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Life management lessons as depicted by the gita

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Abstract

In the present day environment man faces great inner and outer challenges. Ancient Indian knowledge helps tackle negative emotions and could help contribute to world peace. Combination of ancient Indian knowledge of emotions and spiritualism with modern education is the need of the time. The challenges of today's turbulent and imbalanced economic environment and society can effectively be addressed by the teaching of ancient Indian culture and can help us live in peace and harmony.

In the words of Mark Twain, a famous American author: India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive material in the history of man are treasured up in India only.

One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is the holy Gita which is considered to be a revelation from God. The spiritual and management lessons in this holy book are a complete guide to practical life. It provides all that is needed to raise the consciousness of man to the highest possible level. It aims at self improvement of a human being that means self guided improvement in physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional domain. This paper presents a study of the Gita from the perspective of the development of a balanced personality.

Keywords: Ancient Indian knowledge, Indian culture, the Gita, balanced personality, life management

Our personality in general can be defined as a deep rooted pattern of behaviour that is stable and contains elements that are thoughts, will, emotions and inclinations. A balanced personality, one in which all personality traits are of average intensity is not easily achieved. It needs work, and is a life-long process. It means we can continue developing our personality throughout the life.

In the present day environment, man faces great inner and outer challenges. The inner challenges like self-esteem, concentration of mind and other factors keep an individual indecisive. Most of us suffer from psychological weaknesses, to a greater or lesser extent that often emerge from the imbalances of the intensities of our personality traits. These imbalances usually produce feelings of frustration and emotional dissatisfaction in everyday life.

The current study deals with the Indian view of a balanced personality as depicted in the Gita. The Gita's teachings in this context fall mainly into psychological context. This paper establishes relationship between Bhagvad Gita's teachings and a balanced personality.

Bhagvad Gita as a book of practical wisdom, has much to offer to all human beings to grow as balanced personalities. The Gita enlightens everyone on how to cope with various situations in life. It uses the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna to showcase positive coping skills. The Gita, through this case based methodology, teaches us how to cope with a demanding situation. This paper cites verses from the Gita to show how one may cope with the stress of life. The Gita is basically a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna where the latter succumbs to dejection when he realizes he has to fight with his own kinsmen. Lord Krishna, in this situation, helps him cope with his dilemma and stress.

The battlefield described in the Gita is symbolical of the inward conflict going on in our mind. We have entered the battlefield unconsciously and while we are in the field, we cannot absolve ourselves from the necessity to handle the situation in a requisite manner.

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That is what Lord Krishna calls the need to perform one's duty, "nityam kuru karma tvam" [1]. Duty is what we are expected to do in a given situation. Self doubt, worry and anxiety are the results of absence of action. When we fail to act and get caught up in the endless 'what if' loop, nothing is accomplished and we only doubt ourselves more. If we act, either we accomplish our goal or fail and learn from our experience. Lord Krishna teaches to avoid sitting on the sidelines of life and wonder, but to take action and own the consequences: You have the right to act but not to the fruit of your action. You should never engage in action for the sake of reward nor should you be inclined towards inaction. Perform work in this world, Arjuna, as a man established within yourself, without any attachment, and alike in success as well as defeat.

"Karmanyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalāheturbhūmā te sangostvakarmani.
yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi sangam tyaktvā dhananjayaḥ
sidhyasidhyayoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvam yoga ucayate" [2].

Doing one's duty selflessly gives birth to self confidence that is a fundamental quality in order to live an effective and empowered life. Knowledge of our own powers and abilities allows us to think, speak and act purposefully and believe that we have the inner strength and courage to succeed. How can we maintain a healthy level of self confidence in who we are and what we can do? The answer lies to a large extent in the Bhagavad Gita. In the second chapter of the Gita, Lord Krishna gives Arjuna a wakeup call from his despondency and sadness, saying: This despair and weakness in a time of crisis is mean and unworthy of you. Arjuna, how have you fallen into a state so far from the path of liberation? You should not yield to this weakness. Arise with a brave heart and destroy the enemy.

"Klaivyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ partha naitattvayyupapadyate
kṣudraṃ hridayadaurbalyaṃ tyaktvotiṣṭha dhanañjayaḥ" [3].

Then the Gita gives the message of meditation as a tool to achieve a balanced personality. Through the practice of meditation, the voices of doubt, indecision, fear and worry soften to distant whispers, ultimately fading away entirely. In addition, meditation allows one to have direct experience of one's soul; the infinite, immortal, unbounded, pure spirit. Meditation sets one free from seeking approval of others. Lord Krishna describes those established in this wisdom like this:

Neither agitated by grief nor hankering after pleasure, they become free from fear and anger. Established in meditation, they are truly wise. Fettered no more by selfish attachments, they are neither elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad. Such are the seers.

"Dukheṣvanuddvignamaṇaḥ sukheṣu vigatasprihaḥ
Vīrāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate" [4].

A person with balanced personality is one who is free from attachment, fear and anger: "Vīrāgabhayakrodhaḥ" [5]. He is Vimatsaraḥ [6] i.e. free from the feeling of jealousy. Such a person is free from all dilemmas, has a pure heart, free from the slavery of material possessions and knows his real self.

"Nirdvandaḥ nityasatvastho niryogaḥ sama ātmavān" [7].

Wisdom has been called the ultimate support, "buddhau śaraṇam anvichcha" [8] and performing one's duty skillfully the ultimate yoga, "yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam" [9]

Happiness, according to the Gita, is a state of mind. Truly happy is one who is satisfied with one's own self, "ātmanyeva ātmanā tuṣṭaḥ" [10].

Self control is the key to a stable mind, "vaśe hi yasyendriyāni tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā" [11]

Attachment has been described as the root cause of a number of personality demerits as it gives birth to desire. Unending desire gives birth to anger, anger leads to indecisiveness, this leads to loss of memory that causes total loss of wisdom and loss of wisdom is no less than death,

"Sangātsañjāyate kāmaḥ kāmātkrodhobhijāyate
Krodhātbhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmritivibhramāḥ" [12]

Pursuing unending desires, one never finds peace of mind. Absence of attachment as well as ego leads one to peace,

"Vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvānpumañscarati niḥspriḥ
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati." [13]

The Gita stresses upon the fact that there is no shortcut to success. Work and work alone can lead one to success, "siddhirbhavati karmajā" [14]

While in need for some help or support, we must look within ourselves as our own conscience alone is our best friend,

"Uddharedātmanātmānam nātmānamavasādayat
ātmaiva hyātmanaḥ bandhurātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ" [15].

The Gita stresses upon the power of concentration to achieve one's goal and to have a pious soul, "ekāgram manaḥ kritvā.....ātmaviśuddhaye." [16]

The Gita teaches us to treat everyone like we want to be treated unto,

ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yorjuna
sukham vā yadi vā dukham sa yogī paramo mataḥ" [17].

A balanced person is fearless, pious at heart and in deeds, knowledgeable, charitable, self controlled, indulged in self study, tolerant to pain and is soft in behaviour,

"abhayaṃ satvasaṅśuddhirjñānayogavyavasthitiḥ
dānam damaśca yajñāśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavam" [18].

He is non violent, truthful, free from anger, possesses giving nature, calm, avoids evil talk, is piteous towards all, free from greed, soft and stable in behaviour,

"ahimsā satyaṃ akrodhastyāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam
dayā bhūteṣvalolupatvam mārḍavam hrīracapalam" [19].

To conclude, the Gita gives the art of life management. It is the essence of all upanishads and is a concise guide to Hindu philosophy. It guides us in all directions, and helps us lead a positive life while building a strong and pure personality by adopting noble human values. It describes personality as a conglomeration of physical, vocal and mental purity [20] Following the teachings of the Gita helps one become a joyful and complete person. The description of sthitaprajñā in chapter 2 is a true life lesson in attaining a balanced personality.

Lord Krishna, in the Gita, teaches honesty, sincerity, truthfulness etc. so that one may get peace of mind to face all situations. The holy Gita has become a secret driving force behind the wisdom of one's life. This paper suggests the study of the Gita as compulsory at the secondary level so that the teenagers may shape their life in a meaningful way and grow into well guided youth who may never be lured into the trap of anti social activities. The study of the Gita will surely help develop children into focused youth who will pave the way for the progress of the humanity.

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