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Stress Management in the Context of Bhagavad-gita

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Introduction:

Today, the concept of 'knowledge explosion' is taking roots in the educated society, which has put on the garb of Information Technology and technology. But in the current situation, instead of a conducive atmosphere, adverse atmosphere is being created. This is exemplified by the increasing number of suicides committed by students and increasing tendency of students towards addiction. If we probe deeply into this aspect, we observe that the aspects which have become prominent today are competition, spread of media, change in day-to-day lifestyle, bad habits, fear etc. What lies at the root of all these happenings is nothing but stress. Today mental stress is becoming an integral part of each individual's life and its outcomes are seen in the form of suicides in a tender age, physical ailments and addiction. Even though today's education system is modernized and is gaining momentum, yet we have moved a little farther from the basic purpose of education and hence each student is exposed to the problem of stress. The students are finding it difficult to cope with it and this has led to a number of problems. In order that students overcome this problem and become an able member of empowered India, the concept of life skill education is introduced in education system. The govt. is making attempts so that these life skills are not only covered in syllabus but are also found in a number of treatises.

Through the present paper, we are going to explore how one of the life skills, i.e. stress management gets reflected in the Bhagavad-gita.

Student hood and Effects of Stress:

1.	Goal Setting	Difficulties in setting goals, objectives, purposes and action
2.	Determination	To get depressed at minor happenings.
3.	Self Learning	Divergence from real life experiences
4.	Self Confidence	Unaware about one's own capabilities
5.	Creativity	Emphasis on mechanical actions
6.	Discipline	Arrogance at a subtle level
7.	Making Efforts	Escapism taking place of the attitude of making efforts
8.	Optimism	Action from the perspective 'I don't have an impact at my individual level'.

On considering the above aspects, we come to know that stress impacts the internal character / personality of a student rather than his external persona. This introduces problems in the learning abilities of students. Now-a-days, a number of

solutions for managing stress are being discussed. Through such measures as *yogasanas*, *pranayamas*, camps etc., the role of stress management is being made clear. Through the present research, I have delved deeply as to how we find the references / solutions for stress management in the Bhagavad-gita.

Chief Reasons of Stress:

- 1) Mere day-dreaming (excessive indulgence in day dreaming rather than acting)
- 2) Holding situation to be responsible for one's failure etc.
- 3) Pessimism (lack of confidence in one's own capabilities)
- 4) Excessive dependence on instruments (according to this outlook, instruments are not for our service, in fact, we have become their slaves)
- 5) Dominance (to find oneself in domineering position by finding faults in others/ belittling others)

Prevalent Situation of Stress and what Corrective Measures are Suggested in the Bhagavad-gita:

Sr. No.	Prevalent Situation	Role of the Bhagavad-gita in Stress Management
1	Mere day Dreaming: This -ism makes life stagnant. In this situation, only success of a successful person is seen and not the effects of success. Hence, student keeps day-dreaming.	Making Efforts: Instead of indulging in day-dreaming, the Bhagavad-gita has elaborated the importance of making efforts. A thing gained after making efforts brings satisfaction. Moreover, the Bhagavad-gita explains that one should have trust in the efforts one is taking to be successful.
2	Blaming a Situation: Not only students but all of us blame situation for what we are or simply when we face failure, we place the blame on situation. Even Marx and Freud showed inclination towards this tendency.	The Role of your Own Self: The Bhagavad-gita advocates that it is me who is responsible for my own actions, success and my failure. In the Gita, ample examples are given where man has overcome situation. The Gita elaborates as how to keep aside failure in the past and to dwell in the present only.
3	Pessimism – The tendency that on my own, I am helpless and won't be able to achieve something. I'll even put up with slavery, but I need security.	Optimism: In the Bhagavad-gita, optimism is taught. It has advocated that if we combine idealism with realism, we can keep hope alive in our lives.
4	Over-dependence on Instruments: This aspect leads us nowhere. Today, there is over- abundance of instruments. Rather than getting service from them, we have to look after them and thus we become their slaves.	Emotionalism: Instruments should be as means and not as ends in themselves. The Gita explains that as these instruments are necessary, so also is the attachment (emotionalism) to these is needed.

5	Dominance: An individual loses his balance due to dominance. Dominance gives birth to the strong feeling that as others have access to material pleasures, so I should also possess these pleasures.	Superiority of the Absolute Power: The Gita explains that as I have my own dignity, so others also have dignity. Self Respect + Respect for others = Dignity for Mankind Thus, the Gita underlines the superiority of the absolute (divine) power.
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The Role of the Bhagavad-gita in Stress Management:

We have heard about references, abstracts, and examples etc. from the Bhagavad-gita a number of times. Then we come across questions such as what is the theme of the Gita? For whom is it relevant? Whether the Gita should be looked at as a treatise or a religious book? When we begin to delve deep into our own selves, the Gita presents before us the answers to questions and we come to know that it is a treatise explaining the mysteries of life (*'guhayatam shastram'*).

1. Goal setting and the Gita: The Gita has explained 4 ways of goal setting;

- 1) Broadness of the Goal
- 2) Focus on the Goal
- 3) Fineness of the Goal
- 4) its purity.

If we don't have a definite goal before us, our efforts go wasted and knowledge proves to be useless. Hence, guiding principles have been elaborated on in the Bhagavad-gita.

2. Firmness and the Gita: The Gita gives the message 'Nothing is gained without making efforts. Efforts made are not wasted. Do your *karma* and ask for blessings/ help and you will get the help'. This guidance helps one to remain firm in life. When one becomes concerned about the outcome of one's actions, it then merely becomes a desire. By giving the cardinal principle '*karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachan*', the Gita explains the concept of eternal truth in this world.

3. Today, escapism amongst people is on rise and as a result, desperation is equally on rise. But the Gita lays emphasis on making efforts/ performing one's *karmas* as told in the principle '*uddhare datmanamanam natmanamwasayadet*'.

4. When one takes birth in this world, it is but natural that somebody will be superior to you and somebody will also be inferior to you in some or the other way, e.g. age, knowledge etc. This leads to the tendency of considering oneself to be dominant / superior to others and this tendency leads to conflicts in one's personality. In the Gita, this faulty thinking pattern is corrected by elaborating on maintaining self-respect and at the same time, respect for others. The Gita explains that if an individual knows that it is only He (the God) who is great, then there would arise no conflict.

5. If an individual lacks in self-esteem, then one becomes hapless and surrenders to the passions and desires and this gives rise to a feeling of helplessness and ultimately this creates tension in the mind of the person. By explaining us the concept of 'self-esteem', the Gita suggests to us to recognize ourselves. Similarly, the Gita advocates

us not to beg and not to get disappointed. The Gita has also explained that 'I've the ability to work' and thus has introduced self-esteem to us.

Conclusion:

In today's age of computers, it is not sufficient to impart only knowledge to students, but what is more required is how the knowledge is imbibed and how students' personality undergoes development through the knowledge gained. For this to happen, life needs to be free from stress. This state of carefree attitude helps students in inculcating other life skills. As a result, students turn to creativity, solve problems easily and maintain the feelings of sympathy and empathy to others. But for this to happen, they need to be stress-free in the first place. The Gita has explained this way of leading stress-free life in an easy and lucid manner. If students follow this path, then imbibing other life skills becomes very much easy for them.

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