

THE BHAGVAD GITA: A PERENNIAL PANACEA TO ATTAIN SELF- REALIZATION AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY

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ABSTRACT:

Love, happiness, joy, caring and sharing are, on the other hand, positive emotions that everybody seeks in order to achieve a success of his life. These are the emotions that a successful executive looks for and inculcates in his employees and peers. According to Daniel Goleman emotional intelligence is the ability to manage our own inner lives and get along with people. Various theories of emotional intelligence emphasise on the need for emotional regulation for success in life. The Indian philosophic tradition also accentuates on the powerful nature of emotions, which have to be harnessed for a harmonious life. This paper compares the modern theory of emotional intelligence as proposed by Goleman, with the idea of emotional stability as expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita. The preaching of the Bhagavad Gita will offer a positive outlook and help to manage emotions. It not only analyses the impediments but also provides appropriate solutions to achieve emotional equilibrium. This paper aims to suggest the perpetual applicability of the Bhagavad Gita's wisdom in acquiring emotional stability and self-realization in the present perspective.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, Bhagavad Gita, self- realization, sthithapragnya

INTRODUCTION:

Man is a bundle of emotions, just as, with all his education and training, he remains a bundle of weaknesses. In a way our entire life is a struggle to triumph over emotions and weaknesses. In speaking we are advised to make an emotional appeal, but not to get emotional! These emotions are of two types- negative and positive. Negative emotions like hatred, anger, jealousy play havoc with our life and cruelly destroy all our relationships. Love, happiness, joy, caring and sharing are, on the other hand, positive emotions that everybody seeks in order to achieve a success of his life. These are the emotions that a successful executive looks for and inculcates in his employees and peers. There is a necessity to rationalize and develop a kind of intelligence to monitor our emotions by enhancing the positive emotions and mitigating the negative emotions. This is what is known as Emotional Intelligence.

According to Daniel Goleman emotional intelligence is the ability to manage our own inner lives and get along with people. The term was first coined in 1990 by researchers John Mayer and Peter Salovey but was later popularized by psychologist Daniel Goleman. In the words of Mayer and Salovey, "Emotional Intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's own thinking and actions". (Mayer et al., 2008, p. 511).

The core words in this statement are: 'monitor one's own and others' emotions'. This means that emotional intelligence is both inter and intra personal intelligence. We have not only to read others' emotions but also observe and analyze our own. It is profoundly concerned with self- awareness, the ability to manage one's own and other people's emotions, self- motivation and empathy. These qualities enable one to climb higher in the corporate ranks than colleagues having superior IQs. According to Goleman, self-awareness, self-control, empathy, problem solving, conflict management, leadership, etc. are the characteristics of an emotionally intelligent person.

While working at Harvard, Goleman examined students from hundreds of companies, mostly multinationals and

found that the really intelligent people are emotionally intelligent people because they can lead, adapt to change, give feedback on performance, empathize, motivate themselves and others and have integrity.

Stephen Covey, one of the greatest management gurus today, says the same thing in a somewhat different manner. He uses the term 'Emotional Bank Account' as a metaphor to describe the amount of trust that has been built-up in a relationship. "It's a feeling of safeness you have with another human being". (Covey 93)

These various theories of emotional intelligence emphasise on the need for emotional regulation for success in life. The Indian philosophic tradition also accentuates on the powerful nature of emotions, which have to be harnessed for a harmonious life. This paper compares the modern theory of emotional intelligence as proposed by Goleman, with the idea of emotional stability as expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Emotional Intelligence in the Indian Context. Gayathri and Meenakshi (2012). This paper compares Mayer and Salovey's 'ability model' against the background of Indian culture through the Bhagavad-Gita. It finds similarity of thought between the theory of EI and the Bhagavad-Gita.

2. Roots to emotional intelligence in India. Hemanth Goparaj (2019). The paper studies various theories of emotional intelligence and compares them with the Bhagavad Gita. It focuses on the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita that profoundly focus on methods of striking balance that help one understand himself and submit completely to the supreme self.

3. Exploring Emotional Regulation in the Bhagavad Gita: Psychological Concepts and Present Relevance. Ms. Sakshi S. Gavade (2023). The paper presents a comprehensive viewpoint on emotional well-being by bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and modern scientific understanding. It highlights the eternal applicability of emotional regulation in the Bhagavad Gita and the connection with modern psychological theories.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Modern life style and highly competitive attitude results in emotional instability like anxiety, fear, stress and performance pressure. A lack of emotional intelligence leads to workplace conflicts and misunderstandings as an individual is unable to recognize or comprehend emotions. Therefore, it is imperative to cultivate social skills by understanding and practicing empathy and the core components of emotional intelligence. The preaching of the Bhagavad Gita will offer a positive outlook and help to manage emotions. This paper aims to analyze the Bhagavad Gita's teachings on emotional stability and compare with current psychological theories to demonstrate its relevance in the contemporary life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the need of emotional intelligence
2. To compare Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence with the idea of emotional stability as expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita.

The Core Components of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is typically broken down into five core competencies:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-management
3. Social awareness
4. Empathy
5. Relationship management

To develop emotional intelligence, it's important to understand what each element entails.

1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness describes one's ability to not only understand his/ her strengths and weaknesses, but to recognize one's own emotions and their effect on one's self and team's performance.

According to research by organizational psychologist Tasha Eurich, 95 percent of people think they're self-aware, but only 10 to 15 percent actually are, and that can pose problems for your employees. Working with colleagues who aren't self-aware can cut a team's success in half and, according to Eurich's research, lead to increased stress and decreased motivation.

2. Self-Management

Self-management refers to the ability to manage one's emotions, particularly in stressful situations, and maintain a positive outlook despite setbacks. One must find ways to handle anger, fear and sadness. The more in tune a person is with his/her emotional intelligence, the easier he/she can make the transition from reaction to response.

3. Social Awareness

Social awareness describes one's ability to recognize others' emotions and the dynamics in play within your organization.

By communicating with empathy, one can better support his/her team, and can improve his/her own individual performance.

4. Empathy:

Empathy is the cornerstone of meaningful human connection. It means putting ourselves in the position of others. This component of EI enables people to sense power dynamics that play a part not only in all social relationships, but also most in workplace relations.

Practicing empathy helps an individual to respond appropriately to other people based on recognizing their emotions. Empathy allows us to connect with others on a deeper level, to feel their pain or joy, and to respond in a way that is appropriate and helpful.

5. Relationship Management

Relationship management refers to one's ability to influence, coach, and mentor others, and resolve conflict effectively.

Instead of avoiding conflict, it's important to properly address issues as they arise. In a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, 72 percent of employees ranked "respectful treatment of all employees at all levels" as the top factor in job satisfaction.

Importance of Emotions

Psychologists have asserted that deep in the core of everybody's heart is a small child that craves fondling and pampering. That is why it is of paramount importance for us to be essentially kind and compassionate to others. It is essentially this kind of approach that lies at the bottom of the philosophy of successful organizations that appreciate, reward, nurture and promote their employees. Our emotions are so important to us as they play key role in harnessing our relationship with self and others. Few important reasons why emotions are so important to us are:

(a) Our survival: Emotions are necessary for our survival. In the process of evolution, we have come to acquire a sophisticated internal guidance system that makes us alert to our needs - whether we need company when we feel lonely, or we require safety when we are afraid or we like to be accepted when we feel rejected.

(b) Our desire to communicate: Our emotions help us in communicating with others. Whatever we feel we like to communicate to others, verbally or non-verbally. Whether we speak out or not our facial expressions, gestures etc., express our emotions. Emotions and their expression - these are the hard realities of life.

(c) Decision making: Our emotions are a valuable source of information that help us arrive at important decisions. They give us choices to decide and open up paths to take.

(d) Protection of physical and mental health: Our emotions make us alert at once if we feel uncomfortable with somebody's behaviour. This helps us set boundaries around us and find a comfortable niche for ourselves. Emotions act as a kind of armour against painful situations.

(e) Unifying force: Our emotions are perhaps the greatest unifying force. They unite us to the other members of our species. Darwin has written that the emotions of empathy, cooperation, compassion, forgiveness have the power to unite as a species while other forces may divide us.

Conflict Resolution

Emotions lie at the bottom of all conflicts. There is no organization that does not face situations of conflict and confrontation, be it the employer vs. employees or among peers. It is always wise to diffuse the situation at the earliest. The first and the last resort in such a state is Emotional Intelligence.

How to Strengthen Your Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can enhance the ability to manage interpersonal relationships, which is crucial for fostering positive team dynamics, empathy, and effective collaboration. By strengthening emotional intelligence, one can continue to advance in career and can maintain work- life balance.

In a nutshell, the importance of emotions in life cannot be over emphasized. All interpersonal relationships depend upon respecting each other's emotions. Equally important is the awareness and analysis of one's own emotions. In this context, the perennial wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita has a timeless relevance. The Bhagavad Gita recognizes the importance of managing emotions and portrays the characteristic features of an individual possessing emotional stability (Sthitaprajna). It not only analyses the impediments but also provides appropriate solutions to achieve emotional equilibrium.

Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita:

Bhagavad means "of God" and Gita means "song." Hence, the Bhagavad Gita literally means "Song of God." It is a dialogue that took place between the Supreme Lord Shree Krishna and His devotee Arjun, on the onset of the Mahabharat, a colossal war that was about to begin between two sets of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Mahabharat is divided into eighteen sections. The Bhagavad Gita is set in the sixth section, which is called the Bheeshma Parva. It comprises eighteen chapters of the section, beginning from Chapter Twenty-five, and continuing until the Chapter Forty-two.

Since long it has remained an eternal source of inspiration to famous thinkers such as Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Robert Oppenheimer, Carl Jung, Herman Hesse, and Aldous Huxley, to name just a few. Mahatma Gandhi mentioned that in his disappointments, he turned to the Gita for guidance and solace. The Bhagavad Gita reflects on the state of emotional stability (sthitpragya) and its resultant benefits. It also suggests the conditions and the factors to be controlled to achieve emotional equilibrium.

Emotional Intelligence in the Light of the Bhagavad Gita

The Gita begins as a dialogue between King Dhritarashtra and his minister Sanjay. In the opening verse of the Bhagavad-Gita, King Dhritarashtra asked Sanjay, what his sons and his brother Pandu's sons were doing on the battlefield? He uses words- 'Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre'. The words dharma kshetre, the land of dharma (virtuous conduct) used by Dhritarashtra depict the dilemma he was experiencing. Kurukshetra is described as kurukshetram deva yajanam in the Shatapath Brahman, the Vedic textbook detailing rituals. It means "Kurukshetra is the sacrificial arena of the celestial gods." Hence, it was regarded as the sacred land that nourished dharma. The war at Kurukshetra also indicates a symbolic struggle which every individual faces in varying degrees at various stages of his life.

Before waging a war, Arjun requests lord Krishna to place the chariot in the middle of the battlefield to take a closer look at the Kaurava army. Looking at the armies on both sides of the battlefield, his heart sank, they were all "Kurus" his relatives. The brave warrior who wanted to punish the Kauravas for all their wickedness a few minutes back suddenly became fearful. Arjun was now very confused and his mind filled with questions. He refuses to fight. Arjuna's predicament symbolises the fear, anxiety, and emotional turmoil of the an emotionally disturbed person's struggle for clarity of thought and action. Krishna gives a practical solution to come out of this inner conflict. Krishna simplifies the philosophy of life and shows way of life in a way that even a layman can put into practice.

There are striking similarities between Krishna's emotionally stable person (Sthithapragnya) and Goleman's emotionally intelligent person. According to Goleman, self-awareness, self-control, empathy, problem solving, conflict management, makes one an emotionally intelligent person. Firstly, a person should be self-aware of his/her emotions and be able to articulate them correctly. Then and only he will be able to identify those emotions that affect his thought process. He becomes aware of his own and others' emotions. This ability directs him to – emotional understanding – an ability to understand complex emotions. By then he will be able to practice self-control and manage his emotions. Such self-aware and self- controlled person can effectively develop problem solving skill and dissipate conflicts. Such person can have a complete control over his impulses and is thus able to contemplate, analyze and behave rationally in any situation.

The Bhagavad Gita puts emphasis on the effectiveness of being able to control and manage emotions. Arjun is aware of his emotional turbulence and seeks Krishna's help to advice him on the proper path of action. In response, Krishna narrates the reasons that lead to emotional disturbances and then moves on to the ways of emotional management. Krishna's guidance is universal in nature and is relevant at the present time as well. The Bhagavad-Gita outlines qualities of an emotionally intelligent person as a 'Sthithapragnya'. Krishna says:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्यार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥ (Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Sloka 55)

(O Parth, when one discards all selfish desires and cravings of the senses that torment the mind, and becomes satisfied in the realization of the self, such a person is said to be transcendently situated- one with steady intellect.)

Shree Krishna states in the above verse that a transcendently situated person is one who has given up selfish desires and cravings of the senses, and is satisfied in the self. Krishna offers a systematic analysis of the problem at hand and a solution as well. He further warns that while contemplating on the objects of the senses, one develops attachment to them. Attachment leads to desire, and from desire arises anger. Anger leads to clouding of judgment, which results in bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, the intellect gets destroyed; and when the intellect is destroyed, one is ruined.

Krishna identifies the root cause of all emotional turmoil that lead an individual to a person's downfall. They are: 1) Vīta rāga—they give up craving for pleasure, 2) Vīta bhaya—they remain free from fear, 3) Vīta krodha—they are devoid of anger. So, one who does not crave for pleasure, and who is free from attachment, fear, and anger will achieve steady wisdom. He further elaborates:

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Sloka 57)

(One who remains unattached under all conditions, and is neither delighted by good fortune nor dejected by tribulation, he is a sage with perfect knowledge.)

Rudyard Kipling's famous poem "If", also has encapsulated the essence of this verse on Sthita prajña as:

"If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same...
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much...
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!" (Kipling)

Krishna advises Arjun to withdraw the senses from the objects like a tortoise. Whenever it come across danger, the turtle protects itself by drawing its limbs and head inside its shell. Once the threat is gone, the turtle puts limbs out and moves forward. A wise person also has similar control over their thoughts and desires. One should not try to quench the cravings of the senses by supplying them with their desired objects. As fire flares up with double intensity when ghee is poured on it, desires never go away when they are fulfilled; they only come back more strongly.

To achieve emotional stability, Krishna expounds 'Nishkama Karma' – inaction in action. As emotional instability rises from attachment to and a longing for the desired result. So Krishna advise Arjun to detach himself from the fruits of action:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि (Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Sloka 47)

(You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.)

The verse gives four instructions regarding the science of work: 1) Do your duty, but do not concern yourself with the results. 2) The fruits of your actions are not for your enjoyment. 3) Even while working, give up the pride of doership. 4) Do not be attached to inaction.

CONCLUSION

Through the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna shows a way of life to be followed. To be a successful individual, emotional stability is utmost important. Through the dialogue between Krishna and Arjun, one can learn impediments of emotional stability and how to overcome them. It remains a perennial guide to wisdom. Recent research has linked many concepts of emotional intelligence to the Bhagavad- Gita. This paper is an iota in the ocean in a comparative study of thought between Goleman's 'Competency model' and the Bhagavad-Gita. This paper aims to suggest the perpetual applicability of the Bhagavad Gita's wisdom in acquiring emotional stability and self-realization in the present perspective.

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