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Yogic management of stress and anxiety in differently abled persons and caregivers in context of Bhagwad Gita

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Abstract

Stress and Anxiety are two major and most common problems found in Differently Abled Persons and their Caregivers. The stress and anxiety, both together, trigger the behavioral stressors of human mind to adversely affect its thinking ability, decision making capacity and self-esteem along with circumstantial behavior. Prolonged phases of stress acts as a root cause for a lot of mental, physical and psychosomatic problems. Modern day insecure job environment, fear of isolation and unbalanced dietary patterns has compounded the effects of stress and anxiety multiple times in disabled persons. In Bhagwad Gita, Yogeshwar Krishna discusses many yogic principles those are of utmost importance for managing stress and anxiety to achieve mind body balanced state. Bhagwad Gita proposes that the human body, soul and mind are interdependent and intertwined together and their balanced nexus is essence to a healthy and successful life. This can be achieved by the Yogic principles of Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga and Bhakti Yoga discussed in Bhagwad Gita. In the Yogic principles mentioned in second, third, fifth and sixth chapters; Bhagwad Gita presents a modern day pragmatic solution for stress and anxiety management which is beneficial for Differently Abled Persons and their caregivers across the ages from all over the world.

Keywords: Stress, anxiety, differently abled persons, bhagwad gita, caregivers, gyan yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga

Introduction

Stress and Anxiety are two major and most common problems found in Differently Abled Persons and their caregivers. The United Nation, in its preamble of Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, illustrates disability as a condition which arises from the interactions between the working dimensional areas of the persons with impairments with their environmental and attitudinal barriers prohibiting their active and effective participation in society on the base of equality with others^[1]. People with disabilities are living stressful lives due to the stress arising from their physical limitations, limited jobs, career, family relationships and financial matters. Their disability also affects their caregivers who are those persons on whom they are dependent for help to cope up with the limitations arisen due to disability. In context of disability, caregiver is defined as a person who tends to the concerns or needs of another person who has limitations due to disability^[2]. These caregivers may be family members, nurses, neighbours and close friends etc. As per the data depicted on the internet website of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2.68 crores disabled persons live in India according to 2011 consensus and this constitutes 2.21 percent of total population^[3]. If we add the estimated number of caregivers, this number becomes very significant. Due to stress and anxiety, the disabled people and up to a significant level their caregivers are suffering from different Physical, mental and psychosomatic issues thereby triggering stressors in life which further worsens the situation. With the provisions of psychological treatment and medicines, we have many types of therapies and measures available in modern times such as psychotherapy, mind counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy, mood enhancer medicines etc. But, our revered scriptures like the Bhagwad Gita have already mentioned and illustrated the solution to our day to day worries and general problems.

The Bhagwad Gita is a splendid powerful key to all the stress and anxieties which was narrated by Lord Krishna in the war of Mahabharata. Bhagwad Gita presents pragmatic and real life applications of righteous ways to deal with day to day stress and anxieties which disabled persons face in their everyday life.

One of the supreme contributions of Indian spiritual heritage to the world is Bhagwad Gita which is deemed by scholars to be one of the first discourses from divinity. The Bhagwad Gita is a great pragmatic doctrine which speaks of universal truth. The Bhagwad Gita discusses the most revered metaphysical science of body mind existence. It is meant for people across the ages from all over the world. This Holy Scripture needs no formal introduction and is equally accepted and respected in Eastern and Western countries. In the transnational arena of debate and discussion, this Holy Scripture has influenced spiritualists, theosophists and intellectual persons [4]. As the Bhagwad Gita teaches to deal with human day to day stress, worries and anxieties which persons face time to time in their everyday life scenarios, therefore, it is fully effective and applicable in people of every gender, creed, religious faith or culture. The Bhagwad Gita is said to be the essence of the all Vedas and Upanishads. It is also called brahmavidya or the science of the divine. In Bhagwad Gita, Yogeshwar Krishna discusses many yogic principles those are of utmost importance for managing stress and anxiety to achieve mind body balanced state. The word "Yoga" narrated by Krishna in Bhagwad Gita can be interpreted in many ways. Yoga can be inferred as Samadhi. It can be used to denote the meaning of addition or joining, for example, it is used to denote the context of joining the horses with the chariot [5]. In second chapter of Gita, Yoga is said to be the art of skilfulness in work [6]. Yogeshwar Krishna declares that yoga is the separation from the worldly bondages of this sorrowful world [7].

Origin of stress and anxiety in differently abled persons and caregivers

World Health Organization (WHO) defines stress as "a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts and compels us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Every person experiences stress up to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being [8]".

The acceptance of the concept of stress as a psychological issue is widely attributed to Hans Selye. In the year of 1936. Selye had described about stress by putting forward a logical hypothesis of a three-steps process called as the general adaptation syndrome (GAS).

Selye proposed that in answer to some external stressor, a person first react by mobilizing his body resources to fight with or to escape from the cause of stressor. Selye said this as 'alarm' stage. The second stage, involved 'resistance,' which attempts to accept to or cope with the stressor. Third stage 'exhaustion' comes when a person is prolonged to face the stressor and is not able to escape.

In terms of coining the term, it was famous scholar Walter Cannon who first time utilized the term stress in his work which was related to the fight-or-flight response, in the year of 1915.

In modern medical classification DSM-5, *anxiety* is defined as the anticipation of future threat; it is distinguished from *fear*, the emotional response to real or perceived

imminent threat [9]. Anxiety is mostly conceived as a normal emotion. From a psychological viewpoint, it is fast growing and adaptive because it promotes survival by compelling individuals to steer clear of danger and perilous places. Since the last century, anxiety has also been considered as a disorder in psychiatric medical classifications. The clinical limit of threshold between everyday normal adaptive anxiety and distressing uncontrolled anxiety is subject to the experts and this is also individualized. In the period of COVID-19 pandemic, it was reported that the persons who had not a better access for the resources supply, were found to be more prone for developing stress and anxiety issues [10]. This thing also applies to the persons with disabilities who have always been remained deprived of opportunities to have a better access towards the resources.

The Bhagwad Gita is an excellent key to all stress and anxieties of day to day life which was given by Krishna in the great war of Mahabharata. Bhagwad Gita has pragmatic and real life application in the management of day to day stress and anxiety which a human faces in his day to day life. It can also be inferred by the fact that, since the Bhagwad Gita was not narrated in any holy and quiet place like temple or forest, rather it was given by Krishna in the war field of Mahabharata. Thus it is fully evident that the Bhagwad Gita is the practical solution for the stress and anxiety one faces in different situations of life. Bhagwad Gita's seven hundred shlokas or verses present a definitive action guide to reach the goal of self-realization. No other scripture or religious book reveals in such an easy and understandable way, the nature of human consciousness, the self, the whole universe and the supreme. The Bhagwad Gita has 700 shlokas or verses in gross. These 700 verse forms an epitome of wisdom and spirituality. According to the Bhagwad Gita, the human beings are primarily soul or atman that is a part of cosmic consciousness that has appeared in human form to work out its karma to self-realize itself. The Bhagwad Gita focuses reaching stage of self-enlightenment in one's life span. The Bhagwad Gita is divided into eighteen chapters and each chapter is considered as a particular form of Yoga.

Effects of stress and anxiety on differently abled persons and caregivers

Stress is the body's reactionary instantaneous mechanism to dangerous and harmful situations whether they're real or apparent. When we feel fear, a neurochemical reaction occurs in our body that allows us to react in a way to prevent loss or injury. This reaction is called as "fight-or-flight" or the stress reaction. During the stress reaction, the heart rate increases [11], breathing fastens, muscles tighten, and blood pressure increases rapidly.

A little stress and anxiety at day to day situations every now and then is not a serious thing to be worried about. But if it remains for prolonged durations, chronic stress and anxiety can cause many serious health problems, consisting.

- Mood problems, like Depression, Anger, Dominant or Submissive behavior and personality issues.
- Cardiac problems, Blood pressure, hyper palpitations, panic attacks, and strokes.
- Obesity and other excessive eating disorders.
- Hormonal and endocrinal problems.
- Dermatological and hair problems like acne, psoriasis, and eczema, and occasional itching of skin.

- Gastrointestinal problems, such as Ulcers in stomach, ulcerative colitis, and irritable Bowel.

Management of Stress and Anxiety according to Bhagwad Gita

The second Chapter of Bhagwad Gita is Sankhya Yoga containing 72 verses. This chapter explains in deep the permanent nature of human soul. This chapter is often regarded by the scholars as the brief summary of Bhagwad Gita. In this chapter Lord Krishna elaborated Arjuna that the body is destructible whereas the inner soul is immortal and it is our soul which will remain in existence after physical death. Therefore, we must not be attached only with the physical body. This notion of temporary nature of soul attachment with physical body also infers that the limitations with the physical body in the form of disability cannot be perpetual and thus be improved. The persons are entitled only for the work and they should be free from the desires of fruits of the work by doing selfless actions^[12] which is specifically having importance for the caregivers who look after the disabled persons.

Karma Yoga, containing 43 verses explains the eternal and righteous duties of human being. In Bhagwad Gita, Karma Yoga has been depicted as the path leading to the practice of unselfish action which involves working without the thoughtful intentions of financial rewards, name or fame^[13]. Krishna explains that how performance of rightful prescribed duties, but without any attachment to results, is the appropriately suitable course of right action to Arjuna. The person should perform his rightful duties without having attachment to the desires since this nature of selfless action leads the person towards connection with the supreme consciousness^[14]. Krishna advises to tolerate the distress without being disturbed in any manner^[15]. He also says not to hesitate in fighting or engaging for the right cause^[16]. Krishna preached Arjuna that action which is regulated by religion and which is done without any attachment without affection or hatred, and without anticipatory desire for results is considered to be in the mode of righteousness goodness. This applies not only to Arjuna but also to all of us that we must adhere to our duties & responsibilities without any anticipation of fruitful rewards.

Gyana Yoga chapter talks of ultimate truth and contains 42 verses. Gyana means knowledge which is true and inseparable from the gross perception of object which is supreme consciousness^[17]. This path advocates to renounce the desires and the actions related with the desires hence this path is regarded as very difficult and steep for a common man^[18]. In this chapter, Krishna discloses that he has seen through many lives, always preaching for the protection of the revered and the destruction of the devils. Therefore, this section shows us to differentiate between the dutiful and undutiful deeds and to protect the dutiful deeds and destroy the undutiful deeds in the social arena. He reiterates that one can perform duties with the abandonment of results^[19]. One should have faith in himself to understand transcendental knowledge^[20]. The actions which are done for the attainment of different types of comforts, luxury things, or joy is called as Avidya and the actions performed for the achieving of the Brahma i.e. self-realization or soul awakening is called as Vidya. It also suggests us to gain enlightenment for the improvement of self and the world. Dhyana Yoga chapter deals with the science of self-actualization, containing 47 verses. Krishna elaborates the

Ashtanga Yoga here. He further illustrates the complexities of the mind and the methods through which the mastery of the mind be gained. This principles are of utmost importance in reference to the persons with disabilities where physical limitations tend to interfere with the optimal working of their brain.

Gyan Vijnana Yoga teaches the knowledge of the ultimate truth and it contains 30 verses. Krishna explains the absolute reality is to free fully oneself from the bondages of Maya which comes in the form of Materialistic desires. Here absolute reality means the union with supreme consciousness which implies seeking and walking the righteous path. One should control the mind because mind is the friend of conditioned soul and his enemy as well^[21]. Maya is form of materialistic desires- which an individual wants to attain and it leads to one's misery and stress, anxiety in life. By understanding how to live a balance life with spiritual and materialistic wishes, one can reduce stress and anxiety in life and can cope up effectively with stress and anxiety arising from materialistic worldly reasons.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main purpose of this paper is not to disregard and discard any Western psychological therapeutic models for the effective management of stress and anxiety in disabled persons and caregivers and coping but this paper is a honest attempt to focus on an ancient holy scripture, The Bhagwad Gita which has been less discussed by modern especially young generations while considering it as a religious book only. With an increase in the number of psychotherapeutic methods, stress and anxiety management skills in the modern years, majority being eclectic, we strive for therapeutic models embedded in the pragmatic wisdom of the Bhagwad Gita which may add an additional important content to western psychotherapies. In the Bhagavad Gita, much attempt has been made to equate and co-relate Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga in context of stress and anxiety. The Bhagavad Gita is a magnificent holy scripture whose interpretation by Krishna is beyond one's intellectual capacity. One can get immense positive results from the Bhagavad Gita according to their mental level of understanding and faith in oneness of humanity. This paper in gross provides basic understanding of yogic principles which are useful in the stress and anxiety management in context of the persons with disabilities along with their caregivers living in the present era of technology and challenges. Application of the knowledge present in these verses in day to day life, can surely lead us to happy and healthy life free of all stress and anxiety.

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