other Sufi techniques as therapeutic tools. These techniques are still located at many places in Kashmir where people used to live at shrines and follow meditation and mental Counseling under the leadership of a guru, which we call 'Pir' in the Kashmiri language.
- **Mindfulness and Sufism:** Examining the practice of mindfulness within Sufism and how it can be integrated into counselling techniques to help individuals manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Mindfulness is a practice rooted in Buddhist traditions but has gained widespread popularity in secular and therapeutic contexts. It involves paying focused and non-judgmental attention to the present moment. The primary aim of mindfulness is to increase self-awareness, reduce stress, and promote overall well-being.

Meanwhile, Sufism is a mystical and contemplative branch of Islam that emphasises the direct personal experience of the Divine (Allah). Sufis seek a deeper understanding of God's presence and love through various spiritual practices, including meditation, chanting, and studying poetry and sacred texts.

An inner journey, whirling dervishes, love, and devotion characterise Sufism.

- **Self-Exploration and Sufi Mysticism:** They not only teach the people of Kashmir how to connect with Allah but also teach concepts like self-discovery, self-realisation, and self-purification, which can be applied in Counseling to help clients better understand themselves and their life paths.
- **Sufi Poetry and Healing:** Sufi poetry is used as a therapeutic benefit, which often conveys deep emotions and spiritual insights, and it can be used in counselling sessions as a form of expressive therapy.
- **Sufi Practices for Emotional Regulation:** Investigating how Sufi practices, such as music and dance (Sama), can be used as tools for emotional regulation and expression within a counselling context.
- **Sufi Ethics and Moral Development:** Discuss the ethical principles and moral development emphasised in Sufism and how they can be integrated into counselling to promote personal growth and ethical decision-making.
- **Interfaith Counseling and Sufism:** The main aim of Sufis is to love and respect humanity, which ultimately leads to love towards God. They teach how Sufi principles of tolerance and interfaith dialogue can inform counselling approaches when working with clients from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, which are still used and located in the valley of Kashmir.
- **Sufism and Resilience:** The Sufis in Kashmir also Investigate how Sufi teachings on resilience, surrender, and acceptance can be applied to help individuals build psychological strength and cope with life's challenges.
- **Sufism and Existential Counseling:** The Sufis also develop how Sufi thought can align with existential counselling theories, particularly in addressing questions of purpose, freedom, and authenticity.

These points highlight the potential for integrating Sufi philosophy and practices into Counseling and psychology to provide a holistic

approach to mental health and well-being that considers individuals' spiritual and psychological aspects.

### Sufism and Psychiatry

Sufism and psychiatry may seem unrelated, but exciting connections and intersections exist, particularly in mental health and well-being. The term psychiatry, which implies "healing of the psyche or soul," comes from the Greek words *psukhe*, which means "psyche" or "soul," and *atresia*, which means "healing." Ironically, the relationship between psychiatry and spirituality/religion is turbulent. The connection has substantially improved. Freud was affected by psychoanalysis, thinking religion was abnormal and open to naturalistic interpretation explanations (Littlewood. 1996. pp. 178-179). The hostile relationship that evolved from similar ideas remained till the end of the 20th century and has given way to the indifference of the 21st century that psychiatry seems ill afford. According to Fullford, the struggle between science and religion/spirituality is more fundamental than the conflict between psychiatry and spirituality. Psychiatry became associated with the empirical sciences, which rely on observation as the primary source of information, as a result of applying the medical paradigm to the field (Fulford. 1996. pp.5-22). Religion, on the other hand, as we know, is based on the "revealed" knowledge. Sufi experiences have similarities to prophetic revelation experiences and may make it possible to research religion "scientifically." Thus, Sufism might offer the crucial link between psychiatry and religion.

Clinically speaking, psychiatry deals with aspects of human existence influenced by scientific knowledge and religious principles (Fulford. 1996. pp.5-22). By taking into account both aspects of human life, psychiatry can develop into a discipline with a more holistic understanding of human behaviour that can have implications for understanding and treating mental disorders. Therefore, psychiatry needs to

shun indifference and actively engage with the study of religion from a philosophical and clinical perspective.

### Conclusion

The propagation of Islam in Kashmir has received a substantial boost with the presentation of the ways and characters of the great *Sufi* saints -*Sufism*. It has influenced many arenas of the Kashmiri social structure, like economy, religion, and lifestyle. It has also extensively advocated women's education and authorised the position of Muslims in the political spheres of Kashmir. It has also been instrumental in denouncing the evil practices of gambling, dancing of girls, hot drinks, and the sati system, apart from hindering monasticism. The *Sufi* traditions of *sama* have been criticised widely and held responsible for presenting an undesirable direction towards God. Moreover, the *Sufi* shrines became the places of worship for most Kashmiri Muslims, a reprehensible innovation and forbidden practice in Islam. Nonetheless, the impact is unparalleled to any other religious orders in Kashmir that have infused great humanistic values in general and Islamic values in particular.

Sufism has had a profound intellectual affinity and impact in Kashmir, shaping its culture, spirituality, and social fabric. Despite the region's challenges, the Sufi tradition continues to endure and offer a message of peace and tolerance in Kashmir and beyond.

The philosophy of Kashmiri Sufis and Rishis built this Kashmiri ethnic identity. Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims share common customs and beliefs, and Sufi and Hindu shrines attract crowds from both communities. The thin lines between religious boundaries and the pluralistic cultural order of Kashmir are the cornerstone of the unique concept of the Kashmiriyat.

[\[1\]](#) Hindu widow who immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre

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