

When the Self is Blue: a Journey through the Bhagavad Gita to Spiritual Healing

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Abstract

This paper examines how feelings of depression, characterized by a sense of inferiority and dejection, can be transformed into joy and contentment. The author proposes that by aligning oneself with the inherent cheerfulness of human nature, one can transition from despair to happiness. Drawing upon the metaphor of water's resilience, the paper contends that misery is a temporary state that can be overcome through devotion to the divine. This is exemplified by the natural joyousness exhibited by children. The ancient Indian text, the Bhagavad Gita, is explored as a profound source of wisdom that can guide individuals on the path to mental wellbeing.

Depression is an increasingly prevalent mental health concern, characterized by feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and lack of purpose (Bhatia et al.). While modern psychotherapy has developed various techniques to address depression, the application of ancient spiritual wisdom can offer a complementary approach (Bhatia et al) (Dhillon). The Bhagavad Gita, a revered Hindu scripture, presents a comprehensive philosophy for navigating the challenges of the human condition, including the experience of depression (Bhatia et al) (Dhillon).

The Bhagavad Gita, a 700-verse Hindu scripture, is a part of the epic Mahabharata and depicts a dialogue between Prince Arjun and the Lord Krishna, who serves as his charioteer. The text explores the moral and philosophical challenges faced by Arjun as he prepares for battle. Arjun's depression stems from the anticipated loss of life and moral degradation, leading him to question the justification of the war.

The introduction explores the symbolic significance of the names Arjun, meaning "white" or "pure-hearted," and Lord Krishna, meaning "black" or "attractive." It emphasizes the importance of purity and clarity when a student approaches a teacher, analogous to properly preparing a surface before painting. This narrative framework sets the stage for understanding the spiritual transformation that arises through devotion and purity of heart.

Individual should cultivate equanimity in the face of adversity. The *Bhagavad Gita* offers a deep insight into the nature of the human mind and its tendencies. It encourages individuals to maintain a balanced state of mind, free from the extremes of elation and despair (Bhatia et al) (Dhillon).

Mainly, this research paper comprises of these aspects: Purity and devotion emphasize the need for spiritual cleansing, akin to preparing a surface before painting. The devotee must clear old thoughts and approach spiritual life with a pure heart. The text emphasizes the central role of the guru, as exemplified by the relationship between Lord Krishna and Arjun. This dynamic between the teacher and student represents the ideal relation, wherein the instructor's deep wisdom and direction can facilitate a transformative spiritual odyssey for the learner. The text highlights the significance of maintaining an

inquiring mindset for spiritual development. The dialogue between Dhritrashtra and Sanjay is used to illustrate the pivotal role of curiosity in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment but they both failed in their quest. Thereby, there is more comparative analysis of characters in this epic.

The paper compares the characters of Arjun and Lord Krishna, as well as utilizes their dynamic to underscore the importance of purity, devotion, and the transformative potential of spiritual guidance. Additionally, the paper examines the contrasting perspectives of Yudhisthira and Duryodhan to illustrate divergent responses to analogous teachings. The paper examines the detrimental effects of materialism, using the example of Dhritrashtra to illustrate how the relentless pursuit of power and possessions can lead to a form of spiritual blindness. (Lolla) (Dhillon)

The Spiritual Remedies are hereby implied for the cure of Depression: the paper suggests spiritual practices such as mantra chanting ("Om Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya") and reading the *Bhagavad Gita* as methods to overcome life's challenges and depressive states. This mantra chanting emphasizes on accessing the powerful vibrations of sacred Sanskrit mantras to calm the mind and foster inner peace (Lolla). Reading the *Bhagavad Gita* is engaging with the thoughtful philosophical teachings to cultivate equanimity, detachment, and a deeper understanding of one's true nature.(Dhillon)(Lolla)

Outcome portrayal is the importance of being a committed student on the spiritual path. It suggests that authentic spiritual transformation and intense realizations can occur when one emulates the devotion and purity of heart exhibited by Arjun. Additionally, the passage reiterates the significance of having a spiritual teacher who can also serve as a mentor and counselor, offering guidance and empathetic support. The first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* offers a comprehensive framework for overcoming depression and cultivating a sense of inner peace and fulfillment. As a result of embracing the spiritual principles of devotion, equanimity, and detachment, individuals can transcend the limitations of the ego and access the innate joy and contentment that reside within.

The *Bhagavad Gita's* dialogue between Dhritrashtra and Sanjay introduces a reflective examination of human psychology and spirituality. Dhritrashtra's possessiveness and ego, manifested in his preference for his sons, the Kauravas, over his nephews, the Pandavas, exemplify the self-centered mentality that engenders suffering and conflict. The *Bhagavad Gita*, through Lord Krishna's guidance to Arjun on the Kurukshetra battlefield, provides timeless wisdom on overcoming depression and fulfilling one's duties with a sense of detachment and devotion. This paper investigates how the *Gita's* teachings can be applied to ameliorate depression by cultivating spiritual awakening and resilience.

Dhritrashtra's question about the Kurukshetra war, as he separates "my sons" from "the Pandavas," reflects his deep-rooted ego and attachment, which are the underlying causes of his anxieties and conflicts. This paper investigates the psychological and spiritual significance of his language, juxtaposing it with the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Through the story of Arjun's initial despair and eventual enlightenment under Lord Krishna's guidance, we explore how spiritual wisdom can mitigate and heal depression.

Ego and attachment are the root cause of concern: Dhritrashtra's possessiveness reflects the human propensity to create divisions through ego and attachment, which leads to conflicts and suffering. His self-centered language, referring to "my sons" versus "others," underscores a mentality that breeds depression and discord. The Battle of Kurukshetra symbolizes the perpetual inner conflict between virtuous and malevolent impulses that every person confronts. It signifies the obligations and responsibilities individuals must fulfill, even in the face of personal adversities and psychological distress. Arjun's spiritual transformation from a state of depression to one of clarity under Lord Krishna's

guidance serves as a metaphorical representation of overcoming personal anguish through spiritual enlightenment.

Detachment and Equanimity are the key solutions advised in this holy book. The *Gita* accentuates the importance of performing one's duty with a sense of detachment and equanimity, free from the bondage of desires and the ego. Dhritrashtra has Egoistic feelings and its Psychological Implications: Dhritrashtra's dialogue underscores his deep-rooted attachment to his sons and kingdom, indicative of a possessive and self-centered psychological disposition. This mentality, which places primacy on one's own interests over those of others, is a widespread human tendency that frequently culminates in anguish and depression. This section offers a critical examination of Dhritrashtra's personality, as reflected in his language, highlighting how unrestrained attachment and ego can obscure objectivity and exacerbate emotional turmoil.

Dhritrashtra's first question - "O Sanjay, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do in the field of Kurukshetra, eager to do battle?" (Lolla)- betrays his bias towards his sons, the Kauravas, and his separation of "my sons" from "the sons of Pandu." This proprietary language indicates a deep-seated possessiveness and attachment, which are the hallmarks of an egocentric mindset.

Arjun has been in psychological distress and spiritual predicament though his initial response on the battlefield is marked by heartfelt torment and hesitation to engage in combat against his kinsmen. The physical manifestations of his depression, including trembling and dry mouth, are indicative of his inner turmoil and ethical quandary. This section examines the depth of Arjun's psychological distress and his existential crisis, paving the way for Lord Krishna's spiritual counsel.

Arjun's despondent state is vividly captured in the text: "I am not able to stand any more". Lord Krishna's teachings are pathways to spiritual fortitude and through his guidance to Arjun; Lord Krishna presents a comprehensive approach to addressing depression. The main concern is detachment towards worldly deeds, Lord Krishna counsels Arjun to fulfill his obligations without being attached to the outcomes, underscoring the priority of duty over personal interests.

Self-realization and devotion to divine is the main prerequisite of this life. Lord Krishna encourages Arjun to cultivate a sense of spiritual surrender, aligning his will with the divine. This promotes a transcendent perspective that surpasses the constraints of personal ego and attachments, thereby fostering a profound sense of equanimity and purpose. Lord Krishna's counsel empowers Arjun to rise above his emotional turmoil, highlighting the importance of inner strength and spiritual resilience in facing life's challenges.

The *Bhagavad Gita's* dialogue between Dhritrashtra, Sanjay, and Krishna offers a transformative blueprint for overcoming depression and attaining psychological and spiritual well-being. The key insights from the *Gita* include the need to mitigate the grip of ego and attachment, the importance of performing one's duties with detachment and devotion, and the cultivation of self-realization and inner strength. Thereby, embracing these principles, individuals can harness the power of spiritual wisdom to transcend the limiting confines of the self and find solace, purpose, and resilience in the face of life's adversities.

Applying the *Bhagavad Gita's* Teachings to Address Modern Depression: The spiritual wisdom from the *Gita* can be effectively applied to help with contemporary depression. This section explores practical ways to incorporate these teachings into daily life, such as practicing mindfulness, meditation, and cultivating a sense of detachment and devotion. It highlights the significance of spiritual practices in promoting mental well-being and resilience.

The *Bhagavad Gita* offers intense psychological insights and a path to overcome depression through spiritual enlightenment. In the course of comprehending and implementing Lord Krishna's teachings, individuals can transcend their ego-driven anxieties and attain a sense of inner peace and existential meaning. The narrative of Dhritrashtra and Arjun serves as a timeless exemplar of the transformative power of spiritual wisdom in addressing and healing the deepest forms of human sorrow.

In times of adversity, when human beings face anxiety due to unmet expectations, failures, and limitations, depression often sets in, diminishing efficiency and bravery. Depression clouds wisdom and intellect, leaving individuals confused and deviated from their path. This predicament is exemplified in the *Bhagavad Gita* through the character of Arjun, who faces a moral crisis on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Overwhelmed by the prospect of war, Arjun becomes despondent, contemplating the societal repercussions of battle and preferring a life of beggary over the throne acquired through violence.

Arjun's is in dilemma, his distress stems from the anticipated ramifications of the war: the demise of soldiers, the widowing of women, and the erosion of moral integrity among the remaining children. He concludes that a kingdom obtained through the sacrifice of countless lives is not worth governing and contemplates withdrawing from his responsibilities as a warrior. Lord Krishna's supervision:

In response to Arjun's despair, Krishna provides a comprehensive framework for overcoming depression and attaining spiritual enlightenment. Krishna emphasizes the importance of performing one's duty (dharma) without attachment to the fruits of action, highlighting the inherent divinity within each individual and the transient nature of material existence (Dhillon)(Резник et al.).

Lord Krishna advocates Arjun to promote equanimity and to surrender his will to the Divine. Shri Krishna counsels Arjun to cultivate equanimity, transcending the dualities of pleasure and pain, success and failure, and life and death (Lolla). This state of equanimity, or "yoga of equanimity," enables one to surrender completely to the divine will, thereby liberating the individual from the bondage of the ego and its associated anxieties and depressions.

Lord Krishna, cognizant of Arjun's despondency, guides him to dispel his doubts and revitalize his sense of duty. Krishna's teachings underscore the significance of action without attachment to outcomes, the impermanent nature of life and death, and the eternal soul's progression. He exhorts Arjun to transcend his sorrow and fulfill his Kshatriya obligation, emphasizing that shirking responsibility engenders dishonor and societal turmoil.

The *Bhagavad Gita* offers thoughtful approaches into the human condition, particularly in times of adversity, and provides a roadmap for overcoming depression through the cultivation of spiritual wisdom and divine surrender. Thereby, internalizing the principles of equanimity, non-attachment, and a recognition of the eternal soul, individuals can navigate the trials of life with grace, courage, and a sense of higher purpose, as exemplified by Arjun's transformation under Lord Krishna's tutelage.

Lord Krishna employs various metaphorical devices to convey his teachings. He draws parallels between the challenges of life and a farmer's endeavor to remove unproductive plants, thereby enabling the growth of fruitful crops. Analogously, individuals must overcome their obstacles to actualize their potential. Furthermore, Lord Krishna likens the ongoing conflict between positive and negative forces within the self to the struggle between beneficial and detrimental bacteria within the body.

Lord Krishna explains the importance of spiritual awakening and inner strength. He encourages Arjun to draw inspiration from Hanuman, who embodies immense power and devotion. This awakening is akin to

the mother gently waking her child, symbolizing love and encouragement. Lord Krishna's words aim to ignite Arjun's dormant capabilities and restore his confidence.

The narrative establishes contextual parallels with other prominent scriptural works. For instance, it draws comparisons to the admonishment of the antagonist Ravan by his brother Vibhishan in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, as well as the counsel imparted by the deity Yama to the youth Nachiketa in the *Katha Upanishad*. These narratives emphasize the significance of virtuous conduct and the repercussions of moral transgressions. Cumulatively, these intertextual references serve to underscore the universal principles espoused within the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *Bhagavad Gita's* teachings transcend the immediate context of the Mahabharata, offering timeless wisdom on dealing with depression, fulfilling one's duties, and achieving spiritual enlightenment. Lord Krishna's discourse with Arjun doles out as a reminder of the power of inner strength and the importance of perseverance in the countenance of adversity.

This planet has witnessed countless cycles of life and death, yet the inherent exquisiteness of the Earth remains constant. Nature's rhythmic processes continue uninterrupted - flowers bloom, rivers gush, and gentle winds carry their narratives. The sun rises, adorning the sky with its golden splendor, and each day unfolds in its own unique manner. The celestial dance of the moon and stars transcends generations. Regardless of human existence, the world persists in perpetuity. If we have performed virtuous deeds, their positive impact will leave an indelible impression, shaping the memories of future generations.

This world will witness myriad congregations and voyages, yet the exploration for our legacy will prolong. If we enact remarkable deeds, their enduring fragrance will relinquish a long-lasting impression on humanity. Our existence should be dedicated to conducting ourselves with the utmost integrity, and when our physical forms eventually fade away, it should be with the grace and beauty of a flower falling from its branch. Before our time on this earth concludes, the essence of our compassion, empathy, and positive impact will linger like the pleasant aroma of a bouquet. In this fleeting subsistence, it is the core of our benevolence and constructive contributions that will be memorialized, much like the cherished memory of flourishing blooms—bright, ephemeral, and forever etched in the psyches of those who encounter them.

The *Bhagavad Gita* offers philosophical perception into the essence of the humankind and paves the spiritual pathway to self-realization. Lord Krishna imparts timeless wisdom to him. He affirms that the soul is eternal and indestructible, whilst the physical body is perishable. He advises Arjuna to centralize on his obligations as a warrior without connection to the outcomes.

Sankhya, derived from the Sanskrit word meaning "enumeration" or "number," represents a philosophical understanding of reality as described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is not merely a philosophical concept, but a practical guide to living an enlightened life. Sankhya refers to the brilliant, luminous knowledge that dispels ignorance and creates eternal awareness within the intellect. In contrast to the previous discussion of Vishad Yog, the *Bhagavad Gita* now proceeds to impart the direction of knowledge to help us understand and care for ourselves. Thus, the *Bhagavad Gita* serves as a panacea, or universal remedy, for all.

Many modern psychological and philosophical ideas find parallels in the timeless wisdom of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Reflecting on the *Bhagavad Gita* evokes immense joy, just as it did for Arjun when he acquired it from Lord Krishna. The scripture endowed him with a path towards a meaningful existence. Likewise, the *Bhagavad Gita* bestows wisdom that empowers us to navigate life's obstacles with greater

clarity and tranquility. May we emulate Arjun's discipleship, and may the *Gita* become a restorative tonic for us

In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sankhya Yog, Lord Krishna verbalizes this Sanskrit shlok in front of Arjun:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥ (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.47)

Karmanye vadhikaraste, Ma phaleshu kadachana

Ma karma phala hetur bhuh, ma te sangostva karmani (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.47)

You have the right to execute the task; you do not have power over the outcome. Keep on doing your duties, keep on doing karma; it is in your hands. Desire may arise for reward, but do not look for it because man has no control over reward. The one who holds the reward is the Almighty. We can only perform actions; the saviour decides the consequences. We can continue our efforts as long as we exist. You have to work; do not be at leisure or lethargic. Hard work should be a part of your life.

The concept of performing actions without attachment to their outcomes is a core tenet across diverse spiritual and philosophical frameworks. This principle encourages practitioners to cultivate a sense of tranquility and equanimity. It emphasizes the importance of doing what is right intrinsically, rather than being motivated by the prospect of reward or recognition. This perspective promotes a focus on the process of one's actions, rather than solely on their tangible results. In the Buddhist tradition, the notion of "non-attachment" posits that human suffering arises from our clinging to desires and fixation on outcomes, through cultivating a stance of non-attachment, individuals can attain inner peace and liberation from suffering. Irrespective of the specific terminology used, such as "karma" or "duty," the underlying premise remains consistent: concentrating on performing one's best, acting ethically, and making positive contributions to the world, without being overly preoccupied with the consequences.

This passage offers an insightful metaphor for how individuals can find ways to thrive and contribute positively, regardless of their circumstances. Just as plants adapt and flourish in diverse environments, from mountain peaks to riverbanks, the text encourages the reader to emulate this adaptability. If one cannot achieve the grandeur of the towering pine, one can still embody the beauty of high-altitude flora. If the lush valley plants are out of reach, one can strive to be like the serene roadside flora, offering peace and enhancing the surroundings. Even the humble grasses on the trail can represent gentleness and symbolize life. The underlying message is that each person has the capacity to find their own unique way to make a positive impact, to "add grace" to their environment, no matter how small or unassuming their role may be. This metaphor promotes a mindset of making the most of one's situation, rather than dwelling on unattainable ideals.

Analogous to how plants adapt and thrive in diverse environments, individuals can cultivate ways to flourish in various life circumstances. The key is to strive to be one's best self, regardless of the context in which one is "planted." Therefore, contributing positively and adding beauty to one's surroundings, each person can make a meaningful difference, irrespective of the scale or prominence of their role. The underlying message is to focus on finding constructive ways to engage and make a positive impact, rather than being preoccupied with the size or visibility of one's contributions.

The divine has endowed you with numerous exceptional qualities, and fate has bestowed further blessings. You may not fully recognize the uniqueness of your attributes. Regardless of your circumstances, you can enhance your surroundings by diligently performing noble actions, for the Almighty has empowered you to do so. Your conduct may elevate the value of the place where you

reside. It should be said of you, wherever you are, that there exists an individual whose way of life differs from the norm, rendering you significant in your context. Conversely, those who lead disorganized lives and dwell in chaotic environments become entangled in the complexities of this world through their actions.

The text encourages a yogic approach to one's actions, characterized by discipline, dedication, and non-attachment to outcomes. It emphasizes performing one's duties wholeheartedly, without becoming excessively preoccupied with the results. The philosophy promotes a balanced and proactive mindset, where one focuses on the intrinsic value of their actions rather than being driven by the desire for benefits or rewards. Thus, leaving the outcomes to the divine and embracing a stance of detachment, this perspective fosters a strong mental resolve and orientation towards one's responsibilities in life.

A mother's love and care for her children are inherently good. However, when she harbors specific desires for their futures, such as wanting her son to marry and her daughter-in-law to serve her in old age, these wishes reflect an attachment to a particular outcome. If these aspirations are not fulfilled, the mother may feel saddened and distressed. While it is natural for parents to have hopes for their children, life does not always unfold as anticipated. In such cases, the best a mother can do is to offer unconditional support and affection, regardless of the actual outcomes. This demonstrates a sense of detachment and a focus on fulfilling one's responsibilities, which aligns with various spiritual and philosophical traditions. Performing duties without attachment to results can foster a more peaceful state of being.

The *Ramayana*, a celebrated Hindu epic, accentuates the significance of familial relationships. Within this narrative, Sumitra, one of King Dasharatha's three wives, is presented as the wisest queen. While Kaushalya was the primary queen and Kaikeyi the favored wife, the king predominantly resided in Kaikeyi's palace, prioritizing her and Kaushalya over Sumitra. However, Sumitra remained steadfast in her dutiful service to Kaushalya. During the Putrayeshti yajna, a ritual performed for the birth of sons, a divine being appeared with a golden vessel filled with sacred payasam (a dessert). This divine food was divided among the queens. The king first gave half to Kaushalya and Kaikeyi, and the remaining portion was then equally distributed between them and given to Sumitra. As a result, Sumitra gave birth to two sons, Lakshman and Shatrughn. Lakshman, influenced by the portion received from Kaushalya, became a devoted follower of Lord Rama, while Shatrughn, influenced by Kaikeyi's share, became a distinguished supporter of Bharat. Lakshman's unwavering loyalty to Rama reflects the Hindu value of strong brotherly bonds.

Sumitra, the mother of Lakshman, raised her sons with philosophical wisdom. She encouraged Lakshman not to prioritize his own interests over his devotion to Lord Rama. When Lord Rama was about to embark on his fourteen-year exile, Lakshman decided to accompany him. Sumitra's teachings had become deeply ingrained in Lakshman's mindset. Before their departure, Sumitra provided Lakshman with the following sage advice:

“While living in the forest for such a long period, attachments may arise, but your goal should be service. If you remember your father, see him in Lord Rama. If you miss your mother, see her in Sita. If you miss Ayodhya, look at the beautiful flowers in the forest, but do not deviate from your duty and service.”

Sumitra, the mother of Lakshman, imparts the importance of fulfilling one's duties with diligence, even in the face of challenging circumstances. Sumitra exemplifies the ideal maternal qualities of selflessness, support, and understanding.

The *Bhagavad Gita* and the wisdom embodied by characters like Sumitra in the *Ramayana* provide deep insights into the principles of duty, non-attachment, and righteous living. These teachings encourage individuals to perform their responsibilities diligently, without becoming overly fixated on the results. Instead, they promote the idea of finding one's place in the world and contributing positively, regardless of the scale or prominence of one's role. This philosophy, deeply rooted in spiritual and philosophical traditions, offers a pathway to inner peace and fulfillment.

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