



Revisiting Bhagavad Gītā in the light of Reed's Self-transcendence theory

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ABSTRACT

Human beings are susceptible to suffering caused by physical pain and mental perturbations. Various coping strategies and psychological techniques seem to improve resilience to transcend physical pain. Among various nursing theories, Pamela Reed's theory of Self-transcendence focuses on the holistic wellbeing of an individual. The philosophical and spiritual tenets integrated by Reed in her theory connect an individual to the society and to a higher spiritual entity. Bhagavad Gītā is a principle work of Indian Philosophy that impart lessons on Self-transcendence and universal wellbeing. Current study facilitates a reflection of Reed's theory of Self-transcendence and compares its various percepts with the philosophical discussion of Bhagavad Gītā.

Introduction

Human beings are prone to physical and emotional vulnerabilities. A review of literature shows that people tend to achieve resilience and overcome the suffering caused by physical vulnerabilities through coping strategies along with various psychological factors (Stewart and Yuen, 2011). Vulnerable ones either seek assistance of a counsellor or seek refuge in philosophy. Bhagavad Gītā¹ (BhG) is one of the prominent texts of Indian Philosophy where we witness a philosophical counsellor effectuate a change in one facing physical and psychological vulnerability. BhG is an integral part of the Indian epic Mahābhārata. BhG could be considered as a prelude to an inevitable war between two family clans viz Kaurava-s and Pāṇḍava-s. The major content of BhG includes conversation between warrior Arjuna and his cousin Kṛṣṇa who takes-up the responsibility as the charioteer of Arjuna during the war. In the beginning of BhG, Arjuna is seen to be perplexed noticing the vast Kaurava army. Sensing the reality about fighting his kinsmen, teacher, friends and other great kings of his era, Arjuna is overcome with distress and delusion. Arjuna seems to be affected by a fear of causing death and also feels himself to be destabilizing the equanimity and wellbeing (WB) of oneself and of the society. Finally, considering himself to be a sinner, Arjuna shows disregard towards one's duty as a warrior to fight, but engage in asceticism. Radhakrishnan (1923, p. 520) describes the mental disposition of Arjuna,

“Arjuna comes to the battle-field, convinced of the righteousness of his cause and prepared to fight the enemy. At the psychological moment he shrinks from his duty. His conscience is troubled, his heart is torn with anguish and his state of mind [...] If to slay is to sin, it is a worse sin to slay those to whom we owe love and worship”.

1 IAST system of transliteration has been used.

Among various topics discussed in BhG, Self-transcendence (ST) could be a key aspect. We witness warrior Arjuna transcend the state of misery and fight for righteousness after an inspirational dialogue with Kṛṣṇa (Ithamar, 2016). It also shows the path to realize the ultimate goal of human life which is liberation from worldly bondage. “The ultimate and the most important goal to be attained through a human life is believed to be liberation. One seeking liberation has to undergo ST to realize the oneness of one’s own existence with the all-pervading consciousness, the Paramātmān” (Sadasivan, 2021).

Pamela Reed’s theory of ST was developed as a nursing theory. According to Reed (1983, 1997 and 2014, 110), three chief circumstances led her to propound the theory of ST. Firstly, the life-span movement of the 1970s suggested, developmental changes can occur across a life-span based on various life events and accumulation of life experiences over years. Secondly, Martha Rogers’ (1970) postulations about the change in nature of human beings, played an important role. Various philosophical views like pandimensionality of human beings and the human ability of self-healing, WB and her own life experiences inspired Reed in the field of psychiatry and in the application of developmental theories.

There are numerous studies that have analyzed the ST aspect in BhG. Most studies are from the discipline of Management and Positive Psychology. Nursing is an important field that uses Spiritual tenets and Psychological precepts for the purpose of human WB and healing. The purpose of Reed’s theory of ST is to connect an individual to the society and to a higher spiritual truth and thereby achieve WB. A similar purpose can be observed in BhG too as the core focus of the text is on healing and achieving WB through ST.

Objective of study

Current study is a reflection on Pamela Reed’s theory of ST. The chief objective of the study is to examine and analyze BhG from the perspective of Reed’s theory. We seek to connect the fundamental precepts proposed by Reed to the instructions imparted by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in BhG.

Self-transcendence according to Pamela Reed

The ST theory proposed by Reed has three major aspects which are related to each other viz. ST, Vulnerability and WB. A brief description of the three aspects are given below.

Self-transcendence and the expansion of self-boundary

The chief concept of the theory is ST which refers to the expansion of one’s self-boundary by an individual affected by vulnerabilities. “The theory of ST acknowledges the human tendency to construct a self-boundary as well as the capacity to transcend limiting views of self” (Reed, 2010, p. 420). The expansion of self-boundary represents a connectivity not only with other individuals in the society but also a connectedness with the environment in which one lives. This includes other living beings and non-living objects of surroundings that improves one’s WB. According to Reed (1991), “a person’s conceptual boundaries extend beyond a mere focus on the self and self-identity toward ST; that is, a focus on the interdependence of one’s self with others and the greater environment.”

The expansion of self-boundary happens in various ways. Reed (2014, p. 111) proposes some of the methods by which the expansion happens viz. Intrapersonal where one realizes one’s dreams and triggers a drive towards its attainment. Intrapersonal expansion happens within one’s own psyche towards actualizing the values, duties, beliefs and tradition. Reed (2009) terms the intrapersonal expansion as ‘inward’ as it seeks an inner development of an individual to find meaning in one’s life and nurture the feeling of self-acceptance; Interpersonal, otherwise termed as outward expansion seeks an individual’s relation with the whole environment that surrounds one. Reed (2010, p. 421) states “ST embodies

experiences that connect rather than separate a person from self, others, and the environment. The value of connecting with family and friends and having social support is well understood. Enjoyment found in being out in nature, taking in the beauty of the environment, appreciating the arts, caring for a pet, and feeling connected to society in some way are all recognized as important". Expansion of self-boundary can happen in a spiritual or mystical direction which is beyond the empirical and phenomenal world. Reed classifies this kind of expansion as Transpersonal or Upward expansion. Transpersonal expansion is when one seeks support of a higher entity like God or a higher divine power beyond the self and the environment. Mostly people follow religious traditions and imbibe scriptural essence to reach out to the higher entity, but one can also reach out to a higher power by following a non-religious spiritual path. "Relatedness to unseen or unobservable entities may be an important perspective within a person's self-boundary. Religious practices and beliefs are one common pathway to this experience. In society today, there is increasing acknowledgment of an opportunity to develop nonreligious spiritual perspectives that provide a sense of connectedness to something beyond the self" (Reed, 2010, p. 422). Temporal is that kind of expansion where an individual integrates one's past experiences and the vision about future to it in the present. Temporal expansion results in applying the life lessons learnt from the past and applying those in the present and at the same time trying to actualize one's future goals to recognize the ideal self.

Wellbeing

The second concept associated with ST is WB. Based on the perspective of an individual, WB can be defined in various ways. WB can be referred to as the state of wholeness with a condition of holistic satisfaction with regard to one's mental and physical health. "Examples of indicators of WB that have been found to be significantly related to ST include life satisfaction, happiness, high morale in aging, selfcare agency in chronic illness, sense of meaning in life, and specific indicators of mental health such as absence of depression and anxiety" (Reed, 2010, 423). Individuals achieve WB through the process of healing and can even be achieved by dying or extremely sick ones. Pointing out a possibility of self-healing ability, Reed (2010, 419) opines, "Acknowledging an inner potential for WB can be a source of hope in illness and end of life", this process is generally known in various disciplines as inner healing or self-healing.

Vulnerability

The fundamental concept associated with ST and the chief reason behind anyone seeking ST is vulnerability. This includes conditions that completely shatter the self-belief of an individual or when an individual faces existential crisis. Vulnerable conditions occur when an individual face a death situation, chronic illness, threat to one's career, loss of loved ones, disabilities and any sudden catastrophic situation. According to Reed (1996) situations that are vulnerable could potentially improve ST and enhance WB. Vulnerable life conditions are capable of transforming painful and difficult situations to healing experiences.

Additional concepts

The relationship between ST and WB could be enhanced by various other concepts. Personal and Contextual factors could be proposed as one of the chief concepts. Various aspects considered under this category are age, gender, education, intensity of illness, spiritual or philosophical outlook of life, physical and social conditions. According to Reed (2010, 423), personal and contextual factors can be positively related to ST and WB, "relationship between self-transcendence and WB may be strengthened by advanced age, higher education [...] Family stress, caregiver stress, lack of social support or other resources that support self-transcendence may weaken the relationship between ST and WB".

Being a nursing theory, there are nursing factors categorized as primary nursing process and secondary

nursing process that could affect ST. “Nursing interventions that support the person’s inner resource for ST may focus directly on facilitating self-transcendence” (Reed, 2014, 115). When an individual seeks within oneself to achieve ST or a family member or a friend helps one in the process of achieving ST, primary nursing process is said to happen. Meanwhile, an intervention facilitated by a professional, outside one’s family or friend circle is considered a secondary nursing process.

Vulnerable Arjuna in Bhagavad Gītā

According to Reed (2014, p.113) vulnerability can include life situations where one is troubled by chronic illness, mortality, family caregiving, loss of a loved one, career difficulties and other life crises. Arjuna also enters a vulnerable state as the Mahābhārata war is about to start. As the stage is set to begin the war, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to move the chariot to the middle of the battlefield to observe the enemy congregation. After observing the members of the enemy, Arjuna is overcome by a feeling of compassion and profound sorrow. Arjuna realizes that even though Kaurava-s are his enemies, he is set to eliminate his kith and kin.

“It is not so much slaughter but slaughter of one’s own people that causes distress and anxiety to Arjuna. We are generally inclined to take a mechanical view of wars and get lost in statistics. But with a little imagination, we can realize how our enemies are human beings, ‘fathers and grandfathers’ with their own individual lives, with their longings and aspirations” (Radhakrishnan, 1963, p. 89).

Arjuna’s bondage with his relatives hinders him from involvement in the war. Meanwhile Arjuna appears to show symptoms of depression because of extreme mental exertion. According to Fava and Targum (2011), fatigue is one of the important symptoms of depression. “Broadly defined, symptoms of fatigue can affect physical, cognitive, and emotional function, impair school and work performance”. Studies also show that poor psycho-social functioning and residual fatigue seem to be the chief symptom in individuals affected by depressive disorder (Fava *et al.*, 2013; Jason *et al.*, 2010; Romito *et.al.*, 2012). In addition, presence of anhedonia is an additional symptom of depression resulting in individuals to eschew enjoyment of pleasures (Ortiz *et al.* 2011). As soon as Arjuna spies the great warriors against whom he is about to fight, specific indication of fatigue gets the better of him

*sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukham ca pariśusyati |
vepathuśca śarīre me romahaṛṣaśca jāyate ||*

[My limbs fail, mouth has dried up, the whole-body trembles and I am experiencing horripilation.] (BhG, 1.29)

*gāṇḍīvam sramsate hastāt-tvakcaiva paridahyate |
na ca śaknoṃyavasthātum bhramatīva me manaḥ ||*

[The gāṇḍīva bow slips off from hand, skin burns intensely. I am not able to stay steadily, and it is as if my mind is whirling] (BhG, 1.30)

Here, the physical and mental incapability exhibited by Arjuna reflect a vulnerable state that he has adapted temporarily to avoid the war situation. Disability indicators presented in the above verses further progresses to a dislike and aversion to the enjoyment of material pleasures. This mentality of renunciation occurs based on the vulnerability indicator, the ‘loss of loved ones’. In Arjuna’s opinion gaining power over the kingdom, accumulating wealth and other pleasures are not worth slaughtering one’s relatives. Hence Arjuna decides to renounce material prospects and chose asceticism as an immediate solution to get away from the warfield. “In Mahābhārata, Arjuna, one of the greatest warriors, became intellectually and spiritually weak and upset by seeing his own people in the battlefield and got so dejected that he refused to fight the war against his own people who were standing against him” (Kumar *et al.* 2018).

In addition to various physical and mental vulnerabilities that Arjuna displays, socio-cultural vulnerabilities are also presented. The death of men of the warrior clan during war would result in cultural deterioration. The men of the warrior clan are known to be the protectors of righteousness and hence various traditions and culture of clans decline as warriors perish. “In the Gita, Arjuna’s duty to exercise violence in battle is grounded first of all on his dharma ² as a Kshatriya, a member of the warrior class. In classical India, this class enjoyed a monopoly on legitimate violence in order to preserve the social order and protect proper political authority” (Davis, 2014:156). By the demise of members of the warrior clan, Arjuna prophecies righteous activities traditionally followed by clans being subjugated by unrighteous activities. This can consequently lead to complete obliteration of a clan as the members of a clan may resort to unethical or unlawful activities. Arjuna anticipates another serious vulnerability that could affect each clan as a result of preponderance of vice. As the number of men decrease, women may resort to men of other varṇa ³ so as to protect and support one’s family. Thus, progenies are created who are a combination of different varṇas and this results in the deterioration of age-old cultural system and traditions confined to a particular clan. “When we shatter the ideals enshrined in immemorial traditions, when we disturb the social equilibrium, we only bring chaos into the world” (Radhakrishnan, 1963, p. 93). At the beginning of the BhG we perceive a vulnerable Arjuna who propounds various reasons to keep away from his instinctual activity as a warrior. Various vulnerabilities perceived are not just bound to physical or mental aspects but to various socio-cultural factors too. Arjuna, forgetting his own vulnerability proposes to solve the predicted socio-cultural vulnerabilities by refraining from war. In Arjuna’s opinion the warriors of the Kaurava army are overpowered by greed and are desirous of kingly pleasures. Arjuna considers himself to be ethical and he feels renunciation of action is the solution.

tasmānnārbhāb vāyam hantum dhārtarāṣṭrān svabāndhavān |
svajanam hi katham hatvā sukhinah syāma mādhava ||

[Oh, Kṛṣṇa we are not supposed to kill the Kaurava-s who are my own relatives. How does one remain happy after destroying relatives?] (Bh.G. 1.37)

yadyapyete na paśyanti lobhopahatacetasah |
kulakṣayakṛtam doṣam mitradrohe ca pātakam ||

[The Kaurava-s overpowered by greed may not see anything wrong in killing one’s relatives, but we clearly understand the crime in killing our own relatives and therefore turn away from the sinful act.] (Bh.G. 1.38)

Kṛṣṇa’s intervention and Arjuna’s Self-transcendence

After presenting various reasons to avoid the war, Arjuna enters an indolent state. He sits down on the chariot floor stating, ‘I shall not fight’. Witnessing a sudden change in the attitude of Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa detects severe symptoms of depression. As Reed specifies, a primary nursing process happens when vulnerability of a person is recognized by a family member or a relative. In continuation to the recognition of symptoms, an intervention happens when the person affected by vulnerability approaches one’s relative for help or a relative intuitively reaches out to aid the person with vulnerability. A primary nursing process can be observed in BhG as well since the vulnerable Arjuna is counselled by his cousin Kṛṣṇa. Like a counselor, Kṛṣṇa immediately intervenes to inspire Arjuna by advising methods to overcome despondency and seek ST (Keshavan, 2020; Angiras, 2020). Kṛṣṇa points out that since Arjuna is unaware of the fundamental philosophical reality, the dejection that Arjuna shows at the war field is gratuitous as Kṛṣṇa comments, “One shall never be bothered by sadness regarding those who are dead or living” (BhG, 2.11).

² The term dharma has various connotations in Indian philosophy like righteousness, duty, morality, law and justice.

³ According to Bhagavad Gītā 4.13, the term Varṇa refers to division of Indian society based on occupation and the combination of qualities viz. sattva, rajas and tamas.

The metaphysics of non-dual philosophy postulates the presence of an eternal and universal entity known as the universal consciousness or Brahman. Brahman is considered as the unchanging, sentient entity; the substratum of the whole universe. Every individual being or Jīva is a reflection of the same Brahman. Forgetting the transcendental reality ⁴ of oneness with the Brahman, beings are bound to the objects and conditions of the phenomenal world. According to the non-dual philosophy, the ultimate goal of every Jīva is to seek liberation or mokṣa. A Jīva brings about an inner transformation, expands the self-boundary and transcend oneself from the limitations of the external world, body, mind, senses etc.

Being of man is essentially the being of the Brahman. But man does not know it, because he is rooted in Ignorance and is born out of Ignorance. This Ignorance is not only the Ignorance that man has, but also the Ignorance that constitutes his foundation. Yet it is through this Ignorance that the 'I' appears as a spark of the Brahman, which is being, consciousness, and bliss. This ignorance is the same as the Unconscious of depth psychology, but is also metaphysical, in that it constitutes the roots of our finite being. It is through this Unconscious that the infinite Brahman appears as the finite 'I'. The aim of man is, therefore, to realize his true nature, that he is in essence the Brahman itself. But so long as his finitude lasts, the Unconscious cannot be overcome; and finitude cannot be overcome, so long as man considers himself to be a finite subject facing the finite objects of the world and going after them for enjoyment (Raju, 2009, p. 186).

Let us observe how Intrapersonal expansion of self-boundary transpires within Arjuna. Reflecting upon the Non-dualistic philosophy, Kṛṣṇa speaks about the momentariness of the physical existence. Arjuna's sorrow rises from his attachment to the physical existence of his relatives, accepting the physical body to be the ultimate truth and believing himself to be causing the annihilation of others. But in reality, death and birth are inevitable stages which an individual goes through. Current existence is just a momentary experience which is part of a sequence that emerged from an unmanifested state and merges back to the unmanifested state (BhG, 2.27-28). A comprehension of this philosophical reality helps Arjuna transcend his vulnerability, the fear about causing death.

Now, an expansion of self-boundary within Arjuna was necessary to enhance his motivation to fight. The core of non-dual philosophy that propounds the omnipresence of Brahman and the ephemerality of bodily existence seemed to be the apt lesson for Arjuna. Various illustrations regarding Brahman by Kṛṣṇa pierced the depths of Arjuna's consciousness, intuitively leading him to the expansion of self.

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit
nāyam bhūtvābhavitā vā na bhūyah
ajo nitya śāśvatoyam purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

[The soul never takes birth, nor does it die. Never does it once exist and then cease to exist. Soul is beyond birth, eternal, immortal and ageless. Even if the body gets destroyed, the soul never perishes] (BhG, 2.20)

*vāsāmsi jirṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naroparāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jirṇāni
anyāni samyāti navāni dehi*

[Like a person who changes one's worn out clothes and grabs new ones, similarly the soul discards the worn-out body and enters a new one] (BhG, 2.22)

Thus, Arjuna recognized, the Brahman, the eternal truth and the source of sentience, always remains

⁴ According to the Non-dual philosophy, there are three kinds of realities. The transcendental reality that considers the existence of Brahman alone, the phenomenal reality that denotes the reality of the world and the apparent reality belongs to the objects of illusion, hallucination and dreams.

permanent. Various changes ⁵ that are seen in the body do not affect the soul. By reflecting on this truth, Arjuna experiences an expansion from within and understands that there is no concern of contradicting morality if anyone dies during the war since the essence of every individual remains imperishable.

*avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidam tatam |
vināśamavyayasyāsyā na kaścitkartumarhasi ||*

[Understand that the all-pervading Brahman is indestructible. No one is capable of destroying this eternal entity] (BhG, 2.17)

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dabati pāvakah |
na cainam kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutah ||*

[Weapons do not shred the soul, nor does fire burn it. Water can never wet it, nor can the wind wither it] (BhG, 2.23)

The indestructible soul is believed to be subtly existing within all the beings and hence despondency based on ignorance regarding the true nature of soul has to be avoided. With a firm understanding of this reality and realizing one's duty as a warrior, one shall fight. Combating is the source of happiness for a warrior and helps to uphold one's fame. Kṛṣṇa adds, one has to maintain a balance of mind while combating and fight for the sake of delivering one's duty alone

*sukhadukhe same kṛtvā lābhālabhau jayājayau |
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsyasi ||*

[By maintaining a mental balance between happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat, one has to fight for the sake of duty and will never incur sin] (BhG, 2.37)

Kṛṣṇa offers karma-yoga as the path to seek mental balance while one performs one's duty. Karma-yoga helps one to shift one's focus from the results to the actual performance. Karma-yoga is in fact a realization that an individual has freedom to perform one's prescribed actions alone and not on results. Neither shall one consider oneself to be causing the result of one's actions nor shall one be bound to inaction (BhG, 2.47). An inward expansion is perceivable through Arjuna's activities as he recognizes Brahman as the all-pervading entity and therefore agrees to perform his duty. By grasping the concept of Karma yoga, Arjuna was successful in averting emotional stress while fulfilling his duty.

Interpersonal or outward expansion is another important facet of the expansion of self-boundary. Outward expansion is founded on the realization of the oneness aspect that BhG proposes. Here, an individual's thoughts and actions are channelized to be beneficial for the whole world. The activities that are beneficial for the whole world is termed as *lokasaṅgraha*. Kṛṣṇa opines that human beings shall be knowledgeable enough to perform their duties without attachment but focusing on WB of the whole world. Ignorant fellows are never capable of performing *lokasaṅgraha* as they are overcome by attachment. Actions performed with a *lokasaṅgraha* motive is the door to WB. One has to closely watch the behaviour of great persons who are spiritually evolved and reflect upon the actions performed by them to comprehend *lokasaṅgraha*.

*karmaṇaiva hi samsiddhimāsthitāḥ janakādayah |
lokasaṅgrahamevāpi sampaśyānkartumarhasi ||*

[Great people like Janaka have achieved perfection by performing their prescribed duty. Therefore, you have to perform your duty with a vision of doing good to the world] (BhG, 3.20)

yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janah |

5 Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary to BhG (2.20) refers to six kinds of changes that happens to every object in the phenomenal world. They are birth, existence, growth, transformation, decay and death.

sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate ||

[Whatever actions great people perform; common people follow them. The whole world pursues the actions authenticated by them] (BhG, 3.21)

BhG insists everyone to act for the WB of the whole world and leave behind the notions of hatred, attachment and selfishness. The ideology proposed here reflects the aspect of outward expansion. “The finite centres should look upon themselves as members of an organism and work for the sake of the whole. The false claim to absoluteness and the wrong view that his independence is limited by that of others should be abandoned. The true ideal is *lokasaṅgraha*, or the solidarity of the world. The spirit of the whole, works in the world. The good man should cooperate with it and aim for the welfare of the world” (Radhakrishnan, 1923, p. 567). One may think that the interconnectedness proposed here considers only humanity but BhG seeks all-inclusiveness. It explores how an individual is connected to one’s environment and to the other subtle divine powers. Equanimity of the entire universe is preserved through a mentality of sacrifice, renunciation and service.

*annādbhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍannasambhavah |
yajñādbhavati parjanyo yajñah karmasamudbhavah ||*

[Life originates and sustains because of food; food production happens because of rain. By the performance of rituals does rain occur and rituals originate from adherence to one’s duty] (BhG, 3.14)

This is the cycle of all-inclusive existence that reflects the universal aspect of sustainability. BhG states, those who don’t follow the above-mentioned cycle are sinners and their life is in vain since they are bothered about themselves alone and not about the society (BhG, 3.16). BhG encourages one to enkindle a disposition that seeks WB of oneself and the whole society. As one moves towards the goal, foreseeing the WB of the whole world, the individual transcends various societal inequalities and emotional outbreaks like enmity, frustration, jealousy, greed and sorrow.

*samadukha sukha svastha samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanah |
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyānindātmasamstutih ||*

[They are the intelligent ones who remain equipoised during happiness and sorrow, look upon a clod of earth, stone and gold as the same, remain equal to pleasant and unpleasant experiences and are unperturbed by blame and praise] (BhG, 14.24)

mānāpamānayostulya tulyamitrārīpakṣayoh |

[They remain equal to honour and dishonour and to friend and enemy] (BhG, 14.25)

It is imperative to give due value to universal WB. Maintenance of universal WB depends on the mental disposition and attitude of every individual. Negative qualities like Self obsession and selfishness does not aid in the achievement of universal WB. Rather, the negative qualities could cause a complete disorientation of the individual and may disrupt universal WB. Dhiman (2019, 63) sums up the ideal way of acting in the world as propounded by BhG, “the seers act for the WB of all beings and for the unification of the world. At the highest level, they spontaneously embody the virtues of universal morality, such as selflessness, compassion, desirelessness, forbearance, peace, and harmony”. As an initial step towards promoting positive qualities, Kṛṣṇa categorises human beings into two, based on the qualities they possess. The activities of *daiva* or godly category reflects all the positive qualities like nonviolence, truthfulness, free from anger, compassion, patience etc. meanwhile activities of *āsura* or demonic ones display deceit, insolence, pride and anger (BhG, 16.1-4). Avoiding the demonic qualities is imperative for an individual to bring about universal WB. Nurturing demonic qualities could tend to cultivate wicked and evil mindedness. Disrupting the social system, ones with demonic qualities work to amass materialistic prospects for one’s own benefit.

*āśāpāśāsatairbaddhāb kāmakrodhapaṛāyaṇāb |
ihante kāmabhogārthamanyāyenārthasañcayān ||*

[Bound by infinite number of desires and driven by lust and anger, individuals strive to accumulate wealth by unethical means to satisfy their desires] (BhG, 16.12)

*idamadyamayā labdhamimam prāpsyē manoratham |
idamastīdamapi me bhavaīsyati punardhanam ||*

[I have achieved this today and I wish to procure even more; I have obtained this much wealth and I desire to gain more] (BhG, 16.13)

*asau mayā hatah śatrurhaniṣye cāparānapi |
īśvarohamāham bhogī siddhoham balavānsukhī ||*

[I have destroyed my enemies and I shall destroy many others. I am the God, the enjoyer, the powerful one and I am happy] (BhG, 16.14)

One can notice here the significance of nurturing the godly qualities to strengthen one's bondage with the society. Intrapersonal expansion could be perceived as one transcends one's mental limitations to accommodate other members of the society with a vision of universal WB.

Scriptures like the Upaniṣad-s⁶ that speak about the highest goal of human life which is *mokṣa*⁷ (liberation) and ancient works regarding *Nīti*⁸ (ethics) are manuals that could be consulted to seek Transpersonal or the upward expansion. According to Kṛṣṇa (BhG, 16.23-24), those who act to fulfil one's desire alone and act against what the scriptures prescribe may never achieve WB and the greatest goal of human life i.e. *mokṣa*. One of the easiest methods advocated by BhG to focus on universal WB and progress towards liberation is through *Bhakti Yoga* (Path of Devotion). *Bhakti* is a method of practice where an individual believes in an all-powerful godly entity as the one who takes care of one's WB and guides a seeker towards liberation. The word *bhakti* is derived from the Sanskrit root word '*bhaja sevāyām*', used in the sense of selfless service. In his aphorisms on *bhakti*, sage Śāṅḍilya describes *bhakti* as the "greatest love towards one's chosen deity". According to Sadasivan *et al.* (2020), "*Bhakti* is an altruistic mentality towards one's action which in itself is reverential and filled with love towards one's God. The ultimate motive of practising *Bhakti* is to realise one's own real nature". Not all devotees have the mental strength and concentration to meditate upon the divine form for a longer period of time. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa proposes selfless service for devotees to channelize one's mind to the divine. If a devotee still faces difficulty to practice selfless actions focused on the divine, one shall resort to renunciation of fruits of action as well. Through renunciation of fruits of action alone could one attain peace and WB (BhG, 12.10-12). Discharging actions selflessly with a mind-set of renunciation could help a devotee transcend self-obsession. A devotee seeks one's upward expansion by recognizing the divine entity being reflected in all the beings and serving the entire world, considering them as an embodiment of god. This mentality adds to the WB of both the devotee and the beings of the whole world as the devotee reflects positive qualities mentioned below

*adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitrakaruṇa eva ca |
nirmamo nirabāṅkāra samadukha sukhakṣamī ||*

[A true devotee never hates other beings but shows friendship and compassion. Free from possession and egotism, a devotee remains equipoised in happiness and sorrow and is ever

6 Upaniṣad-s are the integral part of Veda-s. They majorly discuss about Brahman and the path to realize Brahman.

7 The term *Mokṣa* is translated as liberation or realization. When one realizes the oneness of the individual self with the universal consciousness, one escapes from the bondage of the material world. Once *Mokṣa* is achieved an individual escape the cycle of birth and death.

8 There are numerous works on *Nīti* (Ethics) and the most prominent ones are of Bhartṛhari and Chāṅakya.

merciful] (BhG, 12.13)

At the beginning of the BhG we see a brave Arjuna who asks Kṛṣṇa to drive the chariot to the middle of the battlefield. Arjuna's confidence is shattered as he superimposes bondage over the members of the enemy camp. Arjuna was overcome by sorrow and emotional distress and became physically and mentally incapable to perform his duty. Arjuna says,

*kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvah
pṛcchāmi tvām dharmasammūḍhacetāh |
yacchreyah syānniścitam brūhi tanme
śisyasteham śādhimām tvām prapannam ||*

[My real nature has been completely taken over by cowardice. I am totally blind about my duty and hence I ask you about what ought to be done. Kindly advise me on what is the best for me. I surrender unto you please protect me.] (BhG, 2.7)

These words of Arjuna depict a state of emotional breakdown. We can also observe that Arjuna is seeking the right course of action to escape the psychogenic blackout he is currently experiencing. As the conversation between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa goes on Arjuna seem to be invigorated. With the comprehension of various constructive and encouraging ideas shared by Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna seem to exhibit a temporal expansion. Arjuna recognizes that performing action with a mentality of dispassion and renunciation could help him from the current trauma. Maintaining a mental equipoise seem to be an immediate solution proposed by Kṛṣṇa. Steadiness of mind is achieved through *abhyāsa* (intense practise) and *vairāgya* (dispassion).

*asamśayam mahābāho mano durnigraham calam |
abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate ||*

[Oh Arjuna! The mind is indeed too difficult to be controlled as it is very restless. Mind can be controlled only through intense practise and dispassion] (BhG, 6.35)

The thorough discussion on one's real essence, the knowledge of self, which is beyond the body, mind and intellect seem to have helped Arjuna overcome delusion. Arjuna expresses the same,

*madanugrahāya paramam guhyamadhyātmasaṅgitam |
yatvayoktam vacastena mohayam vigato mama ||*

[By the esoteric knowledge regarding the self which you have revealed for my WB, the delusion is now dispelled] (BhG, 11.1)

As the delusion is dispelled, we perceive an Arjuna who is ready to discharge his duty as a true warrior.

Arjuna achieves wellbeing

With a strong foundational knowledge of his real self, Arjuna is no more affected by the dopey ideologies presented at the outset of his conversation with Kṛṣṇa. Performing his actions with a balanced state of mind, Arjuna acts with total surrender and with a mentality of service to the divine. Arjuna describes his mental state thus,

*naṣṭo mohah smṛtirlabdhā tvatprasādānmayācyuta |
sthitosmi gatasandehah kariṣye vacanam tava ||*

[With your grace, I have overcome delusion and regained my memory. I am free of all the doubts and shall act as instructed by you.] (BhG, 18.73)

With the above statement from Arjuna, we could assume that Arjuna has realized his inner potential.

It is perceivable that he has overcome the initial state of depression and anxiety. Rather than renouncing his duty Arjuna shows the right intent to fight. Listening to Kṛṣṇa's words and pondering over the advice, Arjuna achieves an inner healing and works for the common WB. Radhakrishnan (1923, 579) opines "These noble souls regard with equal mind all things of the earth. They stand for a dynamic creative spiritual life, and see to it that the social regulations tend to the fuller spiritual unfolding or expression of human life. They do their appointed work ordained by the divine will which works in them".

Conclusion

Being a nursing theory, Reed's theory of ST easily fits into the context of BhG. The cause for Arjuna's vulnerability not only consisted of emotional and physical impotence but Arjuna adds serious social issues like the mixing of varṇas. With the initial mental state of anxiety and depression displayed by Arjuna, an intervention was necessary. To Arjuna's advantage, the primary nursing process was received from his relative Kṛṣṇa who counselled Arjuna. All aspects of Reed's ST model, namely Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Transpersonal and Temporal expansion could be perceived in the interaction between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa's method of intervention helped Arjuna discharge his duty with mental equanimity and with an intention to contribute for universal WB. Through an intense study of BhG, the modern-day counselling psychologists can find various approaches to improve the current intervention methods. Finally, it could be proposed that anyone seeking WB and ST could seek for a solution in BhG.

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