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Managing Mental Health— Insights from Bhagwat Gita

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***Abstract*—** *The present paper is an effort to take the insights from the pages of Bhagwat Gita in managing the mental health crisis that is increasing exponentially these days. The efforts will also include some of key psychotherapies that are used by psychologists to deal with these crises. Also the similarities between the techniques of Bhagwat Gita in dealing with these crises and present era's techniques or therapies will be established.*

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. It has intrinsic and instrumental value and is a basic human right.

Need for managing mental health.

1) IN Bhagwat Gita , the importance of stable and controlled mind is given as follows *ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ (6.5)* The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well.

bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ

anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatru-vat (6.6)

For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.

jitātmanaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ (6.7) For one who has conquered the mind, the Super soul is already reached, for he has attained tranquillity. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same. 2) As per WHO, The WHO states that there is no true health without mental health; it is integral part of individual and collective well being. 3) Mental health statistics of India at a glance - 15% of global mental health burden. 200 +Million Indians live with a mental health condition. 56 million have depression. 38 million have anxiety disorders. India's mental health treatment gap is 83 - 86%, one of highest in the world. India has only 0.3 psychiatrists per 100,000 people , WHO minimum is 1 per 100,000. Suicide is leading cause of death for India Aged 15 to 29. 2% of India's health budget is allocated to mental health. Students suicide rose to a record high of 14488 In 2024 , marking a 4.3% increase from 2023.

Introduction

From the pages of scriptures, we come to know that all of us can be influenced by one out of three types of distresses like- 1. *Adidaivik*- distress from the demigods in the form of natural calamities. 2. *Adibhautik*- distress from other living entities like disease, wars, crimes, etc. 3. *Aadhyatmik*- distress from within like depression, anxiety, stress etc. The Main purpose of this paper is to address the adhyatmik distress that is stress from within that harms our mental health. From the pages of Bhagwat Gita we can find the various types of mental distresses that Arjuna faced. And these were not unique to Arjuna only, in fact through Arjuna, lord krishna gave answers to all of our mental issues, along with addressing other issues as well. The various types of mental health issues , whose reference we

can find in Bhagwat Gita are- 1. Inability in decision making , I.e. confusion of duty

na caitad vidmaḥ kataran no garīyo yad vā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ

Nor do we know which is better – conquering them or being conquered by them.(2.6)

2. Anxiety - having a sense of impending danger, feeling nervous , restless, tensed. *vepathuś ca śarīre me roma-harṣaś ca jāyate gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāt tvak caiva paridahyate*

My whole body is trembling, my hair is standing on end, my bow Gāṇḍīva is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning. (1.29)

3. Death thoughts –

yadi mām apratīkāram aśastraṁ śastra-pāṇayaḥ dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyus tan me kṣema-taraṁ bhavet Better for me if the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, weapons in hand, were to kill me unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield. (1.45) 4. Guilt –

aho bata mahat pāpaṁ kartuṁ vyavasitā vayam yad rājya-sukha-lobhena hantuṁ sva-janam udyatāḥ Alas, how strange it is that we are preparing to commit greatly sinful acts. Driven by the desire to enjoy royal happiness, we are intent on killing our own kinsmen (1.44) 5. Overthinking *kula-kṣaye praṇaśyanti kula-dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ dharme naṣṭe kulaṁ kṛtsnam adharmo 'bhibhavaty uta* With the destruction of the dynasty, the eternal family tradition is vanquished, and thus the rest of the family becomes involved in irreligion (1.39) 6. Depression - a persistent feeling of sadness *na ca śreyo 'nupaśyāmi hatvā sva-janam āhave na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca* I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Kṛṣṇa, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom or happiness. (1.31)

Insights from Bhagwat Geeta and Psychotherapies -

About the nature of mind, lord Krishna has said that-

śrī-bhagavān uvāca asaṁśayaṁ mahā-bāho mano durnigrahaṁ calam abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: O mighty-armed son of Kuntī, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment. (6.35) No doubt that fully controlling the mind is a difficult process but through the wisdoms from Bhagwat Geeta and Psychotherapies, it can be done in following ways- 1. Cognitive behavioral therapy The structured technique to change unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviour about the results of your actions. Its main idea is to focus on present and detachment from outcomes -

karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty,but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty. (2.47) Useful in - countering overthinking, dealing anxiety etc 2. Counselling Where the client shows faith in counselling by surrendering oneself to counsellor, Similarly krishna asked Arjuna to do full surrender and to have complete faith on Him.

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear. (18.66) 3. Mindfulness based cognitive therapy It is a modified form of cognitive therapy that incorporates mindfulness practices that include present moment awareness, meditation, and breathing exercises. This therapy was formulated to address depression. Similarly in bhagwat geeta Krishna says,

śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgāc chāntir anantaram

If you cannot take to this practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind (12.12) Just like any allopathy medicine should be consumed only after prescribed by a certified doctor, similarly any kind of therapeutic intervention should also be done by an experienced practitioner. Also, the use of Bhagwat geeta in managing mental health should also be restricted under the guidance of somebody who is practicing all these techniques and having positive results from using them.

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