ROLE OF CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY: AN INSIGHT FROM BHAGAVAD GITA

Amiya Kumar Sahoo¹ Naresh Kumar Behera²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad-826004, sahooamiyakumar20@gmail.com
²Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad-826004, ajitbehura20@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Bhagavad Gita or Srimad Bhagavad Gita or Gita is considered to be the prominent sacred book of Hindu philosophy. In this study, the author made an attempt by summing-up the postulates of the Bhagavad Gita in relevance to the implications in holistic health perspectives and behavioral therapeutic models in context of Indian cross-cultural set up. The concept of the Behavioural Therapy Model of the Bhagavad Gita for the psychologically healthy person is investigated in the relevance of the cross-cultural set up to the current psychological medicine. The author advocates the rational purpose of enlightenment of the Bhagavad Gita to enhance the efficacy of behavioral therapeutic interventions for patients and to add value. The basic canon of the Indian culture on the perception and its relevance of behavioral therapy in multi-ethnic culture have been analyzed.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita; Cross-Cultural Set Up; Holistic Health; Behavioural Therapy; Psychotherapy.

Background

The spiritual quintessence of Vedas and Upanishads is galore on the Bhagavad Gita. The literal meaning of the Bhagavad Gita is “Song of the Lord” which is part of the epic Mahabharata.

In many parts of the India there are certain advancements in the personality of peoples, especially with regards to spiritual, religious, cultural, situational support, intra-psychic explanation (Neki 1975: 29), dependence on elders, belief in transmigration of soul and fatalism (Varma and Ghosh 1976: 18) and superiority-inferiority complexes on the basis of castes (Sethi et al. 1965: 19) which are important in the behavioural therapeutic model in the current mental health medicine. Life is the continual union of body, sense, mind, spirit and health as a whole physical, sensory, mental and spiritual wellbeing. The progress of medicine depends exclusively on imagination, observation of the sick, meditation and experimentation in the science of laboratory. Health and disease depend on the state of equilibrium between the internal and external environment forming a spectrum in between with various levels of degrees. The Bhagavad Gita provides precious lessons in resolution and resumption of conflict that precipitate inaction from a state of acute anxiety and depression. The Bhagavad Gita elucidates many behavioral therapeutic principles of sickness which is based on a talk between Lord Krishna and Arjuna at the initiation of the Kurukshetra war. The concepts of holistic health, contemporary health behavior and psychotherapies insights in the Bhagavad Gita that focuses on conflict and diagnosis of the patient, underlying psychological principles, the personality of patients and concept of master and disciple (Guru-Shishya) elucidated in the Bhagavad Gita.

I. INTRODUCTION

The significance of spirituality in healing and coping mechanism is an age-old model for health care. The model is on augmentation with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in the form of dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) and the psychotherapeutic application of mindfulness. For healing of mental-health nuisance different configurations of client-centred or person-centred psychotherapy have been utilized for centuries in most of the cultures. The consequences of acculturation stress, nurtures the development of various psychosomatic disorder symptoms.
Acculturation is the process of cross-cultural dimension, of the development of cultural elements. (Millán-Franco, M. et al. 2019) A variety of culturally relevant models of behavioral therapy has been in use since antiquity. Though behavioral-psychotherapy gained greater acceptance as a medical discipline that emerged from the Bhagavad Gita, which is the most distinguished doctrine of Hindu philosophy.

The Bhagavad Gita is served as a spiritual guide to the huge number of aging around the globe. The Bhagavad Gita authored by Sage Veda Vyasa and written by Lord Ganesha that consists of 18 chapters (yogas) and 701 verses (shlokas) that being Sorrow (Vishada Yoga) is the first one and Nirvana and Renunciation (Moksha Sanyasa Yoga) is the last one which reverts to 2500 to 5000 years BC and the epic Mahabharata has 100000 shlokas.

The Mahabharata story is underline on the clash between two groups of a kinsman, the immoral Kauravas and the moral Pandavas. During the battle on the field of Kurukshetra the Pandavas with the support of Lord Krishna overcome the confederation of Kauravas. The context of the Bhagavad Gita engrosses the proficient and insightful archer Arjuna on a chariot manoeuvred by Lord Krishna getting ready to face the large soldiers of enemies consisting of his loved ones, coaches and gurus. Although Arjuna is a potent warrior, he speculates withdrawing from the battlefield due to sorrow, anxiety, guilt, doubt and attachment towards his loved ones as he fears obliteration of his kins and masters. The Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Lord Krishna and his devotee Arjuna, guiding Arjuna for the right course of action to achieve his destiny (a victory of morality over immorality) in the war which includes many behavioral and psychotherapeutic principles.

A few pundits recommend Bhagavad Gita as a detailed detailing of “Mama Dharma” - My duties, responsibilities, rights, ethics, morals, attitude, action, activities and so on (Swamy 2002).

In our mind, too the internal conflicts related to positive and negative dynamisms are fought which symbols the dilemma of Arjuna in our lives. The mental health professionals while addressing the symptoms of resolution, pave the path to long-term recovery of depression, anxiety and conflicts of the patients which are quite similar in many ways to the resolution of conflict through the Bhagavad Gita. Numerous notable Indian psychiatrists have recommended the use of principles of the Bhagavad Gita for coping, counseling, behavioral-therapy, and contemporary application value to current day psychotherapy and healing (Govindaswamy1959: 2; Rao et al.1974: 19).

Counselling or psychotherapeutic models is an essential and integral intervention in the management of a patient having psychological disease/depression. In the Indian context, the usefulness of these models was discussed with the varying cultural, religious, spiritual, societal attitudes (broadly described as the eastern/oriental culture) by psychiatrists in the past (Varma and Ghosh 1976: 18; Neki 1975: 29; Surya and Jayaram 1964: 6). Dr. Neki (1975: 29) gets widely debated for the master-disciple (Guru-Chela) concept as a model in psychotherapy. The Bhagavad Gita as a source and model to develop psychotherapeutic concepts suitable to Indian context have been discussed and proposed by the eminent Indian psychologist and psychiatrists (Balodhi 1984: 64–68; Rao and Parvathidevi 1974: 19; Ramachandr Rao 1983: 1; Satyananda 1972; Jeste and Vahia 2008: 71; Rao 2002: 44; Hegde 2009: 1; Govindaswamy 1959: 2; Balodhi and Keshavan 2011: 4; Gangadhar 2011: 4).

II. THERAPEUTIC MODELS FOR POSSIBLE DIAGNOSIS.

An attempt has been made on socio-cultural, behavioral and holistic health diagnosis based on the current day diagnostic criteria that can only diagnose the acute, transient, situational adjustment disorder (anxiety), panic attack and depression.

The Therapy

The therapist is Lord Krishna and patient is the Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna conveys a single session therapy and stays with Arjuna throughout the crisis that has no specified time limits. Patient considers the therapist as a friend, philosopher, and guide and has immense belief in him.

Socio-Behavioural and Psychotherapy

The subject matter of epic Mahabharata is the conflicts between two kins group namely “Kauravas” and “Pandavas” for the encroachment of the kingdom. Arjuna is faced with deep psychological chaos and depression when positioned in the theatre of war of having to kill his kith and kin in the conflicting base camp – a dishonest act according to him. He confesses physical, pathological and psychological illness signs such as dried of mouth,
quailed of limbs, body shook (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 1) in the midst of forces of warring and becomes anxious, confusion, depressed, negative self-evaluation. He appealed that he is in post to tackle the challenge and seeks to shun it (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2.7). That the above said, paragraph has an example of the defective cognitive approach in the stand of stress.

**Cognitive Therapy**

The analysis of Ramachandra Rao (1983: 1) said that stress of Arjun abide was due to a delusive cognitive appraisal of himself (the virtuous and brave warrior), the object (the war) and the threat (the morality). His duty directed behavior was impaired and led him to in force by the outcome in a negative way. By providing a new skeleton for the coping behavior Lord Krishna resorted to the cognitive inadequacy of Arjuna for independent duty performance. Lord Krishna firmly on the value of the role status of Arjuna’s attention of the objective environment. He taught that non-anticipation does not inevitably mean inaction but may in fact; bring on the more valuable action (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 3.19). Lord Krishna elucidated that Arjun was not correct to withdraw from battling next to enemies on account of hesitation or outcome (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2.31).

**Positive Mental Health**

Positive mental health is an important aspects described in the Bhagavad Gita which includes deep breathing or “Pranayama” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 4.29), discussion or “Pariprashna” (The Bhagavad Gita1971: 4.34), devotion or “Sraddha” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 6.47, 7.21, 17.2), meditation or “Ekagramana” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 6) and good nutrition and relaxation or “Yuktahara-Vihara” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 6.17, 8.13). A person who has tranquilled his senses and control over by grief, desire or anger alike (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2) as well as whose pleasure wells up from within and being non-contingent upon external indulgence (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 12). Lord Krishna describes those persons are said to be mindfulness, bare attention or “Shhitaprajna” who can act freely and effectively in a conflict.

The teaching of the Bhagavad Gita significantly contributes in remediying to physical co-morbidity with an unhealthy lifestyle. The human being makes it important to take care of the body as like as the temple (Kshetra of Lord), that gave shelter to the lord in the body, described by Lord Krishna.

**Cognitive Re-structuring**

The Bhagavad Gita endow with a complete therapeutic package for upsetting problems where anxiety is of primary value. The cognitive appraisal so-called “Jnana”, the action or “Karma” and the faith or “Bhakti” are the primary concern.

**The Cognitive Appraisal or “Jnana”**

According to the Bhagavad Gita truthful cognitive appraisal or “Jnana” is the initial conversation in facing any state of affairs. In a deeper sense “Jnana” means detailed information on the ontogenic and phylogenetic nature of the universe where the man placed as well as to understand instantaneous circumstances (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2.12). The spirit/soul or “Atman” of man does not come under any material or even an action (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 3.42). Lord Krishna contemplates Arjuna that the soul passes through childhood, youth and old age and also into another body just as an old cloth is replaced by a new one (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2). Nuisances come up only when the individual gaffes as the enjoyer or sufferer (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 3.27). In truth, it is the body which comprises ego that experiences and not the self (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 3.29). Thus, therefore, the spiritual nature of an individual recognized those who have overcome these sufferings.

**Action or “Karma”**

Proper action or “Karma” is an additional way for facing problems. According to the Bhagavad Gita proper action or “Karma” is determined by individual’s endowment or “Varna” as well as state of growth or “Asrama” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 3.29). The two aspects of action or “Karma” of an individual’s constituting the social and cultural organization that determines the action within this social structure. The first aspect of “Karma” or action is based on “Varnas” which categories into four kinds as priest class or “Brahmin”, warrior class or “Kshatriya”, business class or “Vaishya”, and labourer or “Shudra”. On the other hand the second aspect of action or “Karma” formed on “Aramas” are also four categories as learning stage or “Brahmacharya”, householder stage or “Grahashtha”, retirement from household or “Vanaprastha” and complete renunciation from the worldly affairs or “Sanyasa” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 4.13).
In the Bhagavad Gita, the three aspects of action or “Karma” are called “Karmayoga”. Thus one should develop his/her indulgence from doing duty not from its outcome i.e. “Nishkamakarma” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2.47), b) execute his task flawlessly i.e. “Karmasu Kaushalam” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2.50) and c) contribute for Welfare of Society i.e. “Yajnarthat Karma” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 3.9).

As Arjuna belongs to warrior class by birth as well as action, Lord Krishna advised him to overcome the improper refusal of his duty to fight. The code of conduct not only protect individual’s interest but also society at a large which is directed by the “Dharma” (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 2).

Faith or “Bhakti”

Dissolving the egocentricities by recognizing with a universal soul that is faith or “Bhakti”. For salvation or to attain liberation, faith or “Bhakti” in God is the one and only path (The Bhagavad Gita 1971: 9.26, 12.2). To attain and uphold the enlightenment regular practice of meditation is essential in the spiritual context. Spiritual or religious exercise and meditation are the techniques bring into play to rule the mind and promote a number of qualities.

III. CURRENT PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The idea of the Bhagavad Gita is brim-full in relevance to psychotherapy in the present-day psychiatric context. From the Bhagavad Gita, the depressed, confused, manic or delusions schizophrenic may bring together many benefits. For the development of behavioral-therapeutic interventions, the Bhagavad Gita has suggested more holistic and individualistic dimensions on the psychiatric symptoms as well as personal well-being. In fact, the concept of Bhagavad Gita is useful as a “canopy” to psychiatry for creating integrated assessment models of reduction and healing in mentally ill individuals that have significant relevance in the psychiatry.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The prevalence of scepticism and agnosticism is high among the psychological distress patients (Curlin et al 2007: 58). The belief system of counsellors has pivotal responsibility in the application of religious and spiritualism, that will help in the improvement of the patient’s health, promotion in healing and coping with the adverse situation. The motto of medical ethics is not intruding cultural, religious and spiritual belief systems of the patient. Simultaneously a psychiatrist should not rule out the remedy of a valuable spiritual intervention, and the spirituality helps the patients in many ways including placebo. The secular content of the Bhagavad Gita could be tied together to benefit patients. Therefore, we urge to exercise spirituality be a part of therapeutic apparatus in the context of current models for mental health.

The concept of “Jnana” is the understanding of the universal nature of the spiritual self that can be helpful in reducing the personal stress, emotional disturbances associated with aging and the concept of the immortality of the soul is grief-stricken with a loss of a loved one. The concept of “Nishkamakarma” is appropriate for anxiety states which is related to action where the outcome is uncertain. The “Bhakti” concept offers prominence for the identification of individual soul with the supreme soul through complete devotion and surrender. The idea of “Yoga” does not only provide a theoretical framework contributing to freedom from psychological conflicts but also provides a guide to the mental health which constitutes an effective approach to integrate the mind and body. For maintaining compatibility in therapeutic relation with a patient, the therapist has to adore the value as well as the belief system of the patient and must not impose own values upon the patient. For instance, it is necessary for the patient having emotional imbalance to read the Bhagavad Gita regularly called Bibliotherapy and seek help from the religious gurus.

From the above discussion, it is concluded that the Bhagavad Gita has offered a tons on cross-cultural, psychotherapeutic, holistic health and behavioral therapeutic concept in the Indian context.
REFERENCES