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Role of mind in personality development as reflected in Bhagavadgītā

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Abstract

Many philosophers have tried to find out the answer of the question, who am I? But psychologist endeavour on what is the nature of 'I'? A person, as he thinks, feels and behaves, accordingly he develops his personality. Psychologists study behaviour, experience and mental processes. It seeks to understand and explains how the mind works and how different mental processes result in different behaviours. When we observe others as common people our own points of view or our ways of understanding the world influences our interpretation of their behaviours and experiences. Psychologists try to minimize such biases in their explanations of behaviour and experience by seeking their analysis in scientific and objective way. Hence according to Robert Baron, psychology is best defined as "The science of behaviour and cognitive processes".

Our Indian scriptures have given valuable explanation to clarify many psychological theories. The Bhagavadgītā is one among them. The first chapter of the Gītā starts with the confused and nervous mind of Arjuna and further, in the whole of the Gītā God gives precious and valuable teachings to make him strong.

According to modern psychology the human mind never stops to think because its natural tendency is to create thoughts in the mind. Though the body remains stable, the mind cannot remain still. It continuously does its work of thinking. The Bhagavadgītā explains in detail how happiness and sorrow depends on the quality of thoughts. And thoughts reveal the personality of a person.

This paper will highlight on the role of mind elaborated by the Bhagavadgītā as a practical analysis of being a guide to one's life, to clarify one's vision and to understand the life to develop own personality.

Keyword: Bhagavadgītā, personality, role of mind, self-realisation, *trigunas*, meditation, self-purification

Introduction

There are many analogues received for the mind such as, "mind is the unbridled horse, it is fickle, and its thoughts are the waves of ocean" etc. It is said that mind is a set of cognitive faculties including consciousness, perception, thinking, judgement, language and memory. It is usually defined as the faculty of an entity's thoughts and consciousness^[1]. It holds the power of imagination, recognition and appreciation, and is responsible for processing feelings and emotions, resulting in attitudes and actions.

It is quoted in the *Chā Up* that, the word *manaḥ* is derived in the sense of that through which one thinks, and it means the internal organ, one should meditate on that (mind) to *Brahman*, the Supreme^[2]. In *Vedāntasāra*, Sadānandayogī gives philosophical teachings for the *Mumukṣutva* (liberation), along this he also thoroughly explained on *Vijñānamayoḥa*, *Manomayoḥa* and *prāṇamayoḥa*. There he says that *Manomayoḥa* is the combination of mind and sense organs^[3].

According to *Samkhya* mind is the eleventh sense organ, Kapila muni has given the definition of mind, he has mentioned that, the sense organ, *manaḥ* the mind possesses the nature of both (the sensory and motor organs). It is the deliberating principle, and is also called a sense organ since it possesses properties common to the sense organs.

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Its multifariousness and also its external diversities are owing to special modifications of the Attributes ^[4]. In the *ṚV* mind is used in the sense of spirit. In the *ṚV*, seer of *mantra* has prayed that, “may our spirit return to us for active and efficient living, may we see the sun” ^[5]. Again in the next *mantra* also it is appealed that, “O elders and enlightened ones, may you give us again the spirit, so that we may live with family of the living” ^[6]. Hence, these two examples indicate that, mind is also called spirit, which is *cetana* or living being. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya has mentioned in his *Gītā Bhāṣya* that, mind is the inner faculty which is also called *Antahkaraṇa* ^[7].

The mind is too mighty to be curbed easily. It runs thousands of miles within a moment. It is restless even when we sleep. In twinkling of an eye, it travels to far off regions whether man is asleep or awake. It occupies the position of a king in a body and all the senses are his ministers. They are always at his beck and call, just as the sun provides light to all the planets, so does the mind impart light (guidance) to all the senses. But for the mind's light, the senses are too blind to function. It is in the interest of man that he should curb and control his mind which is very powerful. If he does not conquer his mind, he will be conquered by it. Consequently his mind, being let loose, will do havoc by means of vicious thoughts and his whole life will be ruined. That is why in *YV*, a Vedic devotees pray to Supreme Being to endow their mind with pure thoughts, they say that, “this mind of mine which travels too far which is light of lights which wanders to far-off places whether I am asleep or awake, May resolve to do what is good and pure” ^[8].

Mind is so wonderful that, we cannot see it, but it has a great effect on the human personality. To understand the human mind, it is very necessary to understand ‘thoughts’, which is a continuous process of the mind and also we have to perceive its impact on the development of the personality.

Impact of thoughts on inner personality

The greatness of a man depends upon the sublimity of his thoughts. It is said that, he, who is capable of curbing and controlling his mind, can conquer the whole world. Vedic religion also urges upon purity of mind which alone ensures peace of mind which is missing everywhere, and salvation of soul which is the goal of man. It is mentioned in *Bhagavadgītā* that “He who conquers his mind attains communion with supreme Lord, for he has achieved perfect tranquillity. Joy and sorrow, heat and cold, honour and dishonour are in equanimity to such a man ^[6]. Purity of external body is of no use when one's internal mind breeds impure thoughts”. In order to stay away from negative thoughts, the *AV* preaches the prayer, “Oh sin of mind, go away, are you speaking negatively? I do not want you. Live in trees and forest, my mind is engaged in my house and cows” ^[7]. According to the *Bh Gīt*, self-realization is not possible without achieving stability of the mind or the state of “*sthithaprajñā*”. Stability of mind means to remain the same in all circumstances and under all conditions, for which the determined thoughts help to human being. Swami Chinmayananda in his commentary explains that “when one is feeling no mental attachments, either to the sense-objects or to the actions in the outer world, it is one of the symptoms of perfect mastery over the mind” ^[8].

When we try to control our mind, we practice converting thoughts from negative to positive. As our mind begins to create elevated thoughts, we also begin to talk and act wisely. Consequently, we feel happy and our happy personality creates conducive environment for others.

Importance of meditation to discipline mind and self-purification

Bh Gīt gives the technique of meditation to purify oneself. In the 6th chapter, it is explained that the one-pointedness of mind requires the mind be restrained and its fickleness be controlled ^[9]. While meditating, one should concentrate the mind and control the thinking faculty and the senses. One should practice yoga, for self-purification. Meditation is the best way to discipline mind. The state, in which perfection is attained, is described in the next verse, that is:

Yatroparamte chittaṃ niruddhaṃ yogasevayā ^[10]

When the mind, disciplined by the practice of Yoga becomes tranquil and when the yogi beholding the self (*Ātman*) by his self, is contented in the self.

Shri Vinoba Bhave has explained in his book “The mind is crowded with the thoughts of limitless *Samsāra* – affairs and happenings in the outside world. Concentration of the mind is impossible until all those thoughts are put out.” ^[11] To achieve any goal it is very necessary to be a focused for our aim and need to keep aside unnecessary thoughts, rather continuously we have to create thoughts regarding our achievement, so those thoughts help us to reach our goal. In Indian philosophy ultimate goal of human life is to attain liberation or to know own real personality. Kuppuswami has mentioned that, one who is possessed of unclean minds, who cannot shun off bad practices, who cannot control passion, anger etc., do not perceive the *ātman* even though they are engaged in penance ^[12]. *Bh Gīt* also described that “*Manah prasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunamātmavinigrahaḥ*” ^[13] cheerfulness of mind, gentleness, calmness and contemplation, self-control, purity of thought – are called, the penance of mind.

In the 6th chapter Arjuna describes the restless nature of mind, he says that the mind, verily is restless, turbulent, obstinate powerful therefore, it is as difficult to control it as the wind ^[14]. Then lord gives the answer that, the mind is restless and hard to control; but by practice and by dispassion it can be done ^[15]. Lord explains further the result of concentrated mind, he says “*Prasāntamansaṃ hyenaṃ yoginaṃ sukhamuttamaṃ*” whose mind becomes calm, because he renounces all *Tāmasika* and *Rājasika* passions, and is free from mundane pursuits and distractions, he attains *Sāttvika* happiness ^[16].

In the modern age, we are habituated to the use of gadgets like - tabs, laptop, and mobile phones on day to day basis. One can stay without food for a day but cannot do without a cell phone. No doubt, these gadgets are very useful, that they are providing lot of information, but we are actually becoming very irritated and disturbed due to unnecessary and waste information. Many a times it is the cause for mental stress. To tackle such circumstances it is very essential to discipline our mind, because all unnecessary information diverts our mind from useful to waste activities. Therefore, *Bhagavadgītā* has given very practical and useful method to keep our mind stable and disciplined in order to be a successful person.

Effect of mind on physical health

Swami Chinmayananda in his commentary says that, the mind, generally functioning as an efficient “receiving-and-despatching-clerk,” receives the information of the perceptions conveyed to it by the sense-organs, and after arranging these perceptions in order, conveys them to the intellect for its judgement. The intellect, with reference to its own stored-up memories of similar experiences in the past,

comes to final decisions which are conveyed to the mind for execution; and the minds in its turn issues the necessary orders for the organs-of-action to act upon. All these are happening at every moment, all through our waking-state, in our intelligent existence in the midst of the objects of the world ^[16]. So the process between mind, intellect and sense organs is very quick and subtle. In *Bh Gīt* we get to know of this process and its effect on the physical state.

The first and second chapter of the *Bh Gīt* reflects the Arjuna's confused state of mind. Arjuna says, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up ^[17], my whole body is trembling, my hair is standing on end, ^[18] and ultimately he was unable to stay on the battlefield, and he was forgetting himself, on account of the weakness of his mind ^[19], his confused state of mind affected his body.

Similarly at present times we see that many people are suffering from various diseases, the root cause being a stressful mind. Hence it is the necessary for everyone to know the art of keeping the mind stable, to which the *Bh Gīt* is a key we need to keep an attention on the mind every moment as the Mind fluctuates from positive to negative very easily.

The root cause of all atrocities and injustice is man's mind. The source of peace and prosperity, beneficence and benevolence is also man's mind. It is the mind which leads senses to virtue or vice, benevolence or malevolence, philanthropy or misanthropy ^[20]. Thus we can find following verse in *Bh Gīt* which explains that, "the mind is the best friend for him who conquers it; the same mind is the worst enemy for him who fails to conquer it" ^[21]. So mind overpowers to sense organs and human being act accordingly good or bad.

Impact of Trigunas on mind to develop personality

In *Bh Gīt* chapter fourteen *Guṇatraya vibhāga Yoga* elaborates on *Trigunas*, purity, passion and inertia born of "Prakṛti". The concept of *Sattva* is rather that of perfect purity and luminosity, the opposite of "foul-darkness" called *Tamas*, and distinctly different from the "dusky-colour of *Rajas*" ^[22]. We will find in the *Samkhya* that these *Guṇas* are function for the sake of the Purusa like a lamp. *Sattva* is buoyant and shining, *Rajas* is stimulating and moving, *Tamas* is heavy and enveloping ^[23]. *Trigunas* theory which provides lessons for understanding personality as a dimension of human behaviour an attempt has also been made to understand the dynamics of *Guṇas* that is *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. The *Guṇa* inherited by an individual is liable to change due to physical, psychological and social influences and the behaviour of an individual, both overt and covert is determined by the *prakṛti* (Personality) operating at that time. As *prakṛti* governs the perception, cognition, motivation and values of an individual, it also influences well-being. A deep understanding in this area could go a long way in human development, which could help in understanding the relationship between personality and behaviour in the Indian context ^[24].

The *Guṇas* have no separate existence as attributes inherent in a substance. All that we can say is that they are as many different mental climates in which the minds behave so differently from each other according to their given moods, governed by the predominating *Guṇa* at any particular moment of observation. Knowledge arises from *Sattva*, greed from *Rajas*, heedlessness; delusion and ignorance arise from *Tamas* ^[25]. When the mind is pure and serene, when there is the least agitation in it, the light emerging through it is steady and properly focussed; therefore, the result of the

predominant *Sattva* in our mind is ultimately the rediscovery of the self, the experience of pure wisdom.

When the mind is seething with a constant eruption of desires it will be continuously in a state of agitation, and in its natural anxiety to pacify itself, it has to rush out into the world to procure and fulfil its endless demands; and in doing so it expresses its greed. *Tamas* veils the capacity to perceive rightly the world outside and it also destroys our powers of right judgement. He, who is under the deluding effects of *Tamas* in himself, miscalculates the world and expects from its false experiences, which are impossible, and in the delusion, curses the world for its imperfections ^[26]! In *Bh Gīt* it is mentioned that who has firm mind, strength, health and happiness they are dear to one endowed with *Sattva*. Their food, sacrifices, austerity and charity are also *Sāttvika* ^[27]. These can be *Rājasik* or *Tāmasika* if someone behaves different than *Sattva Guṇa* as mentioned above. Therefore as *Guṇas* affects to mind so the personality develops, it can be *Sāttvika*, *Rājasik* or *Tāmasika*. For a better life it is necessary to develop *Sattvika* personality.

Conclusion

According to modern psychology the human mind never stops thinking because its natural tendency is to create thoughts. Though the body remains stable, the mind cannot remain still. It continuously does its work of thinking. The *Bh Gīt* explains in detail how happiness and sorrow depends on the quality of thoughts. The *Bh Gīt* gives utmost importance to human mind and its dispositions. The destiny of an individual is framed by his thoughts and the attitude behind his actions.

Bh Gīt exhibits the way to live a balanced life which is lost in present times. We are losing balance in our thought, emotions and in actions. *Bh Gīt* gives many pathways to make balance in everything, detachment is one among them. If we will use any one tool in our daily action it can make a great difference in our life. A verse from chapter eighteen where Lord says, always think of Me, become my devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are my very dear friend ^[28]. These words stress that; one should concentrate his mind upon God, a Supreme father. Concentration of the mind on the form of *Īśvara* constitutes the most confidential part of knowledge, and this is disclosed to Arjuna because Arjuna is the dearest friend of Kṛṣṇa's. Everyone who follows the path of Arjuna can become a dear friend of Almighty and obtain the same perfection as Arjuna. While performing any task if we remember the mantra of "*Manmanābhava*", all of our tasks will be successful due to a focused mind and goal will be achieved.

In the conclusion it can be said that, the *Bh Gīt* helps to orient a self-image in the light of a wholesome vision. The knowledge which is contained in the *Bh Gīt* is one of the important keys for shaping the human-personality. As the teachings of *Bh Gīt* are towards disciplining (or taming, training) one's mind which is the ultimate formula to attain hope, consolation, peace and hence our *Mana* will become *Sumana*.

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मनो ब्रह्मेत्युपासितेत्याध्यात्मम् |
3. *Vedāntasaraḥ* 15

- मनस्तु ज्ञानेन्द्रियैः सहितं सन्मनोमयकोशो भवति ।
4. *Samkhyakārikā* 28
उभयात्मकं अत्र मनः, संकल्पकमिन्द्रियं च साधर्म्यात् ।
गुणपरिणामविशेषान्नवत्वं बाह्यभेदाश्च ॥
5. *RV* 10.57.4
आ तु एतु मनः पुनः क्रत्वे दक्षाय जीवसे ।
ज्योक्च सूर्यं दृशे ॥
6. *RV* 10.57.5
पुनर्नः पितरे मनः मनो ददातु दैव्यो जनः ।
जीवं व्रात सचेमहि ॥
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यज्जाग्रतो दुरमुदैति दैवं तदु सुप्तस्य तथैवेति ।
दूरङ्गमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं तन्मे मनः शिवसङ्कल्पमस्तु ॥
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जितात्मनः प्रशान्तस्य परमात्मा समाहितः /
शितोष्ण सुखदुःखेषु तथा मानापमानयोः ॥
10. *AV* 6.45.1
परोऽपेहि मन्स्पाप किमशस्तानि शंससि ।
परोऽहि न त्वा कामये वृक्षां वनानि संचर गृहेषु गोषु मे मनः ॥
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तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः ।
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17. *Bh Gītā* 6.34
18. *Bh Gītā* 6.35
19. *Bh Gītā* 6.27
20. Swami Chinmayananda, *The Holy Geeta*, Commentary on Bh.g. 2.6, op.cit., p. 55
21. *Bh Gītā* 1.28
सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति /
22. *Bh Gītā* 1.10
वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते /
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न च शक्नोम्यवस्थानुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः
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बन्धुरात्मात्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥
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सत्त्वं लघु प्रकाशकमिष्टमुपष्टम्भकं चलं च रजः ।
गुरु वरणकमेव तमः प्रदीपवाच्चार्थतो वृत्तिः ॥
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सत्त्वात्संजायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।
प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥
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मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥
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