

A Study: Positive Psychology and Bhagavad Gita

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Abstract - Individuals have struggled for the comprehensive development of life since ancient times. At that time, the Vedas and the Upanishads were deeply ingrained in the lives of the majority of Indians. Similar to how the Bible did, the Gita became well-known not only in India but also throughout the rest of the world as a moral and spiritual manual for mankind. Since reason is so important to human existence, it is used to analyse a wide variety of worldly phenomena. So, in order to be satisfied with any doctrine, a critical investigation becomes necessary and more urgent. There is no exception in the Bhagavad Gita. Numerous concepts in the text raise complex issues, and the implicit cosmology, metaphysics, pragmatism, epistemology, and spirituality of the Bhagavad Gita have been the focus of this research. The purpose of the current research was to identify the many concepts that the Bhagavad Gita outlines while also critically analysing those concepts to shed light on them. In this article, the significance of the Gita has been addressed in relation to a particular area of positive psychology. Some academics believe that the work has an allegorical significance and has no historical basis, but others believe that the events described in the Gita actually happened as they are described. This study offers a critical examination of this topic in light of many commentators' points of view.

Keywords - Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, Upanishads, Cosmology, Metaphysics, Pragmatism, Epistemology, Spirituality

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INTRODUCTION

Regardless of religion, belief, community, or race of people, the Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata, and Ramayana are the ancient works that serve as the cornerstone of Indian culture since they concentrate on human nature in general and what it should be ideal. Even though it differs from the Upanishads in many ways, the Bhagavad Gita is sometimes seen as a summation of their teachings. The main Upanishads' essences are included in it. The "Upanishad of the Upanishads" is referred to as such [1].

The Upanishads' message is idealistic and monistic. The Upanishads argue that there is only one Supreme Self and no other (*ekamevadvityam*). The inner self of a human being is similar to the attributeless (*nirvisesa*) Brahman. Finally, the knower and the known are one and the same. The opposite qualities such as unmoving, moved, far, close, inside, outside, etc. are used to characterise Brahman or the Supreme Self since it is an ambiguous concept. The central topic of the Upanishads is the realisation that the deeper self and Supreme Self are one and the same. Only from our point of view can the Supreme Self's many existences as super cosmic and cosmic make sense (ignorant or knowledgeable). Realizing inner spirituality, or understanding one's actual essence, is the aim of human life [3].

The Bhagavad Gita supports the idea that there is a single Supreme Absolute Brahman who is pure consciousness, much like the Upanishads do.

Brahman appears as both distinct human beings and the phenomenal universe. The entire universe system is also created and maintained by Brahman, who has the power to destroy it as well. The scripture imparts to all of humanity the *rajavidya*, or knowledge of the highest [4].

Chapters 25–42 of the "Bhisma Parvan," which serves as the introduction to the Mahabharata, include the Bhagavad Gita. It is described as a conversation between Krishna, the charioteer, and Arjuna, his student and friend, on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra. The Gita is significant in terms of ethics and philosophy in addition to religion. There are seven hundred poems and eighteen chapters in it (*shlokas*). Understanding the ramifications that are involved in it is really challenging. Because of its profound and wide-ranging meaning, it should be carefully explored [5].

Psychology is a field that often focuses on dysfunction and aberrant conduct. However, a growing area of psychology called positive psychology focuses on making people happier rather than changing the level of life. This emerging area of psychology offers advice on boosting self-confidence and human effectiveness. It begins at zero, not when the mental state reaches the negative (minus) level. Therefore, the good psychological transaction would renew the human mental force toward more optimism. Surprisingly, no medication has to be prescribed for this use. The only advice for willpower

growth is the prescription since self-confidence and energy are implied in the healing process [2].

Hope, (Self)-Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism are the four pillars of psychological capital. These letters come together to make the acronym "HERO".

HOPE: Possessing the willpower (agency and goal-directed energy) and waypower (route) to effect good change is what is meant by hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope is formed when we have a clear vision of the ideal future (our goal), know how to get there, and are motivated to make it happen.

Studies have shown how devastating despondency is and how powerful hope can be. According to a well-known psychotherapy research, up to 15% of psychotherapeutic outcomes are attributed to hope (Lambert, 1992). More recently, Park & Chen (2016) make the case that, of all the positive psychology concepts, hope is the one that is most crucial for healing from mental illness. On the opposite end of the spectrum, it has been discovered that a loss of hope or a feeling of hopelessness is a highly significant predictor of suicidal thinking and suicide attempts (Klonsky et al., 2012).

Studies like this show the importance of hope and explain why it is one of the four elements of psychological capital. Hope in many ways provides access to the world we want.

(SELF)- EFFICACY: The conviction that one can effect good change is known as self-efficacy. Albert Bandura created the idea as part of his social learning theory, which contends that social interactions are how we learn about ourselves, the outside world, and how to be effective there. In this way, social learning includes both cognitive and behavioural components as we attempt to make sense of our experiences and respond to our surroundings (Rumjaun&Narod, 2020).

RESILIENCE: Resilience is "the act of adjusting successfully in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, danger, or severe causes of stress—such as family and interpersonal issues, serious health problems, or employment and financial challenges," according to the American Psychological Association (2012). Resilience enables us to recover more quickly and efficiently from setbacks and could even enable us to stay out of trouble entirely.

Resilience may be built, much like the other aspects of psychological capital. We may develop resilience by using a concept called Flagging the Minefield, which is Solution-Focused. The idea entails flagging or identifying possible barriers to development, and it was called from the flags put on explosives while blasting mines. Once they are identified, we may devise plans of action to steer clear of them or better equip ourselves to deal with them. There are two techniques to identify the minefield and increase your fortitude:

- Sort possible roadblocks according to how likely they are to arise and how damaging they may be.
- Identify resources that could be used to overcome difficulties, minimise their negative effects, or change them for the better.

OPTIMISM: Optimism is the conviction that, given the resources and circumstances at hand, good change is possible. Parents of children with depression or anxiety were studied, and it was shown that more upbeat parents tended to feel less stress than their more pessimistic counterparts (Gross, 2020). Additionally, it has been discovered that optimism might lessen the stress brought on by protracted medical diagnosis like cancer (Carver et al., 2010). It is frequently connected to higher resistance to upsetting life circumstances, better physical health generally, and effective parenting techniques (Scheier& Carver, 1987; Taylor et al., 2010). (Carver et al., 2010).

Optimism does not come naturally to animals. We are cynical beings by nature. We are better able to anticipate and react to danger because to this evolutionary characteristic. We have to work extra hard to be optimistic because we are prewired towards pessimism.

Therefore, the Bhagavad Gita is an example of positive psychology principles. By observing Lord Sri Krishna's daily activities and workplace culture, it is possible to learn how to restore people's willpower. It would undoubtedly serve as a useful guide to protect people from the conflicts and catastrophes that the modern, globalised society brings [2].

Bhagavad Gita and its Effectiveness

Resources and its self-actualization by an individual: The first lesson is to realise one's own power and that of others to use it wisely. This is a religious and philosophical guidance to help everyone achieve in their endeavours. Duryodhan picked Sri Krishna's enormous army as his backing before the Mahabharata battle of Kurukshetra, whereas Arjun chose Sri Krishna's knowledge. The outcome provides us with a hint about self-actualization. If the person is deliberate in how they choose their resources and how those choices affect them at every stage of life, they can succeed in life [2].

Individual's attitude towards work: Gita advises us to have a visionary viewpoint in our profession. It helps one develop a feeling of a bigger picture when working for the greater good. It would lead one to become judgemental [2].

Individual's commitment towards work: The Gita counsels against being emotionally invested in the fruits or outcomes of one's professional endeavours. Dedicated effort must be done only for the purpose

of productivity. The outcomes of our own efforts will inevitably fall short of our expectations. Because of the mental agitation brought on by future anxiety, performance quality will diminish. The pledge should not be viewed as a mortgage on an uncertain future. If we don't take height measurements, we're the ones at fault, not the instruction [2].

Most experts agree that the Bhagavad Gita is around 5000 years old. The goal of *Krishna's* entire sermon is to motivate *Arjuna* to perform his duties and advance his knowledge by dissuading him from his denial of truth. Due to his internal anguish over fighting against his family, friends, and revered gurus for his personal benefit, *Arjuna* first wishes to end the battle. He thus rejects engaging in combat and committing the terrible sin of killing those people [6].

To understand the reality of life, Krishna exhorts his devoted friend and pupil to have courage and mental fortitude. It is necessary to calm and steady our minds in order to perceive life as a whole. He reminds *Arjuna* of his responsibility as a *Kshatriya*, his *svadharma*, and counsels him to cast aside his mental frailties and to stay steady [7].

In order to clear up *Arjuna's* uncertainty, Krishna provides him a variety of yoga practises in the midst of a *dharma* crisis (*dharma* is a Sanskrit term that may be translated as virtue, law, righteousness, social responsibility, and caste obligation) [7].

Myth and Reality:

The Gita asserts that all forms of *yoga*, including *Jnana*, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, and *Sanyasa*, are vital, necessary, and equally significant. The Gita is regarded as the quintessential yoga scripture, with each chapter outlining a separate branch of yoga. A *Sthitaprajna* (perfect person) is one who is self-controlled and has a steady mind. His or her focus is fixed on the self (*atma*), hence his or her *Indriyas* are kept in check. In accordance with his or her *Svadharma*, he or she rules over the *Indriyas* and directs them toward *Karma yoga*, the path of action without desire [8].

The Gita asserts that *Yajna*, or sacrifice, is the most significant aspect of existence and that everything we do should be viewed as a sacrifice. Our basic existence depends on sacrifice. Gita loves to expand it and pull it up. However, Gita rejects the Vedic sacrifices since they are offerings for desire, which is motivated by worldly benefits and longing for more enjoyment in paradise as immortality and ultimate redemption. Renunciation of desire is the basic lesson of the Gita [8].

India's current caste structure differs from the one described in the Gita. According to the Gita, the obligations must be carried out in accordance with the *Varna Vyavastha*, which is assigned based on the characteristics of the individuals. According to their *svabhava*, the obligations of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*,

Vaisyas, and *Sudras* are divided, and these obligations are reflected in their works in life. With dedication to one's own task, everyone succeeds. In India nowadays, caste divisions are kept up based on a person's birth [9].

Even though it differs from the Upanishads in many ways, the Bhagavad Gita is sometimes seen as a summation of their teachings. The Bhagavad Gita also supports the idea that pure consciousness is the one Supreme Absolute *Brahman*. *Brahman* appears in the phenomenal world as both the creator and keeper of the entire cosmos as well as individual creatures. The Gita disseminates to all of humanity the *rajavidya*, or knowledge of the Supreme. It opens the door to human redemption, the sought-after objective, which is escape from life's afflictions, through adhering to many yogic practises, including *Karma*, *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, and *sanayasa*[9].

Cosmology-Ksara, Aksara and the concept of Purusottama:

The cosmology described in the Bhagavad Gita is the subject of this. It provides an explanation of actual knowledge and the true nature of the universe. This Gita concept is one of absolute secrecy, according to Krishna. It is presented with the aid of allegories and symbols.

In chapter eight, *Arjuna* was determined to discover about the forms of *Brahman*, *Adhyatma*, *karma*, *Adhibhuta*, and *Adhidaiva*, among other things, from *Krishna*. In response, *Krishna* says that *Brahman* is the endless (*aksaya*). *Adhyatma*, or the spirit, is the indestructible Brahman who independently presents himself in all living things. The excretion responsible for a creature's existence and procreation is known as *karma*. *Adhidaiva* is the form of *Jiva* that emanates from *Adhibhuta* and resides in it. *Adhibhuta* is the perishable form [10].

The Gita mentions the two principles of the *Atman* and the *Brahman*, just as the *Upanishads*. Behind each passing sense or physical body is *Atman*, and behind each passing worldly thing is Brahman. Due to their shared essential characteristics, the two are one. With the aid of the varied, the eternal cannot be defined. The Bhagavad Gita makes the philosophical claim that *advaita*, or nondualism, is true. The greatest rank, everlasting purpose, and ultimate aspiration of the soul is Brahman. All living things are situated in Brahman, who is also their origin, middle, and end [10].

Samkara and his followers believe that Purusottama is the Supreme Reality and that the terms "*ksara*" and "*aksara*" refer to the principles of being and the evolutionary results, respectively. The Gita acknowledges the reality of the realm of manifestation since it is the Divine's potential. *Samkara* exclusively recognises *Nirguna* or unqualified Brahman, but the Gita affirms the reality of both of these aspects of Brahman. *Samkara*

acknowledges the *nirguna* component of Brahman as well and sees *Purusottama* as a subsidiary deity. The Gita's interpretation of the Highest Reality as being both *nirguna* and *saguna* is more intriguing because it holds that *Krishna* will be the best option for those who are weak-willed and slothful and who try to be equal to Him out of love for Him and to open their hands to other beings by following *Krishna*[11].

The concept of *Karma* and *Niskama Karma*:

The term "*karma*" comes from the root "*kr*," which often denotes "doing," "creating," or "action." At the time of the Vedic civilization, activity or act was not seen as a careless or spontaneous sort of action. The act was a defined activity that falls within the category of rituals. An act (*karman*) was a ritual performed in the presence of a deity by a person acting on behalf of themselves or a group. In Vedic culture, sacrifice played a significant role. It was known as *karma* or *karya* and was considered to be the only obligation (action) [12]. These can be carried out for either good or bad purposes. This was perhaps the first instance of karma. The Vedic perspective is one that the Gita departs from. It distinguishes between genuine *karma* and ritualistic behaviour [12].

The Gita counsels us to give up all self-serving interests and behaviour. Vedic sacrifices are intended to get financial rewards. Because of it, all aspect of life must be given up in authentic bhakti. The interconnectedness of all beings is referenced in the Vedic notion of sacrifice as a transaction between gods and humans. According to the *Purva Mimamsakas*, all actions have a sacrifice, or *yajna*, as their intended purpose. An act carried out for *yajna*'s sake never results in servitude. According to *Jaimini*, there are two categories of *karmas*: *yajnarthas* (*karmas* carried out in the absence of any expectation of reward) and *purusarthas* (*karmas* that are performed with some selfish motives, by the performer). Since only knowledge of the Brahman may result in spiritual liberation, the Upanishads consider the act of *karmain* sacrifice to be inferior to *Brahma-jnana*[13].

Jnana:

The source of the term "*jnana*" is "*jna*," which means "to know" or "knowledge." Its etymological definition is therefore any knowledge that the human mind gathers and stores. But theoretically, the phrase may refer to both the microcosmic and the macrocosmic levels. Macrocosm refers to the cosmos, whereas microcosm refers to the individual person. Thus, *jnana* refers to a person's knowledge of their own selves, their relationships with others, and the truth of the universe, of which they are a part. The main prerequisite for achieving knowledge, or *jnana*, is *jijnasa*, or the will to learn. In the Gita, *Arjuna* expresses his responsibility on the battlefield in a way that inspired *Krishna* to lecture about *Karma Yoga* in connection to *jnana* and *bhakti*[14].

Yoga of *jnana* is the pursuit of real knowledge. It is a technique that teaches people how to regulate their thoughts and sensual urges while focusing on their true selves, allowing them to break free from the bonds of the cycle of birth and rebirth. As a result, the Bhagavad Gita recognises *jnana yoga* as a route to liberation. Even if *jnana yoga* is the best road for serious intellectuals, the Gita gave the path of devotion a higher ranking than the other two, *karma* and *jnana*. Deep insight will dispel ignorance, and *the jnani* will then unite with the true, Supreme soul [14].

The *Samkhya Yoga* or *Jnana Yoga* is the title of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Because it includes all of the crucial and essential thoughts and ideas from the text, some academics consider it to be a synopsis of the Bhagavad Gita. It exhorts us to transcend our finite physical selves and connect with our eternal spiritual selves in order to manage all of our sensual desires via the practise of detachment. By doing things for God's glory, we should work toward our liberation. According to the Bhagavad Gita, *jnana yoga* involves the following exercises [14]:

1. Living a life in which the intellect, the senses, and the Atman, or self, are correctly seen.
2. Increasing one's understanding of the phenomenal universe (*Jagat*), which is distinct from the Supreme Self (knowing the difference of *sat* and *asat*).
3. Realizing Brahman by knowledge, or *jnana*, and upholding self-discipline (*atmasamyamayoga*), leading to the cleansing of the mind and body.

Purification, serenity of the mind, detachment, sacrifice, devotion to God, spiritual experience, and many more benefits result from practising *jnana yoga*.

Bhakti

The word "*Bhakti*" comes from the Sanskrit verb "*bhaj*," which means "to dole out, to divide, to distribute," etc. The word "*bhakti*" literally means "adoration," and the root "*bhaj*" is frequently used "to indicate affection." Although the word "*bhakti*" is exceedingly difficult to translate into English, words like "adoration," "devotion," and "love" are frequently used to convey what it means [15].

Bhakti is a form of submission that relies on the mercy of God. This kind of love or submission feels like a complete devotion of every task to the Lord, without any desire for the outcome. The divine nature of the encounter cancels all cravings and fills the soul with unadulterated love and adoration for the holy God. A person's soul combines with a holy experience and draws closer to the Divine via

constant and unwavering devotion while praising and extolling his virtues in front of others [15].

The term "*bhakti*" is not only associated with religious activity; it also appears in the Mahabharata and, as recently as Visakhadatta's play *Mudraraksasa*, nonreligious viewpoints. Loyalty is the fundamental aspect of bhakti; a servant may be faithful to his master, a servant may be devoted to his monarch, and so forth. However, it is not necessarily an emotion meant for a superior; it may also refer to a man or a woman who are deeply in love with or obedient to one another. There is always the idea of having alternative options. Bhakti thus assumes that there may be several options [15].

There are nine major ways to practise bhakti yoga, either individually or collectively. These acts of devotion include [15]:

Sravana, which involves reading the Bible or saints' writings.

Kirtana, or singing songs of devotion.

Smarana, also known as mindfully remembering the Divine.

Serving the Divine, also known as *Padasevana*.

ceremonial worship, or *Archana*.

Vandana, also known as obediently worshipping the Divine.

Dasya, also known as submission to the Lord and unwavering devotion.

A good relationship has been built between the devotee and the Divine called *sakhya*, or friendship.

Atmanivedana means total and unreserved surrender to the Divine.

The Gita states that the best route to freedom is bhakti alone. The text's instructor places a strong emphasis on *bhaktiyoga*. Even Krishna exhorts people to seek shelter in him and be joined with him, even if it means abandoning all obligations. However, despite the fact that the bhakti route is simple for the average person to follow as well, many people reject it. On the other hand, the Gita is adamant about karma yoga since its major goal is to force Arjuna to fulfil his job on the battlefield and afterwards the whole human race to make them conscious of their unique responsibilities. Jnana yoga is necessary to understand a person's true nature and so to calm his mind. In the Gita, it is referred to as the Light of God. All forms of yoga are hence interrelated. There is no better or worse option among these [16].

Moksa

Purusartha literally translates as "human pursuit." It is a fundamental notion in Indian religious traditions, particularly Hinduism, that alludes to the four purposes of human existence. This religion's moral ideals are as follows. *Dharma* (righteousness or moral values), *Artha* (prosperity or economic values), *Kama* (pleasure, love, or psychological values), and *Moksa* are the four aims (liberation or spiritual values) [17].

In Hindu philosophy, all four *Purusarths* are important, but Dharma is thought to be more important or greater than *Artha* or *Kama*. *Moksa* is regarded as the ultimate objective of human existence. It frees the individual soul (*atman*) from bonds and brings a person to extreme joy by uniting the limited soul with the Absolute Soul (*Brahman*). According to Vedanta philosophy, *moksa* is not something that can be obtained or attained. *Moksa* is a goal that is constantly present as the essence of the self and may be disclosed via profound intuitive understanding [17].

Moksa has a similar connotation in Hinduism and Jainism. It is referred to as liberation/salvation in Christianity and nirvana in Buddhism. According to the Jainas and the *Samkhyas*, *kaivalya* is a state of *moksa*. A person who achieves this state is known as *kevali* by the Jainas. Samkhya embraces both *jivanmukti* (liberation throughout life) and *videhmukti* (liberation after the demise of the body, ie, death). Samkara, too, embraces both [17].

Moksa is a state in which all karmas or acts stop and one enters the state of Akarma. It is emancipation from the prison of karma, from old age and death, from material nature, according to the Gita, by pursuing the three pathways of knowledge or jnana, devotion or bhakti, and action or karma (*niskama*). It is the ultimate path that leads to Brahman and from which there is no turning back. It is the spiritual aim of existence, a happy condition of enlightenment in which no more knowledge can be obtained. It is the condition of absolute wisdom. However, one continues to interact and contribute to society [18].

The ultimate objective of human life, according to the Gita, is to attain the habitation of *Brahman*. The link between the individual and the personal God, or *Saguna Brahman*, is central to the Gita, which occasionally refers to impersonal Brahman as the objective. According to the Gita, those who worship Him in His revealed form have superior yogic knowledge. In the following verse, He says again that those who worship the Imperishable, Indescribable, Unmanifest, All-powerful, Unimaginable, Immutable and Unmoving, Permanent, by restraining all senses, being steady minded, and committed to the welfare of all beings might attain him. Thus, the Bhagavad Gita declares that service to humanity is a fundamental aspect of the discipline [18].

CONCLUSION

The Bhagavad Gita's precepts are therefore argued to be relevant to all communities, regardless of religion, creed, or caste. Although at first glance it appears to support the caste system, it still attempts to get over the rigid restrictions of the system based on birth. Instead of considering inherited elements, it considers a person's innate abilities. The Gita prioritises the emotional and physical over the cerebral and rational because they are simpler. Feeling is simpler than thinking. The common people who continue to be open to accepting it are what gave it its appeal.

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