

## 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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