

# A Systematic Review: The Influence of Bhagavad Gita on Positive Mental Health in Adolescents

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## ABSTRACT

Although adolescents make up about 20 per cent of the world's population, they have traditionally been neglected as a distinct target group. In the western framework, adolescence has been described as a period of "storm and stress" fraught by conflicts with parents, mood disruption including extreme emotions, increased substance abuse, heavy reliance on peers and vulnerability to peer pressure and risky behavior and therefore adolescents as problems. Indian Psychology has grown as discipline offering the approach to growth of self and others and a refreshing change of ideology from focusing on the problem to focusing on the possible alternatives. Through analysis of 9 verses of Bhagavad Gita or the "Song of the Divine One", a guide for adolescents has been formulated to fill in the lacunae that western psychology has failed to address. This study attempts to move in the direction of guidance that is from "this is wrong" to "this is right" such it helps them have a better understanding of their being and facilitate wellbeing in this difficult age.

**KEYWORDS:** adolescents, Bhagavad Gita, behavior, psychology, age, emotions, peer pressure, Indian, divine, song

## INTRODUCTION

Majority of the psychiatric problems are neurotic in nature and need some form of psychotherapy. It has been recognised that psychotherapeutic models developed in the west are largely inapplicable in the context of oriental cultures. There are certain special characteristics in the personality development of an average Indian which are important to note in the psychotherapeutic context. Submission to authority, particularly spiritual, acceptance and even fostering of dependence on elders, readiness to accept overt situational support and reluctance to seek intra-psychic explanation, belief in transmigration of soul and fatalism and superiority-inferiority complexes on the basis of castes are some of them. In the west, on the other hand, authority is questioned, independence is fostered and intra-psychic explanation of conflicts is more readily accepted. In this context, there is therefore, an increasing awareness of the need for developing indigenous therapeutic models. Eminent

Indian psychiatrists like Govindaswamy, Satyananda and Venkoba Rao and Parvathidevi proposed Bhagavadgita as a source for psychotherapy and suggested to build up psychotherapeutic paradigm on its line. The Bhagavadgita is now reviewed in detail with special reference to the psychotherapeutic technique available in its teaching. An attempt has been made to interpret those ancient Indian concepts in modern context for their possible application in clinical set up[1,2]

The Gita is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Krishna, the Personality of Godhead. At the start of the Dharma Yuddha (righteous war) between Pandavas and Kauravas, Arjuna is preoccupied by a moral and emotional dilemma and despair about the violence and death the war will cause in the battle against his kin.

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Wondering if he should renounce the war, he seeks Krishna's counsel, whose answers and discourse constitute the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna counsels Arjuna to "fulfil his Kshatriya (warrior) duty to uphold the Dharma" through Karma "selfless action". The Krishna–Arjuna dialogues cover a broad range of spiritual topics, touching upon ethical dilemmas and philosophical issues that go far beyond the war Arjuna faces[3,4]

Numerous commentaries have been written on the Bhagavad Gita with widely differing views on the essentials. According to some, the Bhagavad Gita was written by the god Ganesha, as told to him by Veda Vyasa. Vedanta commentators read varying relationships between Self and Brahman in the text: Advaita Vedanta sees the non-dualism of Atman (Self) and Brahman (universal Self) as its essence

Younger generation, the world over, faces multiple emotional challenges due to various factors such as diminishing value systems, crumbling family structures and lack of quality education. Uncontrolled access to technological appliances and applications has further aggravated problem.[5,6]

The adolescent minds are often unable to differentiate right from wrong, and easily fall into trap of virtual world created by Internet and other forms of technology. They do not learn to accept no as an answer and start demanding and expecting everything at click of a button.

Thus, they lack patience. As a result, many behavioural issues like decreasing sense of responsibility, attention deficit, excessive anger, tech. dependence, drug abuse, open defiance; and above all most prevalent 'I don't care' attitude are becoming more and more common among youth. Tendency of some of parents of placating their children by providing them everything on a platter has further exacerbated problem. Pressure on kids to succeed and excel in everything they do, many times proves too costly. It hinders natural growth and leads to various behavioural issues. Such deviant behaviour of teenagers is increasingly becoming a cause of concern for society as a whole. Concerns of increasingly restless and perpetually dissatisfied young minds can be addressed and strength of their character be built if teachings of ancient Indian scriptures like Bhagavad Gita are inculcated in them.



Gita contains rich and unfathomable words of wisdom, which can be accepted and appreciated by today's youth if its practical aspects are presented to them in a relatable and digestible manner. The knowledge of Gita, thus, has to be made available to the kids in an interesting and engaging way. Such knowledge can help young ones in preparing themselves to cope up with challenges they face or are likely to face in future.[7,8]

Gita is the guide book to life. It has mandated everyone not to run away from struggles of life. One should work hard without worrying about the results. The doctrine of karma (the law of cause and effect) i. e. as one sows so shall he reap, can motivate everyone to do good. Gita teaches equanimity of mind.

Teaching child to accept failure with grace is as important as telling him to handle success, with humility. Such an understanding can help him/her in reducing anxiety levels and avoiding emotional outbursts. It also enhances his/her capability of coping with different situations.

As per Bhagavad Gita, mind is a powerful instrument in hands of man through which he can rise to great heights or fall to immeasurable depths. Mind is best friend of those who have conquered it, but it proves to be worst enemy of one who fails to control it. If this message of self-restraint and self-discipline is instilled in initial years, one can face all challenges of life boldly.[9,10]

Gita has emphasised upon importance of anger management. Lust, greed, jealousy and fear etc. are stated to be worst enemies of man. By keeping such vices under check, one can obtain serenity of the mind; and thus flourish in life. Concentration of mind, taught in Gita, is quite helpful to students in channelising their energies towards achieving their goals in life. Bhagavad Gita has preached unity of Divine and oneness of mankind. If such a concept is understood at a young age; one becomes more humane. Feelings of love, empathy, trust and kindness arise naturally. When child understands that there is only one Supreme Power, he starts respecting every religion.



It is also declared in Gita that excess of everything is bad. Too much of eating, fasting, waking or sleeping is not good. One should also not indulge in too much recreation. Once this principle of moderate behaviour is understood properly; the students can establish a proper balance between their studies, sports and other activities.[11,12]

Gita has also thrown light on the ideal teacher-pupil relationship. It has been advised that a student must pay due regard to his teacher, but should never hesitate in asking meaningful questions. The teacher must impart full knowledge to his students. Further, it has been stated that an elder should set a good example, through his own actions, for the young ones to follow. But teacher must not thrust his views on his students. After thinking seriously about wisdom imparted to him, student must form his own opinion. In this manner, the teacher can motivate his pupils for realising their full potential.

Gita is a complex book, the concepts of which are not easy for kids to understand. At first reading, they may not be able to make much sense as text and their meanings are quite subtle. Therefore, it is duty of parents, teachers and other elders to identify lessons which are relevant to kids; and then explain to them in a language which is appropriate to their age.[13,14]



While imparting knowledge of scriptures, it has to be ensured that formal education of students is not in any way impacted. In short, Bhagavad Gita is not a treatise to be read by sannyasis (ascetics) or senior citizens only. If the basic principles of this timeless guide of meaningful and purposeful living are internalized by the young ones, it can help them in adopting a pragmatic and progressive approach towards life.

### Discussion

Bhagavad-Gita means song of the Spirit, song of the Lord. The Holy Gita has become a secret driving force behind the wisdom of one's life. The timeless teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are deeply embedded in the Hindu psyche and continue to serve as a spiritual guide to the vast majority of Hindus around the globe.

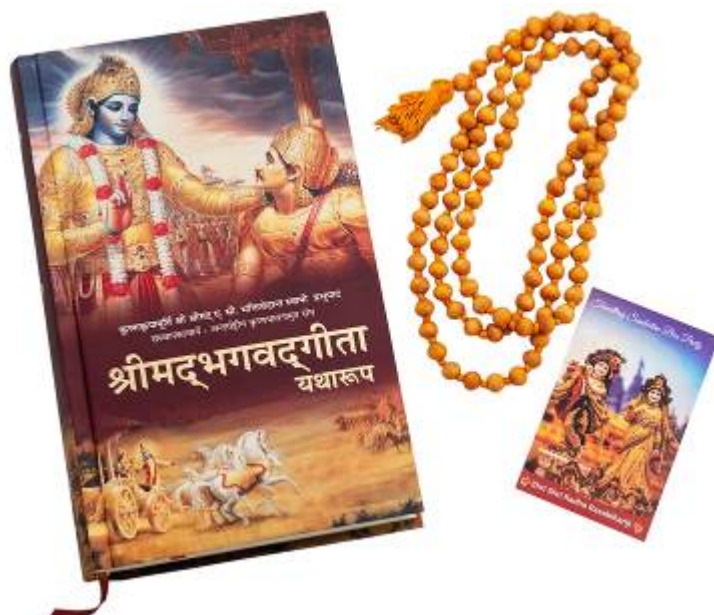


This scripture consists of 18 chapters and 701 verses (shlokas) authored by Vyasa and dates back to 2500 to 5000 years BC. The Gita represents chapters 25-42 of the Mahabharata, which has 100,000 shlokas. The BhagavadGita was delivered by Lord Sri Krishna to boost Arjuna's declining morale, confidence, motivation and to take the Arjuna out of the intra-personal conflict, which was to fight or not to fight the war at Kurukshetra. Arjuna got mentally depressed when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight. Bhagavad Gita has got all the management tactics to achieve the mental equilibrium and to overcome any crisis situation. The spiritual aspect of this book in Hinduism is very well established but, it is also of colossal use for Psychologist and Psychotherapist who deals with the patients of Anxiety, Depression, Fear, Guilt and negative attitude towards life.

There has been a very few studies regarding the Psychotherapeutic use of The Bhagavad Gita in the past. This motivated to study the use of The Bhagavad Gita in Psychology. The present study aims at identify strategies to prevent depressive thoughts, through the lens of Bhagavad gita. This study was also undertaken with a view to find some interventions that are not only effective but are easy to understand and implement.[15,16]

'Bhagavad Gita' is one of the essential Indian ancient scriptures like Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads. It guides us by showing various spiritual paths through which we can gain self-knowledge as well as inner-peace. Many of our legendary leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Lokmanya Tilak and many more was influenced by the philosophy of 'Bhagavad Gita'. This study showcases that, how 'Gita' influences the life of modern human society especially 'Y' and 'Z' generation. It also tries to analyze and highlight, how Bhagavad Gita supports and develops certain management vision and thoughts, which has created a benchmark in the modern world as a key source for success to any organization or an individual.

Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Yoga, Ayurveda, Scientific discoveries in scriptures are few of the sources. One of the greatest gifts, humanity has ever received is the Bhagavad Gita, one of the greatest philosophical and spiritual books. It is also called the song of God as it was the conversation between Bhagwan Krishna and Prince Arjuna in a battlefield of Kurukshetra. In the Indian tradition, the Bhagavad Gita, as well as the epic Mahabharata of which it is a part, is attributed to sage Vyasa.[17,18]



Many pundits say that Bhagavad Gita is the manual of our life. We can get all sorts of answers to our questions related to life and its activities. It clears up mind, it brings your focus to action. I personally get so much benefit while reading the shlokas (verses), exploring the meaning and implementing them in my life.

The Gita considers the world to be transient, all bodies and matter as impermanent. Everything that constitutes prakriti (nature, matter) is process driven and has a finite existence. It is born, grows, matures, decays and dies. It considers this transient reality as Maya. Like the Upanishads, the Gita focuses on what it considers as real in this world of change, impermanence, and finitude

- Chapters 1–6 = Karma yoga, the means to the final goal
- Chapters 7–12 = Bhakti yoga or devotion
- Chapters 13–18 = Jnana yoga or knowledge, the goal itself

Some scholars treat the "yoga of meditation" to be a distinct fourth path taught in the Gita, referring to it as Raja yoga. Others consider it as a progressive stage or a combination of Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga. Some, such as Adi Shankara, have considered its discussion in the 13th chapter of the Gita and elsewhere to be an integral part of Jnana yoga[19,20]

### Results

The Bhagavad Gita is one of India's ancient texts derived from the epic poem, The Mahabharata. Throughout history, this still stands as the longest poem to have been written, with over 100,000 shlokas or over 200,000 verses. Although only a part of this huge text, the Bhagavad Gita is perhaps one of the most important and highly revered yogic texts ever to have been written.





Texts like The Upanishads and the Dhammapada are also part of this epic poem, but it is the Bhagavad Gita which is often cited as the one that holds the key to personal transformation:

As the third of the classics, the Bhagavad Gita is a map and a guidebook. It gives us a systematic overview of the territory [of life], shows various approaches to the summit with their benefits and pitfalls, offers recommendations, tells us what to pack and what to leave behind. More than either of the others (the Upanishads and the Dhammapada), it gives the sense of a personal guide. It asks and answers the questions that you or I might ask – questions not about philosophy or mysticism, but about how to live life effectively in a world of challenge and change.

The Bhagavad Gita is a manual of life that teaches the technique of living. Unfortunately, humanity has lost touch with its deeply practical lessons, perhaps only chanting its verses without understanding the meaning. In these sessions Joseph will bring out the Gita's timeless lessons on how to live, taught in a modern and engaging way for the youth. They will be armed with profound tools to help them in their pursuit of peace, prosperity and spiritual growth.

One of the quintessential contributions of India to the world is the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. It is the voice of the Lord Sri Krishna and the first-ever most powerful leadership workshop that took place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra when Pandavas were going through a deep crisis.

Whether you are a student or a professional, a businessman or an entrepreneur applying the principles of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita will help you overcome challenges and become successful in life.[21,22]

As a service to humanity, we offer a very scientific presentation of the essence of the Timeless Vedic Philosophy, a 6-session foundation course on Bhagavad-Gita, in order to restore peace, friendship, and prosperity in human society.

"We are trying to give human society the opportunity for a life of Happiness, Good Health, Peace of Mind and all Good Qualities through God Consciousness."

The Gita rejects ascetic life, renunciation as well as Brahminical Vedic ritualism where outwardly actions or non-action are considered a means of personal rewards in this life, after-life or a means of liberation. It instead recommends the pursuit of an active life where the individual adopts "inner renunciation", acts to fulfill what he determines to be his dharma, without craving for or concerns about personal rewards, viewing this as an "inner sacrifice to the personal God for a higher good"

## Conclusions

Liberation or moksha in Vedanta philosophy is not something that can be acquired. Ātman (Self) and Self-knowledge, along with the loss of egotistic ignorance, the goal of moksha, is something that is always present as the essence of the self, and must be realized by each person by one's own effort. While the Upanishads largely uphold such a monistic viewpoint of liberation, the Bhagavad Gita also accommodates the dualistic and theistic aspects of moksha. The Gita, while including impersonal Nirguna Brahman as the goal, mainly revolves around the relationship between the Self and a personal God or Saguna Brahman. A synthesis of knowledge, devotion, and desireless action is offered by Krishna as a spectrum of choices to Arjuna; the same combination is suggested to the reader as a way to moksha.



**Bhagavad Gita class for adolescents in schools**

Novel interpretations of the Gita, along with apologetics on it, have been a part of the modern era revisionism and renewal movements within Hinduism. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the author of Vande Mataram – the national song of India, challenged orientalist literature on Hinduism and offered his interpretations of the Gita, states Ajit Ray. Bal Gangadhar Tilak interpreted the karma yoga teachings in Gita as a "doctrine of liberation" taught by Hinduism, while Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan stated that the Bhagavad Gita teaches a universalist religion and the "essence of Hinduism" along with the "essence of all religions", rather than a private religion.[23]

Vivekananda's works contained numerous references to the Gita, such as his lectures on the four yogas – Bhakti, Jnana, Karma, and Raja. Through the message of the Gita, Vivekananda sought to energise the people of India to reclaim their dormant but strong identity. Aurobindo saw Bhagavad Gita as a "scripture of the future religion" and suggested that Hinduism had acquired a much wider relevance through the Gita. Sivananda called Bhagavad Gita "the most precious jewel of Hindu literature" and suggested its introduction into the curriculum of Indian schools and colleges.

According to Ronald Neufeldt, it was the Theosophical Society that dedicated much attention and energy to the allegorical interpretation of the Gita, along with religious texts from around the world, after 1885 and given H. P. Blavatsky, Subba Rao and Anne Besant writings. Their attempt was to present their "universalist religion". These late 19th-century theosophical writings called the Gita as a "path of true spirituality" and "teaching nothing more than the basis of every system of philosophy and scientific endeavor", triumphing over other "Samkhya paths" of Hinduism that "have degenerated into superstition and demoralized India by leading people away from practical action".[24]

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