

Bhagavad Gita by Shri Krishna - A model for Psychiatrist

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Every day in life we have a choice – to do what is right and to uphold the truth or not. Each of us either consciously or unconsciously understands the difference. In this path, we often encounter several conflicts in our mind and heart and try to resolve them by making logical decisions. Krishna, in Bhagavad Gita¹ has explained that “it is our choices that help us to stay on the right path”.

The relationship between Krishna and Arjuna can be considered like a mentor-mentee bond. A mentor’s wisdom and experience can guide us to make the right decisions in our professional and personal life. A mentor is like an engine, pulling us through the tough situations of life that derail us. Without an engine, we would get back on track, but it would take longer. As individuals, we seek mentors not just for their experience, but also as a friend and guide who can be consulted on any occasion. The transformation of Arjuna, from someone who was confused and reluctant to fight against his kin to emerging victorious at the end of the war, can be attributed to these teachings.²

Kurukshetra war can be considered as a universal battlefield of good versus evil and of right versus wrong. We face this kind of battle in our everyday life when managing work issues and relationships, or even internally in our minds when we face ethical dilemmas.³

Every individual faces moral and ethical dilemmas in few situations. We look for proper guidance amid confusion between right and wrong or the mental agony arising from the urge to follow our basic instincts. The Gita also underlines the futility of worldly desires and pleasures that are fleeting and non-permanent in nature. It is in these areas of spiritual and moral conflict that the Bhagavad Gita continues to retain its influence on the human race even after more than two millennia.

The battle between opposing forces of right and wrong offers each of us a choice. The Bhagavad Gita urges us to always make the right choice by following our duties and controlling our emotions. It focuses on the three main paths for leading a clean life - Karma Yoga or actions, Bhakti Yoga or devotion and Jnana Yoga or knowledge.⁴

These paths are essential as they tell us the relevance of performing our duties, following our faith and attaining knowledge. They are like the three branches of the same tree, to reach our ultimate goal. The Gita has given equal weightage to these three paths in achieving this goal.⁵

The relevance of Gita is not limited to any one religion or community – it speaks of values, principles and concepts that transcend time and govern the human race. Its values are based on virtue and righteousness. It teaches a person how being on the righteous path can lead one to attain

enlightenment, understanding the transient nature of life and eventually attaining moksha.⁶

Our decisions at the crossroads of life will define the role we see for ourselves on the path ahead like change of places, starting new business, change of jobs etc.,. These choices have consequences that determine the future version of ourselves. Lord Krishna enabled Arjuna to choose the right path to be taken to fulfill his duties. We should perform our duties without expectations.⁷

Lord Krishna in his Gita teachings helped us to understand importance of performing one’s duties, understanding the nature of life, choosing the right path, believing in God, considering all creations as equal, attaining knowledge, working towards the betterment of life and attaining inner peace.

Lord Krishna helped in understanding that knowledge, action and devotion act as three pillars for every individual in making decisions and leading a right life.

In our everyday lives, we face lot of conflictual situations. In such situations Gita can be considered as torchbearer. It emphasizes that our rational thinking and awareness of our mental strength and our ability to make critical decisions efficiently are critical in achieving success.

Desires with the objective of sensory pleasure can sidetrack us from our goal. It highlights that one should refrain from worldly pleasures and cultivate an attitude of detachment or non attachment.⁸ The sense of attachment leads us to perform activities only for our benefit, whereas a sense of detachment creates a sense of purpose towards serving our community or society.⁹

Few critics claim that Gita teaches violence, it encourages to fight with our own brothers. Few consider it as a religious book to be read by people following Hinduism². But teachings of Lord Krishna should be viewed as a guide in the journey of life. It teaches us values such as righteousness, karma, devotion and detachment which are common across all faiths regardless of their caste, creed or religious belief. Let us implement these teachings of Lord Krishna into our own lives, enriching ourselves with inner peace, better relationships and success.⁴

These are the core principles of various psychotherapy practices applied in East and West. These teachings from Gita can be interpreted and applied in daily psychiatry practice for both spiritually oriented clients and illiterate clients.

Conflict of interest

None.

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