

Chapter 3

Atman's Awakening: Bhagavad Gita's Path to Moksha Through Karma Yoga and Atmabodha

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ABSTRACT

Indian psychology is characterized by its diverse and rich traditions that have evolved over several centuries. This chapter tries to fulfill four objectives: 1) To provide a brief overview of the concept of self in Bhagavad Gita; 2) to give a brief overview of the two frameworks for moksha given in the Bhagavad Gita with the help of empirical evidence of current research; 3) to propose a conceptual model using Triguna Framework and Trimarg Framework; and 4) to provide the implications of the proposed model. The chapter begins with an explanation of the Indian philosophical understanding of self from the lens of Bhagavad Gita. In the second section, an effort has been made to compare and contrast the two frameworks given in Bhagavad Gita for Moksha. The last section introduces a conceptual model to enhance sattva guna and reduce the rajas and tamas gunas to attain atmabodha that can have positive psychological implications in modern times.

INTRODUCTION

The Bhagavad Gita was written between 2500 and 5000 BC. Chapters 25–42 of the epic Mahabharata, which has 100,000 shlokas, are represented by the Gita. Bhagavad Gita is considered a scripture of utmost importance in the Sanātana Dharma (eternal religion). The fundamental ideas addressed in the Bhagavad Gita are deconditioning, dismantling the ego, and consciousness. These ideas are thought to be the necessary prerequisites for a person's transformation. The Bhagavad Gita, translated as the 'Song of God,' is a 700-verse scripture divided into 18 chapters penned by Lord Ganesha as told by Sage Ved Vyasa.

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The Bhagavad Gita is a revered body of knowledge that cuts across time and culture in the large body of Vedic literature, which principally explains the nature and experience of the inner Self or Atman. The nature of atman is among the most important psychological issues summarized in Bhagavad Gita.

It is based on a discourse between the two protagonists of the Mahabharata, Pandava prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The conflict between the Kauravas and Pandavas, two groups of cousins, is portrayed in the Mahabharata. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the Pandavas and their allies defeated the Kauravas with Lord Krishna's assistance. A man of integrity, a person with clarity of thought, and someone with compassion, Arjuna, the best archer of his day, falls into a condition of complete despair prior to the start of the battle on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Due to his feelings of remorse, uncertainty, and loyalty to his family, Arjuna is reluctant to participate in the battle because he worries about losing his relatives and teachers. As a result, he considers leaving the battle. In this crucial moment, Lord Krishna revealed Arjuna which path to take in order to fulfil his duty in the war and achieve victory and righteousness against evil.

All the chapters emphasize a wide range of topics such as ignorance in the form of desires, attachment (vasanas), raag, dwesha, creation of the universe as an interplay of trigunas-sattva, rajas and tamas, paths(margas) to attain moksha, brahman, etc. Based on the content analysis of the Bhagavad Gita, this chapter tries to fulfill the following objectives:

- To propose different stages of how a sādhanak can move from ignorance to brahman.
- To propose an application-based model based on the constructs discussed in Bhagavad Gita

BACKGROUND

Casebeer (1952) observed that the holy text emphasizes the existence two selves within an individual, which are referred to as:

- **Brahman:** The Absolute, the Supreme Reality, or the supreme self. It is considered to be beyond the laws of life and death, changeless, and persists throughout all the experiences. The shloka in the Bhagavad Gita that supports this are:

śhrī bhagavān uvācha

akṣharam brahma paramam svabhāvo 'dhyātmam uchyate

bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-sanjñitaḥ

Bhagavad Gita 8.13

This shloka, as translated by Swami Adidevananda, "The Supreme Imperishable (Aksara), according to the Lord, is brahman.' It cannot be destroyed and is the sum total of all individual selves. One's own material nature (the body) is known as Adhyatma or that which dwells with the self." This shloka further clarifies that the brahman can be known only through self-knowledge, an action (karma) just

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