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Empirical model on self growth : based on Bhagavat Gita

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to interpret scientifically the ancient Bhagavat Gita (BG) text book's, verses on Yoga of Self Growth in terms of Raga (Likes) and Dvesha (Dislikes) vis-à-vis Modern Psychology's concept of Pair of Opposites: Likes-Dislikes. Using selected 6 verses from BG as interpreted by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, we proposed an empirical model on SGY by using Newton's 3rd law. At mental level, Choice (Ψ) made has an equal and opposite reaction in the form of Consequence (ϕ). In Gita, it is inclusion of "less than ($<$) or greater than ($>$) principle" along with equality ($=$) i.e. choice made may be less than or greater than or equal to consequence. In short, it is $\Psi \leq n \geq -\phi$. This modified law is reflected in different verses of BG. Psychological tools and methodologies could be applied in forming BG items. To show the validity of the SGY model, 10 prominent Universal values are derived from this model. Further, the model suggests methods of developing a psychology questionnaire of constructs in different fields of psychology

Key words: Bhagavat Gita, Self Growth, Newton's 3rd law, Universal values.

Introduction

Likes - Dislikes plays a prominent role in one's own daily life. The management of this pair of opposites calls for proper management of choices and consequences in an effective manner in the light of universal laws governing the action and reaction. Action and Reaction are governed by Newton's 3rd of motion i.e. for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Let us take an illustration of this pair of opposites from Mahabharata¹. In Mahabharata, Duryodhana expresses his conflict of mental opposites: I know what is right and I also know what is wrong. The problem is, that I know what is good, but I don't pursue it, and I know what is bad (adharma), but I cannot refrain from doing it. Arjuna in BG [2] also asks the same question as to "Why one does bad in spite of knowing what it is good". The characterization of Duryodhana is that of one who is fighting for likes (raga) and dislikes (dvesha) at the cost of dharma, and Arjuna is fighting for dharma. It is aptly said by Swami DayanandaSaraswathi², the whole Gita is calling for effective management of likes and dislikes to optimize SGY. Swami Dayananda³ used to say that the whole BG is a book of Like - Dislike Psychology. According to him, likes – dislikes (raga-dvesas) are not the cause of birth and death (Samsara), and it is neither possible, nor necessary to totally remove them. If the likes or dislikes has either a nature (e.g. wish to steal) or a force (even though the like / dislike itself may not be opposed to the right course of action (Dharma) that can make one go against Dharma, one has to neutralize it. This means that through a process of values education, processing of emotional pain, an understanding of universal laws of action and results and exercising one's will, one gains mastery over such like – dislike and is able to refrain from (in the beginning) and eventually be disinterested in the behavior they dictate. Like- dislikes that do not impel one to act against the right course of action (Dharma) need not be neutralized, but one still has to gain mastery over them so that one can choose to go with those that will advance one's pursuits.

Aristotle perspective of self growth as a process of developing one's potential, Maslow by Self Actualization, Norton as realization of personal potential, Jahoda's positive conception of mental health, Rogers expressed it as fully functioning person who is open to experience in which one is continually developing and becoming rather than achieving a fixed state, life span theories by Buhler, Erikson, Neugarten, Jung also give explicit emphasis on continued growth and confronting new challenges at different periods of life.

Now the self growth development model as propounded by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi talks about the management of likes and dislikes. The components of the model it calls for management of microcosm, management of macrocosm and understanding its interconnectedness in dealing our life effectively. Interplay of microcosm and macrocosm and its effect on individual gives leads for self growth.

Freudian concept of development lies in managing the conflict between pairs of opposite's namely basic impulses – id (sex and aggression, irrational wishers, impulsive) with the ideals and morals – super ego incorporated from parents' calls for a delay in gratification and control of impulsive behavior. The power to control impulses and delay gratification is one of the earmarks of a mature personality as it is socially appropriate and expresses responsible behavior. Thus, growth happens in managing the pairs of opposites.

Erikson psycho social stage of development deals with the pairs of opposites. The developmental stages asserted by Erikson are based along the concept that we as humans innately think of ourselves in terms of “opposites” /

Despite various studies carried out in Psychology on pair of opposites like success and failures affect the development of self-efficacy beliefs⁴ reveals that there are extrinsic factors which play an important role in change of beliefs on SGY which are Universal.

Zubin Mulla and Venkat Krishnan^{5,6,7}, in their study on Karma Yoga philosophy, have developed a scale for understanding Karma yoga as an absence of desire for rewards which is questionable in the modern age as no work is done without result orientation. He also attributes the reason for the gap being neutral to opposites is not taken into account which is taken in our present conceptualization. Another significant finding of the study was that there was no association between dutifulness and life satisfaction which is considered in our study. Further in their work on “Karma Yoga the Indian work ideal and its relationship with empathy”, use the same construct absence of desire for results for an explanation of karma yoga concept. This gap is being explored in the present study, which presumes that every action has a result.

In an another study by Jayanth Narayanan and Venkat Krishnan⁸, on “Impact of Satva and Rajas Gunas on Transformational Leadership and Karma yoga”, the constructs on right and wrong are attributed as aggressive (rajasic) trait, but in Gita calls for discretion or prudence in one's action. Considering right and wrong is good (satwic) quality i.e. to apply reason based on universal values. In the constructs evolved for Karma yoga, it does not distinguish between binding desire and non binding desire which is being considered now in our work for SGY.

Materials and Methods

The concept of SGY Model is framed based on BG⁹. Broadly, the choice is related to the mental activity and the consequence is related to the objective outcome of the choice made.

- i) Dhyayato visayan pum sah sangas tes upa jayate
Sangat sanjaya te kamah kamat krodha bhijayate

In the person who dwells upon objects, an attachment is born with reference to them. From attachment is born desire and from desire anger is born.

Scientifically,



In the above, attachment is a choice function (Ψ) and consequence function (ϕ) is anger through desire. So it is clear that when a man focuses on a wrong choice, result oriented or consequence based activity, the negative outcomes follows sooner or later.

As per Newton's 3rd law, it is equal and opposite i.e.

$f(\Psi) = -f(\phi)$, i.e. Attachment function = - Anger function

$f(\Psi) = \Psi$ and $f(\phi) = \phi$, it's an assumption made in this paper

This interpretation of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, is applied to our concept of self growth of a person. In the person, who dwells upon objective consequences, a binding connection is born with reference to outside objects. From this connection, desire comes and from desire, anger is born.

These consequence based characteristics is further explained in the following verse [9].

- ii) Krodhad bhavati sammohah sammoha tsmrti vibhramah
Smrti bhram sadbuddhina so buddhina satprana syati

From anger comes delusion and from delusion comes the loss of memory. Because of the loss of memory, the mind becomes incapacitated and when the mind is incapacitated, the person is destroyed.

To put it scientifically,



In the above, anger is a choice function (Ψ) and consequence function (ϕ) is mind destruction through the process of delusion and memory loss. So it is clear that when a man focuses on result oriented or consequence based activity, the negative outcomes follows sooner or later.

As per Newton's 3rd law, it is equal and opposite i.e.

$$f(\Psi) = -f(\phi), \text{ or Anger function} = -\text{Mind destruction function}$$

And therefore, the Choice or Self made decisions plays an important role which is given in the following sloka [10].

- iii) Balam balavatam cah am kama raga vivarjitam
dharma viruddhob hute sukamo'smi bharata rsabha

Arjuna (*a great warrior in the battle field of Mahabharata*), the foremost in the clan of Bharata! In the strong, I am the strength that is free from desire and attachment. In all beings, I am the desire that is not opposed to Dharma.

In the above translation, I am the strength is reframed as "I make the choice with firmness" which is free from desire and attachment. But also one also gives equal, greater or lesser importance makes the desire that is not opposed to universal values.

Here, in this verse, the extended form of Newton's 3rd law is stated, mathematically it may be expressed as;

$$\Psi + \phi = n, \text{ or Choice} + \text{Consequence} = \text{Universal values (Dharma)}.$$

In the above, we have assumed that $f(\Psi) = \Psi$ and $f(\phi) = \phi$ and $f(n) = n$

This result indicates choice and consequence, both are at our disposal in the form of mind governed by or equal to outside the body or objective based universal values

Further, the relationship between choice and consequence is explained in the following verses [9]

- iv) Yogasthah kuru karmaani sangam tyaktwaa dhananjayah
Siddhya siddhyoh samo bhootwaa samatwam yoga uchyate

Remaining steadfast or having evenness in mind is important in practicing action. Dhananjaya (Arjuna) perform actions, abandoning attachment and remaining the same to success and failure. This evenness of mind is called yoga.

$$\Psi + \phi = n \text{ or}$$

$$50\% \text{ Success} + 50\% \text{ Failure} = \text{Mind balancing action,}$$

here the percentage of success and failure varies based on individual's behavior but it is all governed by universal values, 'n'

Mathematically, it is

$$\text{Self Growth Yoga (SGY)} = 50\% \text{ Choice} + 50\% \text{ Consequence.}$$

Further the characteristic of choice is explained: In the management of microcosm and macrocosm, the common element is management of the pairs of opposites to have self growth. Discretion in action calls for one's to choose the right course of action amidst choices based on universal values and to have evenness of mind, it calls for acceptance of the universal law of cause and effect.

Here SGY = Universal values 'n'. This is subjective Newton's 3rd law. If SGY = 0, then it becomes conventional Newton's 3rd law;

$$\Psi = -\phi$$

Ralph Waldo Emerson said the Law of Cause and Effect is the "law of laws". The most important lesson involving human conduct and interaction is seen in the Cosmic Law of Cause and Effect. The prosperity of life is created by our own deeds in helping others through thoughts and actions. The motion or action will give appropriate result, according to the universal law [11].

- v. Yadru cchaalaa bhasan tushto dwandwaa teeto vimat sarah;

Samah siddhaava siddhau cha kritwa api nahi badhyate.

The one who is happy with whatever comes by chance, who is unaffected by the opposites, free from jealousy, and even minded with reference to success and failure, is not bound even though performing the action.

The percentage of success and failure depends on one's own discretion in choosing right or wrong thoughts at the mental level i.e.

$n \leq 1$ or $n \geq 1$ or represented by ; $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} n^n$

This relation is valid when there is imbalance¹¹ in our thinking process or cognition nature or using ones own discretion in a wrong way. Ideal percentage would be giving equal importance to good and bad or remaining steadfast in both times of good and bad deeds.

Neutralization process begins objectively with 3 components. The consequences begins with less than (<), greater than (>) and ends up with equal (=) to whatever action that is performed by an individual. Neutralization calls for doing action by exercising one's choice based on universal values, for protecting the people from falling into unbecoming ways. You are your likes and dislikes. Everyone has own lesser liking or greater disliking or equal liking and *vice versa*. Discretion in action is a result of pursuing an action based on universal values which frees one from conflicting wrong choices and to act with responsibility. An effective person will never be disturbed in his pursuit of achieving social goals as he can give his constructive contribution to social goals, putting in perspective the overall scope of social reforms and also one's sphere of influence to change the status quo. Having evenness of mind is the ability to respond in an appropriate manner by accepting the results of action as a grand design to unfold our potentiality. The talisman for self growth / effectiveness is 'Are we pursuing right choice for action which are mutually beneficial'.

vi) Buddhi yukto jahaateeha ubhesukrita dushkrite;

Tasmaad yogaaya yujyaswa yogah karmasu kaushalam.

One, who is endowed with the balancing of mind, gives up both (results) punya and papa here, in this world. Therefore, commit yourself to karma yoga, Karma yoga is discretion in action⁹.

Scientifically, using the methodology of skilled action and not un - skilled action, one can have a perfect relation like;

The extreme limits are:

$n = 0$ or ∞ , then

$\Psi + \phi = 0$ or

$\Psi + \phi = \infty$

Effectiveness comes when consequences coincide with the above values of Ψ and ϕ . If consequences do not coincide with the actions, then there is a need for replacing at the strategies or the management techniques. De-biasing is a technique used for discrimination which aims to decrease biases by encouraging individuals to use controlled processing compared to automatic processing¹². Another therapy is a cognitive bias modification which alters the attention bias to resolve anxiety disorders. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is an action-oriented approach to managing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral disturbances is developed by Dr. Albert Ellis [13]. According to REBT, it is largely our thinking about events that leads to emotional and behavioral upset. With an emphasis on the present, individuals are taught how to examine and challenge their unhelpful thinking which creates unhealthy emotions and self-defeating/self-sabotaging behaviors which defeats the very purpose of SGY.

Here, the choice of selecting the methodology is skill in action. The concepts pronounced in this sloka are exercising discretion in one's choice (yoga karmasu Kaushalam). Discretion of choices is based on universal values which require understanding and exercising one's will towards pursuing the right course of action which requires objectivity (removal of cognitive and emotional bias). This stresses more on effectiveness, i.e. what one becomes out of it than what one gets out of it (efficiency). It calls for doing the right thing than doing things right. Doing the right thing is possible when one pursues choices based on the universal laws of action which are reflected in universal values.

Therefore based on the above conceptualization of SGY, a diagrammatic representation is made below:

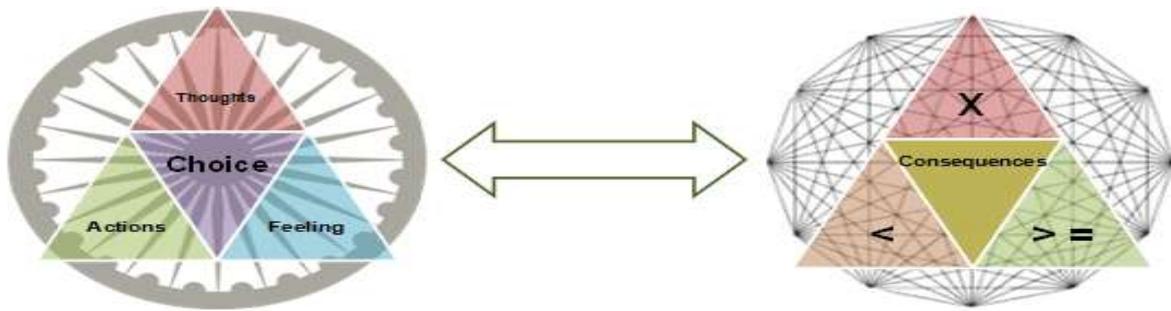


Fig 1: SGY Model Diagram

About SGY Model

There exists interconnectedness between the 3 components in the first half of the diagram. In the second half also there is interconnection among the 3 components of consequences. This SGY model derived from BG are related to the modern day psychological theories¹⁸ of action and reaction are related to the individual role. There are two components in relating to effectiveness, namely discretion in action and evenness of mind otherwise called as “yogah karmasu kaushalam” and “samatvam yoga ucyate”. Discretion in action is a result of pursuing an action based on universal values which frees one from conflicting wrong choices and to act with responsibility.

Universal value based theories like Piaget’s etc^{14,15,16} have contributed immensely to the development of SG model. These theories stresses on the universal values to be the guiding principles of human development. Thus, Universal values shape cognitive, affective and behavioral development. Some of the universal values are like truthfulness, honesty, chastity, tolerance etc. The criteria of universality¹⁷ lays down basic concepts to follow a code of conduct and behavior which are accepted universally.

Results

Results are shown in the form of different examples of Universal values in synonym with integer ‘n’ values. These values are plugged in the empirical equation to have different interpretations of the model. This is one way of testing the SGY model.

There may be other methods of obtaining results by solving the choice and consequence functions. But this requires Numerical methods which require further research.

The Mental equation of SGY model is given by;

$$\Psi + \phi = n \text{ ---- (1),}$$

For n=0,

$$\Psi + \phi = 0 \text{ ----- (2)}$$

If n =1 represents the universal value Truth , then equation (1) takes the form;

$$\Psi + \phi = 1 \text{ ----- (3)}$$

Modern psychology, Aristotle and Plato have enunciated sophisticated reasons for universal values [13] like truth. Indian tradition has an obsessive attachment to this value like Gandhi who ensured truth to prevail upon instinctively.

If n=2, representing the transparency and honesty;

$$\text{then, } \Psi + \phi = 2 \text{ ----- (4)}$$

Transparency and Honesty require total openness. Nothing is to be hidden in the mind from those who would be affected by the information. Whereas Aristotle and Plato saw this as a necessary part of nobility [13] while modern capitalists would view this as the bedrock of an ethical market system. The essential feature of this concept is transparency and full participation of those affected in the decision process.

If n=3, representing the piety or bhakti,

$$\text{then, } \Psi + \phi = 3 \text{ -----(5)}$$

Piety, or bhakti is a basic feature of all religions, need not be a necessary or a sufficient step towards compassion. Chakra borty [19] considers this to be one of the basic values and the fountainhead of good business ethics. But there are many who

would contest this. Massey [20] bemoans the fact that Christian practice all over the world, including India, does not always see compassion as flowing from piety

If n=4, synonym to self-sacrifice,

$$\text{Then, } \Psi + \phi = 4 \text{ ----- (6)}$$

An acute extension of compassion is the concept of self-sacrifice, as advocated by the Jains and Buddhists in India. Chakraborty [19] sees it as totally different from the Western thinking.

If n=5, synonym to trust and cooperation;

$$\text{then, } \Psi + \phi = 5 \text{ -----(7)}$$

Michalos²¹, explains that the quality of trust and trustworthiness within nations has been found to vary at different points of time. Ancient Indian as also Islamic writings do not have the gap of trust found in the original inspirers of current western thinking – the Greeks. Thiruvalluvar, who lived among the trading classes of the day, talked of the need to cultivate trust relationships; ancient trade practices in India also bear out the prevalence of this ethical value²².

If n=6 synonym to tolerance, pluralism and meliorism,

$$\text{Then, } \Psi + \phi = 6 \text{ -----(8)}$$

Pluralism can be defined as a rejection of the destructive quest for some comprehensive and exclusively determining principle. It recognizes that the legitimate ends of life are many, that there are wide varieties of the good and moral, and that there need be no single blueprint of heaven²³. Meliorism is an aspect of pragmatic ethics²⁴ propounded by the American philosopher John Dewey. A modest but deep pragmatic morality, meliorism is a way of life in which there are no solutions, yet we strive to improve things. Both these concepts also have strong Indian roots.

thical revival in the west.

For n = 7, synonym to ethics and justice

$$\Psi + \phi = 7 \text{ ----- (9)}$$

The principle of ethics of justice and law and social contracts, democracy are explained in different ways by different philosophers and psychologists The path of ethical control through professional guilds was quite common in ancient India. Rawls²⁴ sees this value as a most likely outcome of an ethical process of decision-making. Stevenson²⁶ who emphasized the importance of linguistic, factual and attitudinal clarity; and of course,. Hosmer²⁷ accords high value to ethics and justice process. Institutionalizing ethics through laws that can be enforced is a process as old as civilization itself like in India.

For n=8, synonym to greatest good;

$$\Psi + \phi = 8 \text{ -----(10)}$$

The value of the greatest good for the greatest number was developed by England’s John Stuart Mill²⁸ and Sidwick²⁹. It attempted to make an ethical evaluation precise by aggregating the happiness of everyone affected and deducting their unhappiness, both being consequences of every action or rule of behavior. This is the guiding principle of much of modern welfare economics.

For n=9, synonym to greed

$$\Psi + \phi = 9 \text{ -----(11)}$$

Lobha, the Sanskrit word for greed, is described in the Indian tradition as one of the six disturbing elements of human harmony³⁰. But Amartya Sen³¹ argued that if everyone worked greedily for themselves, it would miraculously turn out to be good for all.

Similarly, the other Universal values could be written in same empirical fashion. The more generalized form of this equation could now be;

$$SGY = (\Psi + \phi) = \sum_{i=1}^n UV_i \text{ ----- (12),}$$

Where, UV_i stands for Universal Value of ith order where i=1,2,3 ----- n

The equation (12) summarizes the entire SGY management concept of Bhagavat Gita

A comparison of the model is made with the proposition of Rene Descartes – “*I think, therefore I am*” which has been a fundamental stone of Western philosophy but it is a yet – to – be proven statement in the scientific world. Fundamentally, thinking could be of anything – be it a scientific or philosophical or it could be a fragment of imagination, instinct, deception,

a dream, the very act of doubt in one's own thinking behavior arguably serves as a proof of reality of one's own existence or at least of one's own intelligent thinking behavior like that of Descartes.

Let us now examine the statement of Descartes, logically:

I think = Choice is indicated as Ψ function as mentioned above

I am = Consequence is indicated as ϕ function .

The above mentioned empirical relation between "I think" and "I am" which are roughly equivalent to saying that these two functions are related in the present Modern Psychology problem known as $\Psi - \phi$ problem. The solutions are not easy to find. This problem is existent in Psychology right from the beginning. When it gets equated with $\Psi - \phi$ relation, it follows invariably Newton's 3rd law and hence Bhagavat Gita's more general relation of Self Growth Yoga – equation (12).

Conclusions

In this paper, we attempted to formulate a Self Growth Yoga empirical model based on Bhagavat Gita as expounded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Six verses are selected out of 700 slokas. The SGY model in a nutshell may be stated as a choice made at the mental level has an equal and opposite reaction which is less than or greater than or equal to objective consequences which are to be managed by following Universal Values to have a positive Self Growth. The empirical relation is given by;

$$SGY = (\Psi + \phi) = \sum_{i=1}^n UV_i$$

We have simplified the theory, by assuming the $f(\Psi)$ and $f(\phi)$ are equal to Ψ and ϕ and $n=UVs$. Further research is required if we have to solve these functions numerically

The model is compared with the Western Psychology of Rene Descartes concept of "I think therefore I am".

Our studies gave a Modern Psychological outlook of ancient Bhagavat Gita verses on the concept of SGY. The model could be tested with various modern day issues like sexual harassment of women at work places, Self practice of universal values, development of psychological items etc.

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