

A STUDY OF STRATEGIES FOR SELF -DEVELOPMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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Abstract

This paper explores the strategies for Self -development during COVID-19 Pandemic in the context of Bhagavad Gita. It provides some significance and insights on strategies for self-development from practical perspective. The objectives of the study are to investigate self-development of body, mind and spirit strategies from Bhagavad Gita. This paper is based on literature review and hermeneutics, a qualitative research methodology which involves study, understanding and interpretation of classical text. The existing findings are interpreted by analysing the verse of the Bhagavad Gita. At the end, it is concluded that timeless teaching of Bhagavad Gita has authentic self-development strategies to enhance the efficiency of human being during COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Words: *Strategies, Self -development, Covid-19 Pandemic, Bhagavad Gita*



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Introduction

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases. COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus. It was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. The new coronavirus has been responsible for millions of infections globally, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths. There is currently no cure for the cold-like illnesses caused by coronaviruses. Treatments include self-care and over-the-counter medications. It was declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. And while the countries are grappling with imminent dangers that this virus poses to humanity, there are few key measures that individuals can take to fight this pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly and dramatically impacted the world around us. During this critical period, the all-round development of human being i.e. body, mind and spirit is the need of the hour.

Each individual is responsible for the entire race and this will be remembered as a collective experience for humanity and will serve as a ray of hope for future catastrophes. In this critical juncture, self-development is urgent for each one of us. Each individual has to accept personal responsibility and accountability. Individual responsibility is the only way to ensure protection against the coronavirus and collective health. The Bhagavad Gita provides the ultimate strategies of self-development of body, mind and spirit to overcome during this pandemic.

Objectives

1. To explore self-development strategies in Bhagavad Gita
2. To enhance self-development strategies by enrichment of body, mind and spirit.
3. To investigate the self-development strategies in the Bhagavad Gita during COVID-19 pandemic

Methodology

This paper is a qualitative paper which involves a review and analysis of literature and also the interpretation of selected verses of the Bhagavad Gita in the context of self-development strategies. The methodology used for the interpretation is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is related to the name of the Greek God Hermes in his role as the interpreter of the messages of the Gods. The Hermeneutics method is the theory and practice of interpretation. It is a stimulating and deeply interpretive research approach which can examine complex human phenomena from multiple perspectives to produce rich theoretical and experiential interpretations. In the current context, hermeneutics can be described as the interpretation and understanding of ancient literatures. Hermeneutics is widely applied in many fields of social science such as philosophy, religion and theology, law, sociology and also international relations.

Self-development Strategies in the Context of the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is a handbook on self-development. The universal truths contained in the Bhagavad Gita have remained perpetual by the tide of time and are quite relevant to this critical juncture of COVID-19 pandemic. The teachings enable us to get the true understanding of life and offers practical ways to come out of the everyday miseries that engulf us. The Bhagavad Gita is not an epic telling of the rise and fall of rival powers, or of the great actions of warriors. It is a spiritual book in which, not only the truth about the inner Self of man is revealed, but also the hidden motives, and the way in which they may be

transcended for the benefit of entire mankind are prescribed. Therefore, it is a book of the science of transformation of self as well as mankind.

Sri Krishna leads Arjuna from sense of weakness to sense of strength. It enhances sense of well-being, vitality, and strength. Swami Vivekananda spoke frequently about the necessity of strength. 'The sign of vigor, the sign of life, the sign of hope, the sign of health, the sign of everything that is good is strength'.

Every natural disaster is nature's attempt to create a new balance. It is a response to what we humans are doing to the harmony of the natural order. This requires an urgent and appropriate response from mankind. A deeper understanding entails a radical reckoning and transformation of the ways in which we interact with the world. COVID-19 is a warning that we are not the masters of the universe, and the world is not our private property.

uddharedaatmanaatmaanamnaatmaanamavasaadayet

atmaivahyaatmanobandhuraatmaivaripuraatmanah // 6.5 //

Let a man lift himself by himself; let him not degrade himself; for, he himself is his friend and he himself is his enemy.

The Concept of Self -development

Self is the unified being which is the source of consciousness. The Bhagavad Gita tries to find out the element of permanence in the self. It tries to analyze the relationship between self and body. It defines the essential qualities that distinguish one person from others. Self is the unified being which is the source of consciousness. It makes thoughts and actions happen. It is the substance that endures time and can generate different thoughts and actions for the same self. It makes thoughts and actions happen. It is the substance that endures time and can generate different thoughts and actions for the same self. Man's body and mind are parts of Prakriti (Nature) which is dynamic in constitution. As a product of Prakriti, action is the law of life for the mind and the body. Mental health and physical health are generally inter-dependent. It is essentially about accentuating the positive (good habits) and eliminating the negative (bad habits). For this reason, it is best to make good habits right from the start. These habits will fall into a holistic system of physical well-being.

Different Strategies of Self -development

The Bhagavad Gita teaches how to achieve harmony with divinity in the midst of disharmony during pandemic COVID-19 by subduing all outward energies and remaining in equanimity with pairs of opposites like pain and pleasure, aversion and attraction, success and failure etc.

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The strategies of self-development consist of harmony of body, mind and spirit. These are as follows

1. Physical

2. Mind

3. Spirit

1. Body

Body is an essential vehicle to transport us to higher levels of evolution. It is also a temple housing the all-pervading soul or God. Therefore, it is to be kept clean and pure. It is nothing but the entire cosmos in microcosm. The five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space—are very much available both in the macrocosm (universe) and in the individual body of every human being (microcosm). Also, the individual body has to work in tune with the cosmic body.

The Bhagavad Gita stresses the importance of physical well-being which is closely connected to mental well-being. The maintenance of the body in harmony and of the proper relation of the body with the external world is the first empirical concern of man. It should be the duty of each individual of perfection to be careful to see that the body is not out of its balance in any way, at any time. The health of the body is of great importance in one's endeavor to utilize one's power in the quest of truth.

The Bhagavad Gita also stresses the importance of nourishing the body, because one must be strong physically in order to put forth his efforts in the pursuit of mental and intellectual activities and to serve the community. One must be strong physically in order to put forth his efforts in the pursuit of mental and intellectual activities and to serve the community, the Bhagavad Gita does not ignore the nourishment of the body. Body is the first instrument to perform the dharma". So, body has to be maintained. It should be pure, strong and healthy. For a healthy and strong body, the regulation the food and sleep are necessary.

yuktaahaaravihaarasyayuktacheshtasyakarmasu

yuktaswapnaavabodhasyayogobhavadidukhahaa // 6.17 //

Yoga puts an end to all sorrows for him who is moderate in food and recreation, who is moderate in his exertion at work, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness.

i. Maintain Hygiene and Cleanliness

During COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need of the wellbeing of body by providing proper nourishment, medical care, health, hygiene and physical exercises. External purity and

observance of the laws of hygiene are not to be neglected if the body is to be maintained as one's friend and helper. Cleanliness is the basic rule of sound health. This must include the system of partaking of diet of a suitable quality, in a suitable quantity, at a suitable place and suitable time. Without action there is no life. So, the physical health is as much important as the mental health and they are interdependent. Each one should care his food, physical cleanliness and the practice of Yoga exercise

The basic health and hygiene of body consists of cleanliness – hand washing, etiquettes in coughing and sneezing, clean clothes, dispose of tissues, maintaining social distance etc. Using an alcohol sanitizer, in case we are travelling to disinfect our hands, wearing a mask (cover our nose and mouth) and avoiding touching our hand or mouth. There are also certain methods to improve our immunity which is paramount at this juncture. It also aggravates with age as the general immunity reduces as we get older. In the younger generation with no underlying illnesses, COVID-19 can result in a minor infection, provided we have a robust immunity and do not engage in activities like smoking or vaping to combat the onslaught of the virus.

ii. Right Kind of food

A proper diet is essential for keeping good health. Most problems arise due to bad eating habits. Food strongly influences our mind. Impure food makes mind impure. Sattvic food is the best for a yoga practitioner, which comprise whole grains, fresh and dry fruits, raw or freshly cooked vegetables. It emphasizes the importance of not only eating the right type of food but also the right amount and with the right attitude. The food we eat plays a key aspect in determining our overall health and immunity. The pure food increases the vitality and strength. It augments the energy of the mind also.

The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes on healthy sattvic food. There are three types of food consumed by three types of persons, namely. Sattvic, Rajasika and Tamasika. Food which promotes longevity, intelligence, strength, health, happiness and delight, and which are sweet, bland, nourishing and agreeable are dear to Sattvic type of men, this type of food promotes health and strength.

Sattvic food produces serenity and mental clarity and helps the aspirants to enter, into deep meditation and maintain poise and nervous equilibrium. It supplies the maximum energy to the body and the mind. It is easily assimilated and absorbed. The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning are productive of pain, grief and disease. It

produces restlessness in the mind, evil thoughts, excitement, craving for one thing now and for another then. The food that is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten, it impure as well as produce devilish tendencies.

aayusattvabalaarogyasukhapreetivivardhanaah

rasyaahsnigdhaahsthiraahridyaaaahaaraahsaatwikapriyaah // 17.8 //

The foods which promote life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are sweet, soft, nourishing and agreeable are dear to the Sattvic people.

Sattvic persons like the food which increases vitality, supplies energy, enhances strength to resist temptations from the sense objects, provides health, augments joy and inward cheerfulness. The food brings life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness (good appetite) which are savory and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the sattvic (Pure) It is said that a sattvic person have such diet which increase the vitality and sheer bulk, which supplies the energy for work, which gives strength to resist the temptation for the sense objects provides health . So, one may not fall ill and suffer a break in his regular work. He will have a mental inclination of joy and inner cheerfulness. Sri Krishna makes clear the type of foods to be avoided by those who seek good physical and mental health, worldly success, and progress on the spiritual path. According to the Bhagavad Gita, foods which are too bitter, sour, salty, pungent, dry, and hot can lead to pain, distress, and disease of the body.

The Eternal Reality is indicated as that mighty life which when pulsating through the body manifests itself as 'the digestive fire (Vaiswanara) which assimilates the food taken in. This digestive power in a healthy living organism assimilates all types of food.

ahamvaishwaanarobhootwaapraaninaamdehamaashritah

praanaapaanasamaayuktahpachaamyannamchaturvidham // 15.14 //

Having become the fire, Vaiswanara, I abide in the body of living beings and associated with Prana and Apana, digest the fourfold food.

The Atman illumines the mind and enlivens the body, and the body limits the experience of consciousness by subjecting it to the laws of nature. The laws of nature rule this world. This body is conditioned by every law that is applicable to natural phenomena. That Eternal Reality which is indicated as Life manifests as Digestive Fire (Vaishwanara) which assimilates food. This digestive power assimilates food in four ways through masticating, swallowing, sucking and licking. The power in the digestive system is nothing but a

manifestation of the Principle of Life. Prana and Apana are the physiological functions of perception and excretion that are present in all living creatures. The entire variety of human diet is classified under four heads; food that should be (i) masticated (Bhakshya), (ii) swallowed (Bhojya), (iii) sucked (Choshya) and (iv) licked (Lehya). All things are digested, assimilated and absorbed because of the digestive system and this digestive power is the all-present Life principle.

It the external body, the physiological part or the “Anna Maya kosha” which requires a balanced nutrition, exercise, relaxation and a balance in vitality of physical body. Good food keeps body lean and limber and the mind clear and sharp as well as protecting life and environment. The pure and moderated diet is the best possible guarantee of physical and mental health bringing harmony and vitality to both body and mind. It focuses on the nutrition obtained from the food and not the taste; it recommends moderation in anything one eats and drinks. It is said that a sattvic person have such diet which increase the vitality and sheer bulk, which supplies the energy for work, which gives strength (bala) to resist the temptation for the sense objects provides health (arogya). So one may not fall ill and suffer a break in his regular work. He will have a mental inclination of Joy (Priti) and inner cheerfulness (sukha).

Eating low carb diets, as this will help control high blood sugar and pressure. A low carb diet will help slow down diabetes and focus on a protein-rich diet to keep us in good shape. And regularly consume vegetables and fruits rich in Beta carotene, Ascorbic acid & other essential vitamins. Certain foods like mushrooms, tomato, bell pepper and green vegetables like broccoli, spinach are also good options to build resilience in the body against infections.

iii. Adequate Sleep

Adequate Sleep is vital for healthy body. Good snooze time for 7-8 hours is the best way to help body build immunity; lesser sleep will leave tired and impair brain activity. The lack of sleep will prevent the body from resting and this will impair other bodily functions that will have a direct impact on your immunity. Lack of sleep adversely affects the action of the flu vaccine.

iv. Exercise

A good diet should be followed by an exercise routine. It is necessary to exercise regularly; even light exercise will go a long way in releasing the toxins from body. It is recommended

to exercise for 30 to 45 minutes, depending on stamina. Regular exercise improves metabolism, which has a direct correlation with body immunity.

At the physical level, a disciplined life along with adherence to a principle is a sign of culture. A cultured person does not disturb nature. Methodical life of routine is the mark of a cultured person.

2.Mind

Physical health and well-being are dependent to a great extent on our thinking and feelings. The mind -body relationship has existed since time immemorial. Right thoughts and right attitude towards life is vital for well-being. A balanced state of mind is obtained by following the moral restraints and ethical observances. Mental development is also known as cognitive development which brings a balance amongst our mental functions, like right perceptions, proper learning, positive thought process, creative thinking, etc. The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes the importance of mental training.

Clear perception, observation and thinking are necessary for the development of mind. Concentration of mind on the work undertaken not only helps to improve the skill in that work, but also enables him to understand the reality well. The training of the mind and the process of thinking, are essential for the acquisition of knowledge. Having met his physical needs, man should next direct his attention to such pursuits as will bring him mental happiness and intellectual satisfactions, those that enrich his knowledge, broad understanding and bring him more enlightenment about himself and the world around him. The senses are to be controlled by the mind. It is compared to the horses in a chariot and the rope of the horses is compared to the mind.

i. Managing Destress and Crisis

Too much stress releases the hormone known as cortisol, which impairs our response to immediate surroundings and makes our body susceptible to infections. This left feeling constantly anxious. The best way to relieve stress is through meditation, it is a tried and tested activity to calm the nerves.

These are testing times, and a prolonged period of staying indoors has its implications on our mental wellbeing. The growing anxiety around the pandemic is another concern that is affecting millions across the globe. While the uncertainty might be overwhelming, there are few steps we can follow regularly to help relieve our stress, stress is known to have an adverse effect on immunitycontrol of senses of individuals. Bhagavad Gita has been a great
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advocate of sense control and this is so much valid in current COVID-19 crisis. It is important that people do not stock pile food, do not visit cinemas, shopping malls, hotels etc and control their senses and show their wisdom.

ii.Developing Concentration

When a person withdraws all his senses from their objects, like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs, then his wisdom is firmly established. During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The practice has to be done conscientiously, for the mind is ever capable of emulation and improvement. Steady and ever-increasing betterment of the mind is the sole purpose and object of concentration. When the mind turns away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object.

Concentration is purely a mental process. It needs an inward turning of the mind. It is not a muscular exercise. Diagnosis and cure of the physical ailment is good in itself, but analysis and reformation of the mind is more imperative. The body has its limit in growth and it ceases to grow after maturity. But the mind enriches itself even unto death. Mind makes or mars itself according to the intellectual and emotional food supplied to it. Care should, therefore, be taken to provide the mind with, wholesome thoughts and feelings. A healthy mind is supreme in the human being. Senses are the instruments which in five different ways present the external world to the mind. It behaves this inner organ in its turn to interpret the presented objects right and react worthily. This is self-control. It does not mean curbing the senses, or making them defunct. The mind reads the external world in and through the five senses. Dominion over the senses makes a right reading possible. Unrestrained domination of the senses over the individual inevitably leads to perversion. The subduer of the senses alone has the clarity to see the things as they are. Passions and disturbing emotions disbalance the system and ruin the health of the person.

According to Bhagavad Gita “the mind acts like an enemy for those who do not control it”. The mind can be controlled through intelligence and spiritual power. Mental Health is a state of mind. It is possible through constant practice and detachment. Happiness is within. It is internal. Lord Krishna says, “The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.” (Bhagavad Gita 2:59).

iii. Emotional Development

Emotional development brings the balance in our feelings-reducing or controlling the negative feelings like anger, fear, anxiety, hatred, jealousy etc., and enhancement of positive feelings like love, joy, happiness, contentment.

A mental disturbance means the rhythmic distribution of the vital energy and the disturbance of the nerves; Contentment, joy and devotion to the ideal of one's life bring about the health of the mind. The development of the individual will not be complete unless the spiritual aspect of his personality also is properly attended to. Everyone has a life - Force in him which enables him to perceive, to think, to speak and to act. This makes a living being different from the dead matter.

iv. Controlling Senses

The senses are to be controlled by the mind. It is compared to the horses in a chariot and the rope of the horses is compared to the mind. The forces applied are the intellect and charioteer is the soul. So, it is necessary to the training of the body, senses, the mind and the intellect so that one may reach the ultimate level. Senses should be controlled properly and withdrawn in such a way to the detachment of the objects of this world. Sri Krishna agrees that mind is unsteady and restless and therefore difficult to control and that the goal cannot be easily reached. But through practice and detachment mind can be brought under control. Practice is the effort of the mind towards calmness. Practice becomes firmly grounded when it is followed for a long time and unremittingly with devotion. The end is easily achieved with the help of austerity, continence, discrimination and faith.

Body and mind are interrelated and all through interdependent. A healthy body is conducive to an active and energetic mind and vice versa. But of the two, mind being subtle, its influence on the body is more effective and consequential. To set right the imperfect mind, a constant "Skill in action lies in Yoga". The mind has to be conquered by mind; it has to be made pure and tough to move toward the goal. Purity is attained by overcoming desire; steadiness by self-discipline and practices of yoga mentioned by Patanjali and others. The mind is the cause for bondage and mind is the cause for liberation. The mind can ensnare and the mind can tear itself out of the snare. Turning it towards objects is bondage and turning it inwards is the route for liberation and self-knowledge. The human mind imposes forms and descriptions on the Formless, Changeless, Immutable, the Unmanifest Eternal Reality because of our own limitations and our desire to comprehend and explain.

3.Spirit

Spirituality is an approach to life. The method of spirituality is to see the Ultimate in all living and non- living elements. Spiritual knowledge raises the awareness of a person to a higher level. This takes him above all narrow thoughts into a realm of higher thought. He loses all ego and understands that he is not defined by body, mind or sense organs and that he is one with knowledge and bliss. A liberated person truly lives “according to nature” on all levels. Seeing with the inner eye, hearing with the inner ear, etc., he sees and hears “true.” Spirituality is the inner- most core of our life. The working senses are said to be higher than the body; the mind is higher than the senses; the intellect is still higher than the mind; but Atma (Spirit, Self) is even higher than the intellect. (Gita 3.42).

Spirituality is the treasure house of eternal truths. It gives a man infinite strength.

indriyaani mano buddhirasyaadhishtaanamuchyate
etaivimohayatyeshajnaanamaavrityadehinam // 3.40 //

The senses, the mind and the intellect are said to be its seat; through these it deludes the embodied by veiling his wisdom.

indriyaaniparaanyaahurindriyebhyah param manah
manasastuparaabuddhiryobuddhehparatastusah // 3.42 //

They say that the senses are superior to the body; superior to the senses is the mind; superior to the mind is intellect; and one who is superior even to the intellect is He - The Self.

Pain, sorrow, disease, enmity is also challenges to the soul to grow beyond its outer limitation and discover its inner reality. If we do not face and overcome the difficulties of life, we remain weak and fail to discover the divine within us. Try to dwell always in our own Self. Abide in our center. Think of the Self constantly.

i. Practicing Yoga

All beings have a responsibility to practice yoga, so that all can live in peace. Yoga it is, when there is harmony at all levels and Bhagavad Gita emphasizes Yoga throughout. As yoga regards the body as a vehicle for the soul on its journey towards perfection, the asanas are designed to develop not only body, they also broaden the mental faculties and spiritual capacities. Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. It is an art and science of healthy living. Practice of Yoga is an integrated approach to achieve holistic health and total personality development.

People established or settled (Asana) in life with discipline (Yama) and principle (Niyama) are of culture. They lead a regulated life (Pranayama) of self-confidence, self-reliance and self-dedication. It is proper pranayama, when we breathe out more and breathe in less. It is a cultured life of pranayama and yoga, when we take less from society and contribute more for its well-being. Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama of Raja Yoga are but the essential aspects of physical culture leading to individual and social health. Yama denotes discipline—discipline of space, discipline of time and discipline of procedure. If we are capable of allotting a place to every object and cultivate the habit of keeping things in their respective places, we will be free from tensions and anxieties.

ii. Moderation in All Activities

It is advised to practice moderation in our daily habits—in eating, sleeping, recreation, etc. Extremes are to be avoided as they hinder the practice of meditation. Living a life of such moderation, and gathering up all his forces and directing them towards meditation upon the Atman, the aspirant gradually transcends the senses and intellect and merges himself in the blissful Atman. He finds that the bliss of the Atman is incomparable, that there is no gain greater than the Self.

naatyashnatastuyogo'stinachaikaantamanashnatah

nachaatiswapnasheelasyajaagratonaivachhaarjuna // 6.16 //

Verily, Yoga is not possible for him, who eats too much, or for him who does not eat at all; or for him who sleeps too much, or for him who is always awake, O Arjuna. The Lord gives guidelines in this verse and the following ones on the possible pitfalls that have to be guarded against in pursuit of meditation. The central theme of His guidance is that moderation in all activities at all levels is the precondition for achieving success in Meditation.

yuktaahaaravihaarasyayuktacheshhtasyakarmasu

yuktaswapnaavabodhasyayogobhavatiduhkhahaa // 6.17 //

Yoga puts an end to all sorrows for him who is moderate in food and recreation, who is moderate in his exertion at work, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness.

iii. Meditation

Meditation is the soul of spiritual life. A life without meditation is like a horse without reins or a boat without rudder or a car without breaks. He speaks of applying several tenets and techniques of meditation in order to achieve complete control of the mind and body. The best way to relieve stress is through meditation, it is a tried and tested activity to calm the

nerves. Meditation is one way of attaining control over mind and desires. It is a process which leads the mind towards the realization of the self. It takes the mind to the subtler aspects of one's innate qualities and finally paves the way to understand the source of mind. Practice is necessary for concentration.

Meditation is the very intent of spiritual consciousness. It is the response of the awakening spirit. It brings peace and happiness, but meditation is not just one of many ways to peace and happiness. Sri Krishna reveals to us that it is the only way. The Absolute in all Its glory dwells as much in the heart of the ignorant as in the heart of the wise. It needs only to be perceived by meditation.

iii. Cultivating Virtues

One develops attachment to sense objects by thinking about them. From attachment arises desire for them. From unfulfilled desires comes anger. From anger comes delusion; from delusion confusion of memory; from disappearance of memory and bewildering mind; reasoning (Discrimination) is destroyed. When reasoning is destroyed, one falls from right path. When one's mind is full of doubts, negative emotional conflicts, anger, fear, attachment, ego, greed and desires etc, he loses his memories, his discrimination power between good and bad; and right and wrong, and cannot make any proper decision.

daiveesampadvimokshaayanibhandhaayaasureemataa

maa shuchahsampadamdaiveemabhijaato'sipaandava // 16.5 //

The divine nature leads to liberation and the demoniacal for bondage. Grieve not, O Arjuna, for you are born with divine properties.

Everyone's personality is equipped with evil (Asuri) and virtuous (Daivi-godly) traits. Sri Krishna awakens in Arjuna the virtuous powers inherent in him and motivates him towards the right path. Yoga, often defined simply as "union", "union with the divine", yoga is a means of achieving the inner realization of the union that already exists (though forgotten and hidden) between individual consciousness and universal consciousness.

Spiritual development leads to self-realization. The small self is selfish and body bound, self-centred and earthbound, egocentric and materialistic. The large Self is unselfish, loving, universal and infinite. It is sublime and spiritual. Materialism and spirituality have three components in each of them.

Each soul is potentially divine; everyone has the spark of divinity within; every person is born with a talent; each is endowed with a gift. The hidden soul, latent spark, the intrinsic

talent or the gift. The hidden soul, latent spark, the intrinsic talent or the gift Self-realization means realizing the self by which one realizes everything. Such a realized person will have a very peaceful mind and a pleasant life and he will be moderate in all walks of life. Finally, he reaches the highest bliss or merges with the absolute.

Finally, such a person who realizes the soul with pleasure and great bliss identifies with everyliving being because he identifies himself with, the ultimate reality.

aatmaupamyenasarvatrasamampashyatiyo'rjuna

sukhamvaayadivaaduhkhamsayogee paramo matah // 6.32 //

I hold him to be a supreme yogi, O Arjuna, who looks on the pleasure and pain of all beings as he looks upon them in himself.

Good thoughts prompt good actions and evil thoughts encourage evil deeds. This lower nature is called ignorance which breeds desires. Desire is the root cause of all evil. Just as smoke veils the bright fire, dust the reflecting surface of a mirror and the unborn child by the mother's womb, so also the desire veils the Pure Self, the all illuminating self-knowledge. Desire acts through the organs of perception and organs of action at the mental and intellectual levels. So, the first task to destroy desire is to check and control senses.

Findings

The findings of strategies of self-development of body, mind and spirit in the Bhagavad Gita are helpful during COVID-19 pandemic. All-round development is urgent to survival of self as well as mankind. The pandemonium of COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented set of dilemmas. The Bhagavad-Gita is the eternal message of spiritual wisdom from ancient India which can answer questions about our lives and existence during this critical period. It offers insight into every aspect of our life and is universally relevant to survival of mankind.

Relevance

Everyone has to fight their own battles to lead a productive and purposeful life and should be ready for tough times. 'When the going gets tough, only the tough gets going'; simply reminds us of the nature's basic law of 'survival of the fittest. Everything depends upon Mind (Self). Therefore, the contamination and deterioration of the mind can be controlled by intellect through spiritual practices, eliminating negative thoughts, developing positive thinking and controlling our senses. The senses are enemies (Impurities such as attachment, desire, anger, greed, arrogance, jealousy and hatred) are the causes for disconnection of body, mind and spirit. The eternal teachings of the Bhagavad Gita will bring new hope in our life.

Implications and conclusion

The Bhagavad Gita is gaining momentum to follow the righteous path of spiritual enlightenment along with the scientific and technological developments. The timeless teachings of Bhagavad Gita however, transcend all the barriers of time and religion. The highly revered Bhagavad Gita is a practical as well as eternal wisdom addressed to humankind of all times and shows light in darkest of times. It will help us to reach the state of stable mind. It teaches perseverance in the face of impending threats. It is a guide to reach out ultimately in the depth of one's inner self. It calls upon us to dedicate our mind, body, and soul to pure duty and rewrite destiny. It provides strength in times of distress, spark in times of darkness, and helps snatch success from the jaws of failure. The essence of the Bhagavad Gita is to meet the challenges of life with determination. The pearls of knowledge and wisdom given by Sri Krishna rejuvenates and kindles flame of hope in our mind to enable us to cope with the hoarse realities of Covid-19 pandemic and perennial struggles of life, but also it vanishes doubts and inspires us to solve the problems of life.

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