

SHRIMADBHAGWADGEETA & SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

According to Ayurveda; the knowledge of life, life is a journey and our vehicle is equipped with forces of the body, mind and soul, which carries us towards the ultimate goal of life. The mind plays an important role to go through this journey successfully. It becomes essential to have knowledge about qualities and functioning of mind. The mind with qualities of lightness (Satva), activity (Rajas) and inertia (Tamas), functions as a connecting bridge between body and soul. The fluctuating and unstable nature of mind needs proper guidance to follow right path and reach correct destination. The body oriented approach always leads to disease and destruction and soul oriented approach always maintain true health and leads us towards construction, means evolution of consciousness. The psychology is progressing from psychodynamism, psychoanalysis, behaviourism, humanistic approaches, existentialism, positive psychology and now to spiritual psychology. The psychological approaches are turning from outer modification to inner transformation, from dynamism to acceptance, from analysis to meditation.

So essentially the psychology is bound to be spiritual. The present paper is an attempt to explain that the secret of mental health lies in spiritual approach towards life and modern psychotherapeutic principles and techniques are following the same concepts as explained by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in Shrimadbhagwadgeeta

KEYWORDS

Spirituality, Shrimadbhagwadgeeta, Psychology, Mental Health, Consciousness Evolution

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY: PRESENT SCENARIO

Our modern technology and culture have given rise to practices that may relieve many forms of human illnesses and sufferings, but they have yet to provide satisfactory answers to the most fundamental questions of human existence. The modern medicine is progressing towards finding new medicines for new infections and both medicines and infections have same distance as it was in previous millenium. Similarly with the modern psychology which is trying to solve the puzzle of human personality and behaviour. Modern psychology started its journey from psychoanalysis, behaviouristic viewpoint, social learning theories, to humanistic and existential theories. But still there is continue increase in the psychological disorders like mental stress, depression, suicides etc.

We have to evaluate our approach of finding solutions of human sufferings.

The present paper is an attempt to explain that the secret of mental health lies in spiritual approach towards life, health and disease and modern psychotherapeutic principles and techniques are following the same concepts as long ago explained by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in *Shrimadbhagwadgeeta* .

LIFE, HEALTH & DISEASE : HOLISTIC APPROACH

According to Ayurveda, mind is the component of life, as life constitutes with the coherence of body, mind and soul.

Sharirendriye satwaatma samyogo dhaari jeevitam (Ch. Su 1/42)

According to *Charak Samhita* ; an renowned tekst of Ayurveda, life is a journey and our vehicle is equipped with forces of the body, mind and soul, which carries us towards the ultimate goal of life.(Shastri,Chaturvedi, 1991)

This contract of life with body and soul is established by mind and achieving and establishing health in all perspectives can be possible by having control and guidance of mind. As Lord Shri Krishna says in Shrimadbhagwadgeets:

Asayamatmana yogo dushpraap iti mae mati|
Vashyaatmana tu yatata sakyovaptumupaayat|| (B.G. 6/36)

The divine unity between body mind and soul can't be achieved by someone who's mind is not under control and guidance; one who has the mind under one's control by striving through proper methods, able to achieve it.

Mind is the causal factor behind the bondage with the physical body and mind is also the causal factor behind liberation. The understanding of mind is essential to maintain health and also to prevent various disorders. Here arises foundational questions that why there is so much importance is given to maintain health , to prevent diseases and to live long. The Indian tradition gives the answer of these questions is :To attain *purushartha* !!

“Dharmarthakaammokshanaamaarogyamulamuttammam”
(Ch.Su 1/15)

The health is needed to achieve the four *Purushartha* which refers to the motivational aspect of human behaviour (Salagame, Kiran Kumar ,2010) and only the one who is totally healthy in all aspects of body, senses, mind and soul can be optimally motivated and able to attain all four *Purushartha*.

The term *Purushartha* denotes four primary values of life namely *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. *Dharma* represents value orientation. *Artha* represents material wealth, *Kama* represents all types of desires. *Moksha* represents liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The Indian tradition holds that human beings have to pursue *artha* and *kama*, material wealth and pleasure guided by *dharma*, the values, and strive towards *moksha*, liberation, like a train travelling to a destination being pushed from behind and pulled forward (Salagame, Kiran Kumar,2010) The first three (*dharma,artha and kama*) encompass all the concepts and theories of motivation, from hedonic to eudaimonic (Ryan,& Deci,2001) available in modern psychology. But the last one , *moksha*, is unique to Indian tradition, and it is rooted in the understanding that human beings have the inherent capability to transcend the limitations imposed by nature and attain freedom in absolute sense.(Salagame, Kiran Kumar 2010)

What is health? *Sushruta Samhita* a well known ayurvedic tekst defines swasthya with reference to body, mind and spirit. Not only that it specifies health as a condition of balance of bodily elements (sama dhatu), bio-energies (sama dosha),

bio-assimilation energies(samagni) and unhindered eliminative process, it also insists that one should have pleasant disposition in his/her sensory functioning, mind and self. (*prasanna atmaindriye manaha*). (Su Su 15/48) Shastri, A (1987). The acknowledgement of this holistic concept of health is essential. The role of spiritual dimension plays an important role for the total mental health management. The only possible way to reach goal of total health is by providing nutrition not only to body but mind and soul too.

The path towards total mental health was long ago described by the Lord Shri Krishna by maintaining the path of life on the lines of *Anasakti*-the spiritual principle of detachment or intellectual equanimity. The *Anasakti* helps to keep a fine balance between body and soul by creating awareness about transitory nature of world.

SHRIMADBHAGWADGEETA AND CONCEPT OF INTELLECTUAL EQUANIMITY

Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna how elimination of attachment- in action and fruits of action gives birth to intellectual equanimity. Equipoised state of mind in positive or negative result, are the features of intellectual equanimity

Yogashtha kuru karmaani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya|
Siddhyashiddhyo samobhutwa samtva yoga ucchayate||
(B.G.2/48)

O *Dhananjaya* (Arjuna), Perform all your duties established in Yoga, renouncing attachment and be evenminded and indifferent in success and failure; This mental evenness is termed *yoga*-the skillfulness in action.

Anasakti or detachment is a means towards self realization and is also an end state because a realized soul is spontaneously *anaskta* or detached.(Naidu & Pande 1999)

Shrimadbhagwadgeeta delineates the characteristics, attitudes, feelings and actions of a *Stithapragya* (one with equipoised mind and stable with wisdom), who is regarded as an embodiment of *anasakti* and practices *nishakama karma* (desireless action). (Salagame, Kiran Kumar 2010)

Prajahati yada kamaan sarvaan paarth manogataan|
Atamanyevaatmana tushth stithpragystadouchayate||
(B.G.2/55)

O Arjuna! when a man completely relinquishes all desires of the mind, and is entirely contented in the self, by the self, he is then considered to be one with stable mind and settled in wisdom.

The ideal of *anasakti* embodies the principles of spiritualism as exhortations to pragmatism and action orientation. The descriptions of the attitudes and behaviour of a *stithapragya*, served as the source of the measure of *anasakti*.

Pandey and Naidu (1992) found that *anasakti* or nonattachment was a health promoting attitude. (Naidu & Pande 1992)

The intellectual equanimity and nonattachment plays an important role to maintain peace of mind at individual, family, social and spiritual levels. therefore path of intellectual equanimity is the best way suggested and encouraged by Lord *Krishna* to *Arjuna* for the maintenance of physical balance and mental harmony.

SHRIMADBHAGWADGEETA AND CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH: INTERPLAY BETWEEN *TRIGUNAS*

Samadukhsukha swastha samloshtaashmakanchanah|
Tulyapriyaapriyo dhirastulyanindatamsanstuti||
Maanapmaanyaustulyastulyo mitraripakshyau|
Sarvarambhparityagi gunateetah sa uchayte||
(B.G. 14/24-25)

Unaffected by joy and sorrow,praise and blame; who is ever established in the self, regards a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as equal in value ; the same in his attitude towards pleasant or unpleasant; firm minded.

Uninfluenced by respect or insult; treating friend and enemy alike; and has renounced the sense of doership in all undertakings, is said to have risen above the three *gunas*.

The Bhagwadgeeta suggest the only way to establish mental health in true essence is by being nonattached, balanced in all circumstances and with all kind of people. This state of mind can be achieved by proper understanding of trigunas –three attributes of the mind and finally to reach the beyond *triguna* state.

The trinity of the *gunas* referred to in the Geeta denotes personality characteristics. "*Sattv, rajas, tamas*-these *gunas*, O, mighty armed, born of prakriti, bind fast in the body, the indestructible embodied one" (BG 14/5). From *prakriti*, the *gunas* come forth, *sattva, rajas and tamas*. These are the bonds that bind the undying dweller prisoned in the body. *Sattva* represents purity, *rajas* represents passion and *tamas* indolence and ignorance. Personality is a blend of these and the dominance of any one particular type of these three *gunas* determines the type of the personality. (Venkoba Rao & Parvathi Devi S.1974)

"Of these, *sattva*, being immaculate, is illuminating and unobstructive. O Arjuna it binds through creation of attachment to happiness and knowledge. (B,G. 14/6).

"Arjuna the *rajas* to be of the nature of passion, the source of desire and attachment; it binds the soul through attachment to actions and their fruits. (B.G.14/7).

and know *tamas*, the deluder of those who looked upon body as their own self, as born of ignorance. It binds the soul through miscomprehension, sloth and sleep. (B.G.14/8).

The consequences and effects of interplay between *gunas* are also explained in *Shrimadbhagwadgita* as follows

The rewards of a *Satva* action are joy, wisdom and dispassion; the result of *Rajas* act are ignorance and the *Tamas* oriented action results in to Ignorance. (B.G.14/16).

“Those who abide in the quality of *Sattva* wend their way upwards; while those of a *Rajasika* disposition remain in the middle and those of a *Tamasika* temperament goes downwards. (B.G.14/18).

These *gunas* determine the physical and mental tendencies of man. They determine such diverse features as worship, sacrifice, speech, gifts, knowledge, action, understanding, food, and the happiness.

“All this goes to show, that the *gunas, sattva, rajas, and tamas* are the determinants of the tendencies of, or rather the stuff of the moral and the immoral, pleasurable and painful planes or characteristics of our experience. *Sattva* represents the moral and supermoral planes, *rajas* the ordinary mixed one and *tamas*, the inferior and immoral characteristics of our experience.” (Das Gupta.1968)

The *Shrimadbhagwadgita* also explains the effects of three types of food on the *gunas* in following way:

“The food which promote longevity, intelligence, vigour, health, happiness and cheerfulness and which are juicy, succulent, substantial and naturally sustainable are liked by *Satvika* people.

That food is liked by *rajasika* people, which is bitter, sour, salty, dry and causes suffering, grief and sickness.

The food which is impure, tasteless, old and rotten is liked by *tamasika* people. (B.G.17/7,8,9)

Some modern psychologists have utilized *triguna* concept to understand human personality and behaviour. They have conceptualized *Guna* (a) as aspects of human temperament and personality (Boss, 1966, Marutham, 1998, Parmeshwaram, 1969) (b) as fundamental components of mind (Kulkarni, 1972). Most of the studies have tried to correlate with the personality measures of modern psychology.

The *Gita* advocates transcendence of the three *gunas* to attain *moksha* (salvation). “The transcendence from three *gunas*-the cause of physical and mental bondage results in releasing from the sufferings of birth, old age, death and attains supreme bliss –the immortality. (B.G. 14/20).

Thus the secret of mental health lies in understanding of psychophysiology of Trigunas and their effects on self with respect to behaviour, interests, attitude and life style. This understanding will leads to transcendence and transformation of human nature. The trigunas are innate mental attributes so change has to come with inner transformation. One has to gradually learn that how Gunas are affecting and regulating their life. Then with the help of awareness one has to stepwise grow from *tamas* to *rajas* and from *rajas* to *satwa* and at last comes in beyond *triguna* state, by leaving *satwa* too, to achieve total health. Therefore according to psychological concepts of the Shrimadbhagwadgēeta the person is functioning according to the innate attributes of *Gunas* and one has to regulate the diet and life style, in such a way that there is possibility to maintain the balance between *trigunas* with awareness and meditation and contemplation.

SHRIMADBHAGWADGĒETA AND MODERN HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVES

In the middle of the twentieth century the pessimism of Freudian psychoanalysis with its emphasis on conflict and animalistic needs, together with the emphasis of behaviourism on external control of behaviour, gave rise to a third force in psychology: The Humanistic Perspective. Humanists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow wanted psychology to focus on the things that make people uniquely human, such as subjective emotions and the freedom to choose one's own destiny. (Ciccarelli and Meyer, 2013)

Maslow believed that human beings are interested in growing rather than simply restoring balance or avoiding frustration. He described the human beings as a "wanting animal" who is always desiring something. Indeed, as one human desire is satisfied, another arises to take place. In the drive to self actualize, or fulfill one's potential, the individual moves towards growth, happiness and satisfaction. (Engler B. 2006),

Maslow (1970) proposed a hierarchy of needs based on the principle of relative potency. In order of their strength, the five basic needs are: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. As each need is satisfied, the next higher-order need attains importance. (Engler B.2006)

The Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is modern explanation of age old Indian concept of achieving four Purushartha as explained above. The Indian wisdom advices to be aware while fulfilling needs and desires that's why topmost priority is given to Dharma (the righteous path of awareness) to be healthy and happy. The Shrimadbhagwadgēeta explains that when the needs are fulfilled then they are not eliminated but subside for sometime or become calm, they leave their impressions and as a result they arise once again. The cycle rotates and one becomes victim of endless sufferings.

Ye hi samsparsaja bhoga dukhyonaya eva te|
Adyantavantah kaunteya na tesu ramate budahah || (B.G.5/22)

The sensual pleasures which are born of outer sense contacts and have beginning and end and transitory in nature that's why they gave birth to misery. O Arjuna, it is for this reason for this reason that wise man doesnot indulge in them.

So Shrimadbhagwadgeeta purposes the idea of awareness while fulfilling needs and desires and gave warning, that sensual indulgence forms bad habits and destroys the sensitivity by limiting the dimensions of higher growth.

The Shrimadbhagwadgeeta advices the universal and time beyond methods to stay healthy and establish peace of mind.

Aapooriyamaanam achalampratishtam samundramapah pravishanti yadvat
Tadvat kamah yam pravishanti sarve, sa shantimaapnauti na kaamkaami
(B.G. 2/70)

As the ocean remains undisturbed, unchanged by the waters of different rivers entering in to it, similarly , he in whom all enjoyments merge themselves without causing disturbance attains peace; not he who hankers after materialistic desires.

Like Maslow, Rogers (1961) believed that human beings are always striving to fulfill their innate capacities and capabilities and to become everything that their genetic potential will allow them to become. This striving for fulfillment is called the selfactualizing tendency. An important tool in human self-actualization is the development of the self-concept-the image of oneself that develops from interactions with important, significant people in one's life. (Ciccarelli and Meyer.2013)

The Shrimadbhagwadgeeta explains that development of self concept is total responsibility of self, instead of giving importance to people and circumstances. If selfconcept is strong enough and independent, then circumstances will change according to self.

Uddhared atmaanam naatmanam avsaadayet|
Aaatmaiva hyatmano bandhur atmaiva ripur aatmanah||
Bandhur aatmatmanas tasya yematmaivaatmana jitah|
Anatmanas tu satrutave vartatmaiva satruvat|| (B.G.6/5,6)

One should uplift oneself by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself; for one's own self is one's friend and one's own self is one's enemy.

One's own self is the friend of the self by whom the lower self (consisting of mind, senses and body) has been conquered; even so, the very self of him, who has not conquered his lower self, behaves antagonistically like an enemy.

PSYCHOPATHOGENESIS AND ITS SOLUTION IN SHRIMADBHAGWADGEETA

There is hypothesis about aggression in modern psychology, called frustration-aggression hypothesis. (Dollard, Miller N.Mowrer & Sears, 1939) that suggests that frustration produces aggression. Means interference with the attainment of a goal, or the blocking of an impulse can be the cause behind aggression. The Shrimadbhagwadgeeta describes very systemically the pathogenesis behind anger and destruction of intellectual powers necessary for preservation of the mental health and the human survival.

Dhyayato vishyaan pumsah sangas teshupjaayte|
Sangaatsanjaayte kaamah kaamat krodhobhijaayte||
Krodhaat bhavati sammoh sammohat samritivibhrahmah|
Smritibhranshaad buddhinasho buddhinaashat pranashyati||
(B.G. 2/62,63)

The man thinking excessively about sense objects, develops attachment for them; from attachment springs up desire, and unfulfilled desire (frustration) breeds anger.

From anger arises delusion; from delusion arises memory confusion; memory confusion results in to decaying of sense of discrimination between beneficial and non-beneficial. The loss of sense of discrimination results in to total destruction of self.

The solution to above mentioned psychopathogenesis for the preservation of health is also provided in Shrimadbhagwadgeeta

Shaknautihaiv yah saudum prak sharirvimokshnaat|
Kaamkroadhodbhavam vegam sah yuktah sa sukhi narah ||
(B.G. 5/23)

The happy and content men is one who learnt to withstand urges of lust and anger, in this very life before casting off this physical body.³⁶

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY CONCEPTS OF SHRIMADBHAGWADGEETA

In the present era, there is new approach of looking at psychology with positive perspectives and recognition of strength and positive emotions, called Positive Psychology.

The Shrimadbhagwadgeeta, right in the middle of battlefield, expounds very lucidly cardinal principles of being in positive and happy state of mind .

Raagdeshvivyuktestu vishyaaniindrishcharan|
Aatamvashye vidheyeraatma prasadamadhigaschati|| (B.G.2/64)

The unshakable inner happiness can be achieved by one who is enjoying the various sense objects, by keeping the self control and not affected by the attractive and repulsive states of sense objects.

Prasaade sarvdukhaanaam haanisoyupjaayte|
Prassanchetso hyasu buddhah paryavatisthate|| (B.G. 2/65)

With the attainment of such placidity of the mind, all the sorrows comes to an end; and the intellect of such a person of tranquil mind becomes firmly established in the self.

The shrimadbhagwadgeeta explains that the fluctuating and unstable nature of mind needs proper guidance of “practice and dispassion “(B.G. 6/35)to follow right path and reach correct destination. The body oriented materialistic approach will always leads to disorder,confusion,psychosis,neurosis and destruction and soul oriented approach on the principles of spirituality will leads the humanity towards health,harmony, prosperity and evolution of consciousness. There is need of certain austerities to make mind, soul oriented. The soul orientation of mind is possible by following ways

Manahprasadah saumyatawam maunamatamvinigrah|
Bhaavsanshuddhiri ityetat tapo manasam uchyate|| (B.G.17/16)

A calm and contented mental clarity, kindness, silence, self control and purity of character constitutes the potent state of mind and makes the mind soul oriented.The Reverend Gurudev of Shri Paramhansa Yogananda, Shri Yukteshwar ji, describes the tapas word as “Learn to Behave.”(Paramhansa Yogananda). The mind needs to learn to know its real nature that is beyond triguna. This verse of Shrimadbhagwadgeeta describes very creatively the way towards happiness and establishes the criteria for mental health.There is need of inner discipline in activity as well as in meditation.

By maintaining a mental calm and a cheerful positive attitude, there is birth of clarity of thought and perception (*manas prasadah*). With an inner evenness of heart, in which feelings are free from the aggressiveness of likes and dislikes and expectations, the kindness develops under all circumstances (*Saumyatavam*) without getting disturbed by external factors, there is possibility to retain a placid inner stillness (*mauna*), sel control and virtues becomes the attributes of the character (*Bhavasamsuddhi*).” (Paramhansa Yogananda)

CONCLUSION

Conclusively we can say that the Shrimadbhagwadgeeta is an unique,elevating and inspiring psychospiritual literature, given by Lord Shri Krishna, to the whole world, to eliminate the all kinds of physical,mental and spiritual ailments. The psychology is progressing from psychodynamism, psychoanalysis, behaviourism, humanistic approaches, existentialism, positive psychology and now to spiritual psychology. The psychological approaches are turning from outer modification to inner transformation, from dynamism to acceptance, from analysis to meditation. Essentially the psychology is bound to be spiritual and the universal and time beyond message from Shrimadbhagwadgeeta is the source of all wisdom, able to solve the psychological problems of the mankind and can help to achieve the highest goal of evolution of consciousness-the self realization.

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