

Swadharma and Education Towards Learned Optimism: Reflections from the Bhagavad Gita

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Abstract

This paper represents some reflections from the Bhagavad Gita which can help students to go on a path of Learned Optimism. Learned Optimism leads the students towards an optimistic and positive thinking approach which help them to reduce their academic stress. Academic stress is the impermanence state of anxiety, stress and pressure while achieving academic goals. It is one of the biggest causes of unease, angst and depression among students. Teachings of The Bhagavad Gita are actually a boon to students to transform their lives. Now-a-days, not only Indians but the whole world is looking towards the teachings of The Bhagavad Gita where people from foreign countries come and learn Gita on its birth place i.e. Jyotisar. The urgent need of revitalizing the ancient teachings where nothing was beyond happy life can be fulfilled by The Bhagavad Gita teachings. Basic teachings of Gita equip students with big optimistic life lessons like this verse from The Bhagavad Gita

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

purely drive the students toward hard work which is their Swadharma i.e. fulfilling their duty. Also, doing hard work will automatically reduce academic stress.

This paper shows more reflections on teachings of Gita enhancing Learned Optimism.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, Learned Optimism, Academic Stress, Swadharma

INTRODUCTION

We are living in an era of technology where lives have become stressful and fast paced. This stress is particularly seen more among students of all grades. Students make an important and contributory percentage of world population. As per NEP 2020, we need to focus to make our education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, enjoyable and flexible at all levels of education. We also want to regain the status of Vishwa Guru by providing quality education at affordable prices. All these goals can be easily achieved with the dissemination of teachings of The Bhagavad Gita. This paper reviews the teachings and principles of The Bhagavad Gita, especially towards the enhancement of learned optimism and reduction of academic stress. Teachings from Gita reduce the sense of helplessness and hopelessness which divert the pessimistic perspective of students towards the optimistic one. This is what we say learned optimism i.e. the skill of re-attributing students' pessimistic explanations to more optimistic causes. Broadly we can say learned optimism is a skill set which promotes cognitive flexibility and resiliency (Te, W. 1999) in

students and discourage the anger & depression related issues. In this paper, we aim to inoculate students with the skills of learned optimism, that too with the help of teachings of The Bhagavad Gita.

Literature Review

Mishra (2020) has proposed the integration of the Bhagavad Gita into educational curricula and also highlighted its potential to develop resilience, ethical reasoning, and emotional intelligence among students. They also gave experiential suggestions including workshops and meditation exercises which can translate the Gita's principles into actionable strategies. **Tiwari (2020)** explained that how Bhagavad Gita strengthened Hope in context of during COVID 19 Crisis. **Sharma (2018)** emphasized the concept of equanimity, emphasizing its value in handling stress and uncertainty. **Kumar (2017)** also explained the connection of Bhagavad Gita with well-being of adolescents. **Bandura's (1997)** theory of observational learning and self efficacy, which emphasizes the belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals, resonates deeply with the Gita's emphasis on perseverance and self-trust. **Goleman (1995)** worked for emotional intelligence resembles the Gita's teachings on self- regulation and mindfulness, both of which are needed to manage academic stress.

Identified Gaps

While the above studies emphasize on various aspects of The Bhagavad Gita in children's lives and towards their well-being. Limited research explores the direct implications of The Bhagavad Gita for 'Learned Optimism' which in a way can reduce academic stress and also for students of all levels.

Objectives

This research aims to:

- analyze the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita in the context of learned optimism and academic stress for students.
- reflect on the key teachings of the Bhagavad Gita.
- propose practical implications of core teachings of the Bhagavad Gita for students.

Key Teachings of The Bhagavad Gita and Their Relevance

Core teachings from 18 chapters and 700 verses of The Bhagavad Gita which are relevant to our objectives are:

- **Swadharma:** Gita explains it as an individual's personal duty, that is determined by their innate nature and societal role. It encourage students to perform their own duties because even with flaws, own duties are better than performing another person's duties, which can be perilous.
- **Jnana Yoga:** It gives us knowledge about self awareness which is very important to live better lives. By understanding our own strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations, we obviously can make informed academic and personal choices.
- **Nishkama Karma:** It explains about not to attach with results or outcomes because our right is only on our work/duty. We don't have any right on the results.
- **Karma Yoga:** It gives us the knowledge about selfless action. The four principles of Karma Yoga are Duty/Dharma (which should be done with utmost honesty and seriousness), ego (which should be eliminated), attachment (which we should let go), and expectation of reward (which we should

give up); because with the understanding of these principles, students can practice selfless action, performing their responsibilities with dedication without being influenced by personal gain or ego.

- **Bhakti Yoga:** It stresses the importance of doing things with devotion, dedication and purpose. For students, this can translate into a sense of dedication to meaningful goals, providing a source of motivation during challenging times.
- **Equanimous:** The Bhagavad Gita teaches us to keep your calmness, composure and equanimous nature on in the times of trouble. Being calm will give you different perspective while finding solutions for the problems.
- **Educational Implications:** The best part of these teachings of The Bhagavad Gita is that these are useful for any situation in lives, education, profession and so on. There are some educational implications of the above teachings of The Bhagavad Gita:
- **Enhancement of Learned Optimism:** Each and every single teaching of this holy book can inculcate optimism in students. When students learn to be optimistic In life that is called learned optimism.
- **Reduce Procrastination:** As per above teachings, when students just focus on doing their work dedicatedly and with pure devotion, that too without thinking about results i.e. Nishkama karma; they will never be late in doing things.
- **Reduce Academic Stress:** When students have learned optimism and also reduced procrastination along with nishkama karma then automatically the academic stress will go down.
- **Students well-being:** When students have a knowledge of self awareness and they know their strengths and weaknesses which helps them to lead a better life.

Conclusion

All the teachings from The Bhagavad Gita gives an optimistic perspective to students which helps them to lead better lives. By integrating these teaching with different pedagogical methods we can enhance the students' understanding. By inoculating these optimistic teachings in students, as a teacher, facilitator or guide; we can provide the best experience of their lives. Future studies could either experimentally evaluate the effectiveness of these teaching towards the enhancement of learned optimism and decrement of academic stress or can also just do a survey to know the concept of learned optimism among students at different levels.

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