



“The Impact of Bhagavad Gita on Youth: Cultivating Forgiveness, Finding Purpose, Embracing Gratitude and Building Ego Resilience”

Afreen Qureshi* & Dr. Rati Khurana**

*Master student, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences,
Amity University, Noida, India

**Assistant Professor, IILM University Gurugram

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Abstract

This study looks at the perspective of Indian psychology (teachings of Bhagavad Gita) as an approach for forgiveness, purpose in life, gratitude and ego resilience of people (youth) who read Bhagavad Gita and people (youth) who don't read Bhagavad Gita. A sample size of 100 young adult population (18-24yrs) was selected for the study through purposive sampling method; 2 groups were made of 50 each who read Bhagavad Gita from ISKCON temple classes in Delhi and non-readers from Delhi. Ego resilience scale, Bolton forgiveness scale, Purpose in life scale, and Gratitude scale were used. Using the 't' test to examine the data, it emerged that the Bhagavad Gita reading group extensively outperformed the non-reading group in terms of forgiveness, ego resilience, purpose in life and gratitude. Therefore, it signifies that youth who read Bhagavad Gita have greater resilience, forgiveness, purpose in life and gratitude. Recommendations for further research include employing simple random sampling on various longitudinal studies on various age groups to see the efficacy of Bhagavad Gita teachings.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, youth, Forgiveness, Purpose in life, Gratitude, Ego resilience

Bhagavad Gita and its importance in Indian culture

Among Vedic compositions, the most quintessential literature is the Bhagavad Gita. It is for the people who have a keen interest in seeking truth, who have a quest for complete science of everything, irrespective of caste, religion, creed nationality. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, 5000 years ago it was spoken by Lord Krishna to Arjuna which holds an explanation of the science of life (Five Aspects of the Absolute Truth, 2022).

Bhagavad Gita is a book that contains knowledge of the entire universe and it's not only a holy scripture. If one is cognizant of its depths, the person can triumph over all tensions, conflicts and worries in life, moving ahead towards a life of contentment, self-realization and self-actualization. Balodi & Raina (2014) conducted a study to see emotional maturity and values among two groups of college students Bhagavad Gita readers and non-readers aged (19-21) years, analysis of the data was done using t-test, results indicated that Bhagavad Gita group was ahead in emotional maturity and values compared to the Non-reading Bhagavad Gita group.

Common problems faced by youth in the 21st century are psychological, social, emotional

Youth is a crucial time in life for development and a time when stress sensitivity is increased. A study conducted by (Bühler et al., 2022) on the psychosocial development of 415 young adults indicated that there is less affective well-being and adaptive trajectories of social functioning

Indicating negative impacts on young adults' socioemotional development caused by ongoing group stressors. The general physical and emotional health of youth after the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact resulting in lower levels of resilience, poor sleep, loneliness linked to stress and anxiety and depression. Studies results indicated that these vulnerable young adults need more support, nevertheless, age age-specific intervention for preventable factors that contribute the psychological discomfort must be initiated immediately (Varma et al., 2021). Pillai et al. (2008) estimated that suicide behaviour among young people as a public health issue has emerged with psychological distress and violence. Suicide conduct is independently correlated with both psychological suffering and violence.

In India, programmes aimed at preventing youth suicide must tackle the systemic factors that give rise to gender inequality as well as the personal experiences of trauma and poor mental health. Psychological distress and 2019 coronavirus-associated predictor, stated that young survivors demonstrated higher levels of stress response symptoms and emotional symptoms of depression and anxiety symptoms and emotional reactivity compared to older adults. It suggested for the psychological distress screening of COVID-19 survivors followed by intervention (Cai et al., 2020)

Role of Bhagavad Gita teachings in mitigating problems faced by youth

Bhagavad Gita is a book that was written 5000 years ago on the battlefield of Kurukshetra to Arjuna when he was experiencing distress to fight, Bhagavad Gita's mission is to free humanity from the illusion of material life, like Arjuna we also face so much distress and anxiety in everyday life due to this bodily existence. As the Bhagavad Gita is a great mystery and quite challenging to comprehend we should comprehend it by being in a submissive spirit like Arjuna and accept Lord Shri Krishna as the ultimate nature of the godhead at least theoretically (Prabhupada, 2015, p.5.6).

It's a fact that Gita does not only belong to Hindus but to the entire Humankind. It covers a broad spectrum of aspects associated with human life, purpose in life, motivation psychology, leadership etc. Bhagavad Gita's beauty appears in the manner in which one's perspective determines its interpretation, significance and meaning. It incorporates topics related to leadership, communication, fear, anxiety and other psychological and spiritual elements (Jayanti, 2020)

Forgiveness, Ego resilience, purpose in life and gratitude among youth today

In the foundation of Inner Peace (1975), Toussaint and Friedman (2008)

define forgiveness in seven criteria (a) a change in vision and perception (b) a change in beliefs and attitudes, (c) a change in effects, (d) a change in self-responsibility and self-empowerment, (e) a change in choice, intention and decision, (f) a change to oneness consciousness from duality consciousness and (g) a change in an awareness of what constitutes a person substantial. According to this perspective when an individual lets go of emotionally backed judgments, attack thoughts and beliefs towards others and themselves so that they can perceive the worth, goodness, innocence, love, splendour and peace in others and themselves forgiveness occurs. Additionally, based on this perspective, the act of forgiveness occurs when an individual consciously decides to forgive (or can perceive things differently) and then commits the process of forgiving to a higher force or oneself (such as the Holy Spirit). Peace and love are set as goals during this process, and projections are

owned and released. Forgiveness refers to compassion towards the offender, it is the replacement of disruptive- negative non-forgiving emotions with positive emotions like positive self-esteem and that creates a significant positive effect and well-being on the forgiver and the offender (Lijo K.J., et al 2018). Association of gratitude and forgiveness are closely associated with each other (Breen et al., 2010)

A study done on adolescents in South Korea indicated that depression has increased from 2012 to 2015. Despite teacher support was not a significant predictor, higher degrees of ego-resilience, family support, and friend support were linked to lower levels of depression. There was no statistically significant moderating influence of friends and family support on the relationship between ego-resilience and depression (Kang et al., 2022)

A random sample of 337 young individuals was used in a study to examine the relationships between life satisfaction, ego resilience, depression, hopelessness, and loneliness. The findings revealed that every one of the detrimental indices of psychological well-being and life satisfaction are mediated by ego-resilience. Loneliness is linked to hopelessness, which is linked to depression (Padmanabhanunni&Pretorious, 2021). A higher sense of purpose in life was associated with a lower risk of having abnormal CRP, according to a study on older men (eg-men: HR=0.89, 95% CI: 0.79-0.99) (Guimond et al., 2022). Social media-based gratitude studies done on undergraduate students aged 18-24 years, were randomly assigned to the gratitude group and control group. For 7 days students in the gratitude group were required to upload a single image on Instagram along with a gratitude-stimulating caption. Covariance analysis revealed that students in gratitude conditions reported higher levels of gratitude than those in the control group (Koay et al.,2020)

Relevance of spiritual learnings of Bhagavad Gita to enhance forgiveness, ego resilience, purpose in life and gratitude of young adults

Shloka used in addressing ego resilience

The three modes of material nature ultimately execute the actions that the spirit soul, deluded by the influence of false ego, believes it is the doer of.

(Chapter 3; Shloka 27)

Shloka used in addressing forgiveness

Lord Krishna states: "O son of Bharata, these transcendent attributes are characteristic of godly men endowed with divine nature: vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, and freedom from jealousy and the desire for honour."

(Chapter 16; Shloka 3)

Shloka used in addressing gratitude

Lord Krishna states: "Recognise that all extravagant exquisite, and magnificent works originate from a tiny flicker of my magnificence"

(Chapter 10; Shloka 41)

Shloka is used in addressing the Purpose of life

The following attributes are considered to be signs of knowledge: perceiving the negative aspects of birth, death, old age, and disease; being detached and free from attachments to family, home, and other worldly concerns; maintaining an even-minded attitude during both pleasurable and unpleasant events; having unwavering devotion to a solitary life and spiritual practices; being detached from the general populace; recognizing the importance of self-realization; and engaging in philosophical inquiry to discover the ultimate truth.

(Chapter; 13 Shloka 8-12)

Method

The present study is based on an explorative design that was conducted in the Delhi-NCR region through virtual and offline set-up. The study was carried out with a sample size of 100 individuals, who were further divided into two groups. One group of 50 participants read Bhagavad Gita everyday and the second one comprised 50 participants who didn't read Bhagavad Gita. The study used a purposive sampling technique.

Aim- To see the effect of Bhagavad Gita on Ego resilience, forgiveness, purpose of life and gratitude of young adults.

Objectives- to see the effect of the Bhagavad Gita on regular readers' Ego resilience, forgiveness, purpose of life and gratitude in young adults.

Inclusion criteria-

- The individual should be fluent in the English language
- The individual should be reading Bhagavad Gita for at least two years.
- The individual should read Bhagavad Gita every day for at least 20 min.
- The other group should not be reading BhagavadGita.
- Should be in the same age group of 18-24 years of young adults.

Exclusion criteria-

- If an individual is not fluent in the English language (independent and dependent group)
- If an individual is not into reading the Bhagavad Gita (independent group)
- If the individual is not reading BhagavadGita every day (independent group)
- If the individual has not read the Bhagavad Gita for at least 2 years (independent group)
- All the participants in the study should be in the age group of 18-24 years (independent and control group)

Tools

- Ego resilience scale- (J. Block &Kremen, 1996)
- Bolton forgiveness scale- Amanze, R. U., and Carson, J. (2019)
- Purpose in life scale (Robbins and Francis, 2000)
- Gratitude scale (GQ-6)- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002)

Results c

(Table-1)

| | Mean | SD | t -Value | Sig |
|-------------------|-------|------|----------|------|
| Non-Reading group | 32.10 | 5.27 | 37.20 | .000 |
| Reading-group | 71.76 | 5.38 | | |

In Table 1, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare readers of Bhagavad Gita and non-readers in forgiveness.

There is a significant difference in the scores of the participants who read Bhagavad Gita (M=71.76, SD= 5.38) and non- readers (M= 32.10, SD=5.27) conditions; $t(98)= 37.20$, $p=0.000$. these results suggest that readers of the Bhagavad Gita do affect forgiveness.

(Table-2)

| | Mean | SD | t-Value | Sig |
|--|------|----|---------|-----|
|--|------|----|---------|-----|

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| <i>Non-Reading Group</i> | 33.40 | 2.72 | 26.57 | .000 |
| <i>Reading group</i> | 45.22 | 1.56 | | |

In Table -2, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare readers of the Bhagavad Gita and non-readers in purpose in life.

There is a significant difference in the scores of the participants who read Bhagavad Gita (M=45.22, SD= 1.56) and non- readers (M= 33.40, SD=2.72) conditions; $t(98)= 26.57$, $p=0.000$. these results suggest that readers of Bhagavad Gita do affect purpose in life.

(Table-3)

| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-Value</i> | <i>Sig</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| <i>Non-Reading Group</i> | 19.36 | 2.84 | 20.38 | .000 |
| <i>Reading group</i> | 28.96 | 1.72 | | .000 |

In Table 3, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare readers of Bhagavad Gita and non-readers in gratitude.

There is a significant difference in the scores of the participants who read Bhagavad Gita (M=28.96, SD= 1.72) and non- readers (M= 19.36, SD=2.84) conditions; $t(98)= 20.38$, $p=0.000$. these results suggest that readers of the Bhagavad Gita do affect gratitude.

(Table-4)

| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-Value</i> | <i>Sig</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| <i>Non-Reading Group</i> | 22.88 | 5.47 | 31.70 | .000 |
| <i>Reading group</i> | 49.06 | 2.02 | | .000 |

In Table 4, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare readers of Bhagavad Gita and non-readers in ego resilience.

There is a significant difference in the scores of the participants who read Bhagavad Gita (M=49.06, SD= 2.02) and non- readers (M= 22.88, SD=5.47) conditions; $t(98)= 31.70$, $p=0.000$. these results suggest that readers of Bhagavad Gita do affect ego resilience.

Discussion

The main portion of the Indian spiritual text, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, is a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna that is recounted in the BhishmaParva of the renowned epic Mahabharata. It has seven hundred Sanskrit shlokas in all, organised into eighteen chapters (Bhagavad Gita – the Divine Life Society, n.d.).After lengthy discussions, the Pandavas and Kauravas decided to be at war in the Mahabharata. As the battle was about to start, Arjuna felt too weak to fight his cousins and made up his mind to abandon the conflict and live a life equivalent to a monk.As a counsellor to assist Arjuna in identifying the right path of action, Lord Krishna starts a discussion with him. After the discussion, Arjuna

appeared to be psychologically ready to wage war and devoid of confusion and false notions (Balakrishnan, 2013).

The present study aimed at understanding the effect of Bhagavad Gita teachings on young adults. A sample size of 100 was divided into two groups, one who read Bhagavad Gita daily and the other group who didn't read, with 50 participants in each group. The participants were made to fill out assessment tools i.e Ego resilience scale- (J. Block & Kremen, 1996), Bolton forgiveness scale- Amanze, R. U., and Carson, J. (2019), Purpose in life scale (Robbins and Francis, 2000) and Gratitude scale (GQ-6)- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002) through purposive sampling method, data for Bhagavad Gita group was taken from ISKCON temple Delhi Bhagavad Gita classes and for the control group it was taken through different college students in Delhi.

For analysis of the data Independent samples t-test was conducted to compare readers of the Bhagavad Gita and non-readers in forgiveness, purpose in life, ego resilience and gratitude.

There is a significant difference in the scores of the participants who read Bhagavad Gita ($M=71.76$, $SD= 5.38$) and non- readers ($M= 32.10$, $SD=5.27$) conditions; $t(98)= 37.20$, $p=0.000$ in forgiveness, who read ($M=45.22$, $SD= 1.56$) and non- readers ($M= 33.40$, $SD=2.72$) conditions; $t(98)= 26.57$, $p=0.000$ in purpose of life, who read ($M=28.96$, $SD= 1.72$) and non- readers ($M= 19.36$, $SD=2.84$) conditions; $t(98)= 20.38$, $p=0.000$ gratitude and who read ($M=49.06$, $SD= 2.02$) and non- readers ($M= 22.88$, $SD=5.47$) conditions; $t(98)= 31.70$, $p=0.000$ ego resilience. These results suggest that readers of Bhagavad Gita do affect forgiveness, purpose in life, gratitude and ego resilience of young adults.

The outcomes of our investigation aligned with a related study that examined the effectiveness of positive psychology and Bhagavad Gita teachings for a community of semi-urban students who reside in Delhi-NCR. The participants were divided into three groups by the study's authors: group 2 and group 3 got interventions based on positive psychology and the Bhagavad Gita, respectively, while group 1 constituted the control group. The Bhagavad Gita-based intervention's recipients demonstrated a statistically significant rise in optimism, resilience, and hope ($p<0.5$) (Dabas & Singh, 2018) Another interventional study done by (Khurana & Qureshi, 2023) on teachings of the Bhagavad Gita on physically ill patients having depression and anxiety with a sample size of 39 adult population The diminution in scores for both variables was statistically significant, as per the results. Pre-test GAD mean = 14.51, post-test GAD mean = 3.95, SD pre-test GAD = 3.568 and SD post-test GAD = 1.169; Wilcoxon signed rank test (pre-test PHQ mean = 17.08, post-test PHQ mean = 2.69, SD pre-test PHQ = 4.385, SD post-test PHQ = 1.127).

Practical contribution of the research

There are multiple theoretical and empirical evidence that

Limitations

The results of the present study would be more applicable when a simple random sampling method is employed on a larger population of young adults and an interventional study is done pre and post-Bhagavad Gita session to see the forgiveness, purpose in life, ego resilience and gratitude among young adults.

Conflict of interest

Concerning publication, authorship, or acknowledgements, the study's authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

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