

Relevance of the Philosophical Wisdom as Drawn from the *Bhagvad-Gitā* During Adverse Circumstances like a Pandemic

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Abstract

The present paper is focussed upon addressing the concept of affirming a humane kind of spirituality which can be achieved with sustained emotional stability and mindfulness even during adverse circumstances like the current times of living through a pandemic. The pandemic that the world currently is besieged with has deactivated most of the human population of its designated schedule of work and duty. Hence, it becomes pertinent to problematize and contextualise the new meaning of active engagement with professional and personal spaces. This pandemic has led many to think and question the meaning and purpose of life. To most, it is like a situation full of uncertainty for the future, hopelessness in terms of losing the public-professional space, and the new ways to have an inter-personal connect via technology rather than the real connection-something which was taken for granted before the virus engulfed the world, is making everyone feel lonely and disconnected. This paper is looking at the traditional Indian wisdom as espoused by the Philosophic and Scriptural Tradition of *Bhagvad-Gitā* that has emphasised upon recognising the real meaning and value of being a person or a self with their insistence on comprehending the inner-life view based upon understanding the meanings of renunciation, action, self-identity and inter-connectedness. I have endeavoured to highlight that the *Bhagvad-Gitā* emphasizes on the possibility of being mindful and emotionally stable while being actively engaged with life issues and pragmatic concerns through this inner-life perspective.

Key Words: *Bhagvad-Gitā*, Pandemic, Humane, Emotional-Stability, Mindfulness, spirituality, Inter-Connectedness, Social-distancing, *Karma*, *Sthithprajña*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the spiritual according to the *Gitā*, as I have interpreted in the paper, implies a state of holistic mental and emotional well-being at the individual level in the personal space, and a simultaneous pursuit of professional excellence, through introspection, mindfulness and emotional inter-connectedness in the current context of professional karma moving from physical public space to a corner in a private domain via the use of technology. I have, therefore, contextualized the wisdom of the *Gitā* in addressing and resolving the mental health issues and disharmony both in the personal and professional spaces that have become a part of the contemporary world-view. In my understanding, the world, in the *Gitā* is understood as an interconnected web of cause and effect, happiness and suffering, life and death. Accordingly then, acting from ignorance or selfishness which means to have a myopic view of one's personal identity in isolation from others will lead to suffering both for one-self and for the others. Acting from wisdom and a love for the common good can lead to sense of well-being, a kind of liberation even in difficult circumstances like the current state of living through a pandemic. Freedom based upon spiritual elevation and following emotional stability is to be found in the midst of this interconnectedness, by the grocery worker keeping people fed, the organizer serving his community, or the doctor treating her patients. Classical texts cannot teach us virology or epidemiology, but they can help us to see our deep interdependence and how to act more wisely and compassionately in light of it. There is certainly a need to stress on emotional interconnection despite the physical/ social distancing. This task, in my view, has been achieved by emphasizing on being mindful and capably addressing mental and psychological distress. Despite being an ancient classic, it continues to inspire humans in excelling in life skills, and thereby enabling one to lead a life of purposive action, of doing duty without ulterior motives, practicing righteousness and in maintaining a well-integrated mind-body and heart harmony.

II. RATIONALE OF THIS PAPER

The current situation, across the world, of living through a pandemic has led many to think and question the meaning and purpose of life. To most, it is like a situation full of uncertainty for a future, hopelessness in terms of losing the public-professional space, and the new ways to have an inter-personal

connect via technology rather than the real connection-something which was taken in stride before the virus engulfed the world is making everyone feel lonely and disconnected. There have been unfortunate cases of severe depression and some of which have even led to the act of ending one's life. The paper affirms that according to the Indian philosophies that have also been part of the scriptural tradition like the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, one must see the world clearly in order to act wisely in it. What, then, is the wise response to an interconnected world that inevitably includes the good and bad, wellness and illness, and an illness of magnitude of a pandemic like Covid-19? According to wisdom treatises of the Indian philosophical and scriptural tradition, Spiritual freedom implies an overcoming of the delusion of being a separate self/an individual person in conflict with the world. Instead, the wise person realizes that all those happy in the world are so because of their desire for the happiness of others, and not merely of one's own self. I have tried to contextualise the guiding thought that underlines the *Bhagavad-Gītā* - the wisdom that is both philosophical in its content and pragmatic in its outreach and despite being centuries old is still one of the most pertinent literature on leading a meaningful life, and most significantly in the **new normal way**.

III. METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary methodology that I have followed is interpretive and presenting a descriptive analysis.

The attempt, in the paper, has been to expound on the wisdom that the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the scripture that is drawn from the Indian epic, *Mahabharata*, and which is based primarily upon the classical Indian Philosophy of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, and to some extent on Vedanta, has provided a continual enlightenment to comprehend and internalize the meaning of leading a meaningful life. I have drawn mainly from the text, *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is* (2006 edition) for the present paper.¹

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* which literally means the Song of the God has Lord Krishna as the narrator and the verses are written in a poetic form. It is narrated as a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, a warrior prince, taking place on the battle-field just prior to the start of a climactic war. Krishna elaborates on a number of philosophical tenets for everyday living, with examples and analogies. Composed probably in the 3rd or 4th century BCE, Bhagavad- Gita's content suggests that it aimed at being presented as a kind of an Upanishad, that is a work in which a spiritual master imparts knowledge to a pupil at a personal level. However, technically the *Gītā* is accorded the position of *SādhanaPrasthāna* (practical text); and, is regarded as the starting point of the tradition that is referred to as the tradition of memory- *SmṛitiPrasthāna*, and hence is considered as a *smṛiti* scripture or a non-mainstream philosophical thought.²

I have highlighted, by alluding to the relevant philosophical excerpts and commentaries that the *Gītā* emphasizes on the feasibility of leading an active engagement with life-issues and pragmatic concerns and yet, strongly facilitates the process of spiritual elevation in an individual. The primary Source material for Philosophical exposition that I have alluded to in this paper is Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's work, *Indian Philosophy*(2008 edition).³

IV. A BRIEF PHILOSOPHICAL BACKDROP IN CONTEXTUALISING THE BHAGVAD-GITĀ AS A PHILOSOPHICAL TEXT:

A) *Bhagvad-Gītā* and Some Philosophic Traditions:

Bhagvad-Gītā, according to Dr. S Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy* is a treatise in conveying wisdom and learning in Philosophy, religion and Ethics. A brief explanation of some of the orthodox philosophies, as put forth by S. Radhakrishnan in his book, in relation to this scripture will substantiate it.

Samkhya Philosophy and the *Gītā*

The philosophy of right knowledge-distinction between the material and the pure spiritual).The original Samkhya tradition did not believe in a Cosmic Being, or a creator, God. Creation according them was an effect hidden in *Prakṛiti*, the primal cause. The original Samkhya tradition fundamentally followed the same line of thought as the modern theories of evolution, which consider the world and life as the products of chance. Although, the Samkhya school digressed from the Upanishadic thought in its earlier days, subsequently the essential doctrine of the Samkhya school and many of its concepts and beliefs found their way into Vedic tradition and became associated with the theistic beliefs of present day Hinduism, that includes the *Bhagvad-Gītā*. Shaivism and Vaishnavism adapted the essentials of Samkhya and integrated

them into their own theistic philosophies, acknowledging God as the creator, the individual souls as his aspects and *Prakṛiti* as his dynamic force.(Radhakrishnan,S.*Indian Philosophy*, 449-450)

Yoga Philosophy and the Gītā

Yoga Philosophy implies that the right knowledge is achieved by practice of control over Senses, Mind and Intelligence. *Ashtānga yoga* as propounded by Patanjali finds its recurrent references in the *Gītā* with the suggestion that these steps culminating in the meditation control the fickleness of the mind (which is referred as the *chitta -vikshepa* in the Yoga Philosophy) and senses and focuses concentration on Paramātmā (the Super-soul, the form of the Lord situated in the heart. This super soul was referred as the *Purushottam* by the Yoga Philosophy). This practice culminates in *samādhi*, full consciousness of the supreme. (Radhakrishnan, *S. Indian Philosophy*, 450-451).

Vedanta and the Bhagvad-Gītā:

The vedantic concept of the self (ātma /Brahman) referring only to the ultimate truth, the immutable and eternal One and as being the only referent of the self-identity, which can only be intuitively realized- in having oneness with the cosmic self/Brahman/Atman has been replaced here with a personalised Supreme Lord as being the Supreme perfect form of Brahman. The absolute of the Upanishad is rather revealed as the one that fulfills the reflective and emotional demands of human nature, and this alteration exemplifies the pragmatic synthesis of Yoga, Sankhya and Vedanta to make the thought of the *Bhagvad-Gītā*: accessible to ordinary people. (Radhakrishnan, *S. Indian Philosophy*, 453 paraphrased)

B) Bhagvad-Gītā as an Integrated Philosophical Wisdom:

The philosophy of is integrative *per-se*. It will not be out of place, here, to paraphrase from Radhakrishnan's book. It is noted, the *Gita* discusses and synthesizes the three dominant trends in Hinduism: enlightenment-based renunciation, dharma-based householder life, and devotion-based theism. The *Bhagvad-Gita*, taking cues from the Sāṅkhya tradition of Philosophy, acknowledges that some individuals are more reflective and intellectual, some affective and engaged by their emotions, some are action driven, yet others favour experimenting and exploring what works. It then presents different spiritual paths for each personality type respectively: the path of knowledge (*jñāna- yoga*), the path of devotion (*bhakti -yoga*), the path of action (*karma -yoga*), and the path of meditation (*rāja -yoga*). The *Gītā* states that none of these paths to spiritual realization are intrinsically superior or inferior rather they converge in one and lead to the same goal. They are meant to be guide posts that direct us along the paths that best suit our nature and attitudes. However, the two prominent ones are *jñāna* and *Karma* with *Bhakti* as being the overarching guiding factor. In the *Bhagvad-Gītā*, *jñāna - yoga* is also referred to as *buddhi -yoga* and its goal is self-realization. The text considers *jñāna-mārga* as the most difficult, slow, confusing for those who prefer it because it deals with the formless reality- the *avyakta*. It is the path that intellectually oriented people tend to prefer.⁴

The emphasis of this paper shall be on the *Jñāna -Yoga* in relation to the *karma mārga*. To establish the nature of a *sthitprajña* person. The designations *sthitprajña* (one with steady intellect) and *samādhi-stha* (situated in meditative bliss) has been accorded to an enlightened persons in the *Bhagvad-Gītā*. Arjuna seeks the nature of a perfect yogi or a wise person. Lord Krishna has, by way of explanations and answers to Arjuna has explicated the nature of the wise person who holds steadfastly during the happy and adverse circumstances, understands the fields of action, contemplation, can gather the relation and difference between the material and spiritual nature, the meaning and purpose of life experiences, the nature of supreme self, the meaning of self- identity, devotion and renunciation of desires in an action, the path of duty. In response, Lord Krishna reveals the deepest secrets of *karma- yoga*, *jñāna yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, austerity, meditation, mindfulness and compassion etc. through the set of sixteen questions and answers between Lord Krishna and Arjuna starting from 'chapter-2 till chapter-18 of the *Gītā*.⁵

The explanation of a mindful and emotionally stable person, a *sthitprajña* has been made wonderfully feasible in the *Gītā* due to its syncretic Philosophy . Combining the traditions of Sāṅkhya -Yoga and Vedānta Philosophies, the analysis of mind in relation to spiritual wisdom that emerges from the Scripture is that the mind is fickle by nature, and can easily be diverted, but can also be calmed due to the right Knowledge. 'The mind is unstable because of the activity of the senses and the desires and attachments which they induce. An unstable mind is verily the cause of delusion, an enemy of the self, whereas a stable mind is the very seat of Supreme consciousness, the doorway to self-realization and a precondition for the attainment of immortality. The gist is that the spiritual elevation or well-being follows realising that a stable mind is the key to realising one's identity and purpose. A fickle minded person, on the other hand, remains deluded and remains bound to the cycle of births and deaths. One of the benefits of mental stability is clarity in thinking. When the mind is calm, it thinks clearly and lets the intelligence shine. Intelligence (*buddhi*) is the key aspect of thinking and discernment. It is the highest faculty of the mind. A yogi whose mind is stable and whose intelligence is sharp and focused is described in the *Bhagvad-Gītā* as *sthitprajña* (a person with established intelligence or reason).⁶

With this wisdom, a *sthithprajñā* can clearly discern things, know the truth from falsehood, reality from delusion and escape from the confusion and delusion of *māyā*. The inclusive philosophy of the *Gita* makes it feasible to pursue any of the three paths (those of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna*) without any hierarchy towards the goal of spiritual realization.

For the present paper, I have referred to the philosophic wisdom as imparted between chapters 2 and 18, as put forth in an earlier paragraph. However, specific references as found in chapters 5 and 13 of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are being paraphrased here. 'When Krishna talks of Nature (*Prakriti*), he is not just talking about the material reality of and around us, he is talking of the whole scheme of the cosmic reality through a two-fold way: i) wherein the Supreme Lord (*Purushottama*) manifests Himself in the creation through His lower, material, transient, physically manifest nature, which are described as *Apara-Prakriti*, and which consists of the five basic elements of earth, water, fire, air, ether (corresponding to the five outer senses), mind, reason/intellect, and ego; and ii) his higher nature known as *Akshra / Para Prakriti*, -. the consciousness/soul (*Atma /supreme Purusha*). This soul/*Ātmā* is described as the life giving energy or the life consciousness. The further reality of existence reveals that the highest immutable Self, the Supreme Lord, invested with the plenary powers effects the constant creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. These cycles also happen on two levels: One, He pervades the entire phenomenal creation and governs it; two, He lends a spark, a touch, an infinitesimal part of his divinity (individual soul, *Jiva / Atma*) to all the beings which then, get embodied and act according to the dominating tendencies among Purity, Passion and darkness (*Tamas*; from *Triguna* in *Apara-Prakriti*) of the physical bodies. It is with the union of the material and spiritual essence that an individual life starts, and in which the presence of the soul affects the process but it still remains immutable; it is only the lower nature that acts. All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. Hence, the acting self, guided by the lower *prakriti* and thereby deluded by egoism, thinks that I am the doer. The individualised agency of 'I' and the predicative terms related to it like, my, mine, me are at once redefined and diverted to our consciousness i.e. our soul which has a veil of illusion drawn before it by the senses, mind and ego, making it superimpose the physical reality upon itself, which is not its quintessential character, but begins subjecting itself to a complete identification with the body, it starts owning it. How this happens is explained by Krishna as- the individual person musing on the objects of sense, conceives an attachment to these; from attachment arises desire; from desire anger cometh forth; from anger proceeds the delusion, from delusion arises confused memory; from confused memory the destruction of Reason; from destruction of the reason the person perishes into the worldly snare.'⁷

In other words, s/he is unable to scale the spiritual heights of self-realisation and attain the real supreme bliss which can only be attained by acquiring the stage of inner renunciation of attachment to sense-objects and the desire for the fruit of action and resignation of thus purified individual consciousness.

In relation to the *Gītā* and the context of the present day crisis amid the pandemic, it becomes imperative to further explicate how this scripture focusses upon the *Karma yoga* as the overarching dharma by realizing the *jñāna* via the *bhakti mārga*. Another interesting and unique feature of the *Gītā* is its emphasis on dharma as a duty and aligning it with *karma*, the action minus the *kāmas* a *purushārtha*. So, the *Kama*, *dharma*, *artha* and *moksha* get integrated through *nishkāma mārga*. The subject matter of action or/and inaction bewilders even the wise men, stated the *Gītā*. However, in the current context of work from home there is not much action happening in the public space which is the usual mark of a professional domain. So, *the need of the hour is to highlight the contemplative nature of righteous karma as advocated in the Gītā*. I have, therefore, alluded to references from chapters 3 and 4 of the *Gītā* in the following paragraph.

It is the chapter-3 that details out the theory of action (*vikarma*) and what is the renunciation of action (*akarma*). However, in chapter-4 conjoins the action and knowledge, and is stated therein that 'one should understand what is a prescribed action (*karma*), the path of action is most difficult to comprehend. One who can see inaction in action and action within inaction is certainly wise amongst men.' (Verse 17 of chapter-4) Indeed, he is a yogi and a performer of all actions. The path of 'karma yoga' – the path of detached action becomes the core value system or dharma according to the *Bhagvad-Gītā*, '*karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesukadachana ma karmaphalahetur bhūmatesango'stvakarmani*.' (*Bhagvad-Gita As It Is*, verse 2.47, **put in bold since this is the most popular phrase from this scripture**). It means that one's right is limited to the performance of the action, and that is one's duty as a worldly being- one is not entitled to an attachment to its fruit or the result since one is not the cause of the result but only the beholder of *karma*. *Bhagvad-Gītā* propounds the concept of *nishkarma* (no attachment to the *phala*) but not *nihi-kāma* that is not to non-action. *karma* according to *dharma* (individual's moral duty) in the following verses. In the verse 3.4: Krishna explains to Arjuna that *karma* is to purify the thoughts and emotion of heart. A person can't let go away from the responsibility of *karma* to become a monk. Only after purification from *karma*, a person can live a monk life. Likewise in the verse 3.5, it is stated that *Karma* is a quality of active soul. According to Sāṅkhya thought, the *trigunas* (*sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*) are the constituents of Soul. Hence, the soul directs every individual person to perform some *karma* every second. (*Bhagvad-Gita As It Is*, chapters 2, 3 and 4 paraphrased).

This theory of righteous and appropriate karma gets clarified in the *Gita*'s category of performance of actions too. *Bhagavad Gītā* talks about two types of work cultures. '*Daivi-sampat* and *Asuri-Sampat*. *Daivi-sampat* implies the dispositions like purity, righteousness and positivity. *Asuri-sampat*, on the other hand, implies ego, jealousy and lack of trust and motivation.' (*Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*. chapter-16, verses 16.1-16.8 paraphrased). Hence it is evident, from the foregone paragraphs, that by cultivating higher knowledge through self-purification, selfless actions, devotional services and contemplative practices, a person lifts the veil of illusion covering her/his mind and sees the beauty and splendour of her/his true Self which is hidden deep within one's self. An individual goes beyond seeking external/objectified world-view and mental modifications to become absorbed in the introspective infinite Consciousness and sees oneself in all and all in oneself. For that person there is no rebirth and no suffering. S/He sees the world as one's own extension. Thus detachment of mind following the *nishkāma karma* can be attained through any method of the following three practices and contemplation: Devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*), Wisdom (*jñāna-Yoga*) and Action/Duty (*Karma Yoga*). The scripture clearly propagates life of action over inaction. My argument is that these are the guiding thoughts for looking at the holistic, and yet pragmatic wisdom of conjoining *Karma* and *jñāna* in way feasible to address the contemporary life-issues.

V. HOLISTIC WISDOM DRAWN FROM THE *GITĀ* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT PANDEMIC AND THE WORLD –VIEW:

One of the primary issues of concern in today's world is mental well-being and emotional stability both at the personal level and in a professional code of conduct. However, in the current context of the pandemic where private and professional spaces have been obfuscated, the emotional instability and mental anxiety have taken the centre space of our existential lives. It is like the *trigunas* (*sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*) are in a constant state of disequilibrium and hence there is a constant state of *chitta-viksipta* (as Yoga Philosophy would call it). There is an urgent need to become steady emotionally and mentally, i.e. become '*sthithprajñā*', as has been stated in the preceding paragraphs. The *Gītā* also suggests that the mind can be controlled through *abhyās* (practice) and *vairāgya* (detachment), by withdrawing the senses from the sense-objects the way a tortoise withdraws its limbs, overcoming desires through detachment from the sense objects, living in solitude, free from incessant possessiveness, and by fixing our minds constantly upon God. In other words, it implies a change in the orientation and direction of the mind, from the outward obsession with worldly things to the inward focus upon the hidden truth, and from objectivity to subjectivity. (*Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*. chapters 2 and 6 paraphrased).

The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as is clear from the foregone paragraphs, has offered many solutions to achieve meaningful inter-personal connection, one that is accomplished without incurring sinful *karma* or neglecting the worldly duties. The *Gītā* facilitates a mind-full engagement with the worldly affairs and enables one to thwart the challenges with moral fortitude and emotional stability. To explain my thesis further, I have highlighted how this scripture emphasises on contemplative and compassionate mode of conduct, and that these virtues facilitate living life meaningfully. This is possible in the following ways:

A) The Methods to restrain the mind:

The ways as Suggested in the *Gītā* can be summed up as the following: It implies restraining the mind and the senses through self-discipline by overcoming desires by cultivating contentment. This restraint requires cultivating detachment and dispassion by renouncing the desire for the fruit of one's actions or nurturing one's disposition with *sattva*. *Sattva* implies that pursuit of the knowledge about one's true self-identity follows from liberating oneself from the obsessive acquisitive desire of material and physical benefits, and by performing selfless actions as an offering to Lord Krishna. The mindfulness or of being wise follows by performing all actions in public spaces with the *nishkāma-karma* (with a sense of detachment for the reward) but avoiding *nihkarma* (in-action or no *karma*).

B) Key to Emotional-Stability/ Mindfulness (*Sthithprajñā*):

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* (Chapter II, Verse 15) sums up the entire concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) besides stating the above mentioned restraints. It says: 'a person who is calm and remains unperturbed by either pain or pleasure is the one who attains immortality'. (*Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*. chapter-2.54).

Emotional intelligence, as a Psychological theory, was developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer. According to them, emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. However, it got popularized with Daniel Goleman.⁸

The theory of EI which has been popularized by Daniel Goleman can be traced down to David Wechsler, who, as early as in 1940 said that intelligence does not denote just the cognitive abilities of a person

but the non-cognitive abilities as well. Daniel Goleman elaborates on five components of EI and these certainly have had reference in the *Gītā*. **Goleman delineates five points** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_intelligence). **These points are paraphrased, here in the paper, in the following manner:**

i) Self-awareness: This is an ability to recognize and understand personal moods and emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others. Hallmarks (according to Goleman a hallmark is a sure sign of behavior or dispositional indicators)⁸ of self-awareness include self-confidence, realistic self-assessment, and a self-deprecating sense of humor. Self-awareness depends on one's ability to monitor one's own emotion state and to correctly identify and determine one's emotional disposition.

ii) Self-regulation: This implies an ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, and the propensity to suspend judgment and to think before acting. Hallmarks for this include trustworthiness and integrity; comfort with ambiguity; and openness to change.

iii) Internal motivation: This implies a steadfast pursuit to work for intrinsic merit that goes beyond the extrinsic rewards of material possessions like those of a spiritual vision, something that holds critical importance in life, something of a joy in doing anything and a curiosity in learning. It implies a flow that represents being engaged/immersed in an activity. In other words, it is an indicator of pursuing goals with a mindful persistence. 'Hallmarks include a strong drive to achieve some kind of optimism even in the face of failure, and organizational commitment.'⁹

iv) Empathy: This has been described as an ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people. Hallmarks include expertise in building and retaining talent, cross-cultural sensitivity. It has been identified as a skill which makes people react and respond to others with a heart to heart connect, **and in the context of current pandemic, in my understanding, it represents inter-connectedness despite the physical/social distancing.**

v) **Social skills:** This implies proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, and an ability to find common ground and build rapport. Hallmarks of social skills include effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness, and expertise building and leading teams or organisation.

It is evident from the analysis as made above with reference to some main theories in Psychology that *Bhagavad-Gītā* stands out as a text that finely synthesizes human sensibility and sensitivity. It stands tall as an authority in not only identifying the nature of emotions but also in showing a way to come out of the darkness of emotional instability. The contemporary terms like attachment to one's extrinsic possessions such as one's relationships, work spaces, public life etc. would count as miseries according to the *Gītā*. It is asserted here that attachment leads to desire; un-fulfilled desire leads to anger; anger to delusion; delusion to indiscriminate action which in turn leads a person towards downfall. Attachment, according to the Scripture is the web that ensnares a person in this materialistic world. However, as has been recurrently maintained that the scripture in tune with Upanishads argue that this world is nothing but an illusion or '*māyā*' which blinds a person and prevents him from realizing the Supreme Being. A person who has realized this eternal truth severs his attachment with this 'unreal' world - 'unreal' because, nothing in this empirical world is permanent. It is constantly changing. A *sthithaprajñya* has the knowledge that distinguishes between the 'real' (the permanent; the *ātman* or the soul) and the 'unreal' (the impermanent). S/He has firmly anchored himself in the realization of this immovable, unchangeable, indestructible 'self' or the *ātman*. This enables to detach oneself from this 'unreal' world and steer his thoughts towards the real/ the *ātman*. The steadfast state of mind achieved through the right action can be used as a reference point for understanding the influence of The *Gītā* in addressing present day issues of mental health following the emotional upheavals.

C) *Bhagavad-Gīta*: The Meaning and Purpose of Life and Living

In an uncanny resemblance to the current situation the centre point of Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* based upon Nietzsche's philosophical dictum of "...he who has a 'why' to live can bear almost any 'how' makes one realise the merit of valuing inner worldview".¹⁰ This paper notes that this perspective which facilitates an understanding of the righteous way to live has already been enunciated as the *sthithaprajñā* mode in *Bhagavad-Gīta*. Frankl has based his novella on his experiences at the concentration camps, and has emphasised on what most of the traditional Indian Philosophic and Scriptural wisdom has already dwelt on, i.e., the 'inner life' of humans, or in emphasising on alleviating the spiritual quotient of a person. This can be achieved by understanding the how or the method to correct the meanings of the individual/personal/self-identity. In the current context, it can imply understanding that the Physical/inter-personal distance need not be understood and practiced as being antithetical to the much stronger concept of inter-connectedness through emotional and mental solidarity and agreeability.

The crux of my paper is that the *Gītā* exemplifies the Cultural Psychology of traditional India by addressing the questions of how to be mindful and how to live a life that's fulfilling and meaningful. The major

existential crisis in today's time is the issue of a sort of anxiety due to an imbalance between the mind, body and emotions ensued by the contemporary world-view as caused by the Pandemic of Covid-19. So, like the 2nd world war and its terrifying side of the concentration camp that disturbed everyone, and for which a new guide to hopeful future was sought- the *Gītā*, despite being an ancient text can similarly provide guidelines to the **new-normal** necessitated by a **post-covid** world.

The paper distinctively flags the point that the traditional Indian Philosophies including that of the *Gītā* did not include any clinical aspects of Psychology, as understood in the Contemporary theories at all, but they proposed methods to improve life and gain wisdom. These systems basically advocate theories that cover in principle all the main aspects of Psychology-such as cognition, behaviour, personality, emotion, and volition, i.e., a holistic range leading onto the spiritual elevation. The meaning of spiritual according to the *Gītā*, as I have interpreted in the paper, implies a state of holistic mental and emotional well-being at the individual level and at the inter-connected level during any adverse circumstance like the current one of being afflicted by the pandemic.

VI. CONCLUSION

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* in its current form was composed at least two or three thousand years ago. However, its message is still relevant. *Bhagavad-Gītā* continues to inspire humans in excelling in life skills, and thereby enabling one to lead a life of purposive action, of doing duty without ulterior motives, practicing righteousness and in maintaining a well-integrated mind-body and heart harmony. Simple common sense tells that we are disturbed by our own desires and expectations. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as has been maintained in the foregone paragraphs, suggests that the Karma is the key to freedom from the cycle of death and birth (salvation). The concept of karma as *nishkāma* and the concept of *Jñāna* in relation to it implies a correct methodology (how) of managing life skills in the current state of global distress. The Scripture, as has been highlighted in earlier paragraphs, clearly states that a *karma yogi* knows the importance of controlling one's senses. Therefore, s/he engages in actions by restraining her/his mind and senses, unattached, directing one's senses only to the work. By that, s/he overcomes the desires and remains contented within one-self taking delight in the Self alone. Calm and collected, S/he performs his actions without attachment and inner commotion. A holistic goal of an integration of reason, action and faith define the pragmatic methodology of defining wisdom in the contemporary context. Such an approach not only liberates human beings from the struggling and striving that characterizes their egoistic actions, but also greatly reduces their anxieties and frustrations, creating in them in the process a permanent basis for a stable, peaceful and contented life. In my understanding, the mental and emotional stability that follows on comprehending the meaning of one's personal identity as a self that transcends the physical and egoistic nature makes it amenable to live through the current times of anxiety and stress due to the Pandemic. *Asthithprajñā* person will certainly conduct one-self with empathy and compassion towards others. This wisdom should certainly prove to be a guiding factor to remain 'inter-connected' and zealous. **Hence, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* provides a guidance to comprehend an appropriate meaning of inaction and action, and hence of the new meaning of *karma* in association with *jñāna* and thus provide the feasible-pragmatic guidelines to a new-normal way of life and living. The wisdom drawn from *Gītā*, enables a *karma-yogi* to thereby understand the affirmative meanings of human inter-connectedness and duty despite there being social distancing and the blurred spaces of home and work-place.**

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