

# Elevation of Universal Brotherhood through Better Mental Health: A Psychological Analysis

Received: 29 April 2022  
Revision Received 15 May 2022  
Accepted :18 May 2022  
DOI:10.56011/mind-mri-112-202213

\*Shivangi Pandey,  
\*\*Vatsala Pathak  
\*\*\*Anubhuti Dubey

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## Abstract

Universal brotherhood is a comprehensive term which suggests the thought of equal rights, common interest, reciprocal devotion and affection, and compassionate care. It is an extension of this idea that all human beings are the member of same family and the child of same parents. Mental health is a state of emotional stability and calmness in which one can perform one's duty effectively and fruitfully, can handle the normal stresses of life appropriately, has capacity to make a contribution to his / her community, and perceive whole community as a family. Such type of thought promotes the feeling of universal brotherhood within individuals. Hence, for the elevation of the feeling of universal brotherhood within individuals, it is necessary to explore that what type of techniques may relevant in the maintenance of mental health. The present paper is an attempt to explain that the secret of good mental health lies in behavioural peace and inner journey, spiritual approaches towards life and the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita*.

**Keywords:** Universal brotherhood, Mental-health, Behavioural peace, Inner journey, Spirituality, *Bhagavad Gita*.

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Universal brotherhood, or brotherhood and sisterhood as usually said today, is a term that refers to a state of awareness that unites us. The implication is that our current state of awareness does not recognize this unity consciousness. Our awareness is asleep. It is so focused on the outside world, the world we perceive through our mind and senses. We have lost the awareness of the inner unity consciousness, that the sages mention and which the mahatmas call the real world – the world where we know who we really are. This is hinted in world mythologies, by the sources of the world religions and by the ancient texts. Universal brotherhood is a comprehensive conceptualization. It comprises a feeling of deep affection for everyone and be caring, loving, compassionate, and equal to everyone. Universal brotherhood encourages people to provide their contribution in the development of society, to love humanity and to save the earth and its resources. It is an understanding that promotes the value system and morality and teaches us that all human beings are

brothers and sisters, whose parent is God. Therefore, all people in the world are members of equal family and they are all loved children of the same parent-God. The major intentions of universal brotherhood are to communicate morality, unity, non violence, peace and truth. It is also recognized fact that truth is not something complete term but every path, religion, philosophy, and culture has a part of truth. It accommodates science, art, tradition, and culture for creative increment of spiritual education. Universal brotherhood also refers a harmony in entire world and its main aim is to reduce war and discrimination and establish peace in universe. The central point of universal brotherhood is to combine all people in a common bond and inspire them to work towards the transcendence of spirit, regardless of religion, nationality, gender and social and economic status.

## The Pathway of Universal Brotherhood through Mental Health-

Mental health is a state of sentimental equilibrium. Jahoda (1958) defined mental health on the basis of

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\*Research Scholar, Dept. of Psychology, DDU Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, UP, India  
\*\*\*Professor & Head, Dept. of Psychology, DDU Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, UP, India

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three dimensions: self-realization which makes an individual able to perfectly utilize his potentials, sense of proficiency on the conditions, and sense of autonomy, i.e. capacity to recognize, oppose and resist of emerging problems. The symptoms of mental health consist of an individual's subjective well being. Subjective well being exhibit individual's approaches and appraisals of his life in terms of positive social functioning. After the forty years of research on subjective well being a new classification of mental health symptoms emerged which includes emotional well being and functional well being (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002; Keyes and Waterman, 2003). Presence of positive emotions, absence of negative emotions, and perceived satisfaction with life are three main characteristics of emotional well being. Functional well being has two dimensions- psychological well being and social well being. Psychological well being includes six sub dimensions namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery and autonomy (Keyes & Ryff, 1999), whereas, social well being includes social actualization, social contribution, social coherence and social integration.

In this way psychological well being focuses more on subjective and private criteria for the evaluation of functioning, whereas social well being emphasizes more on collective and social criteria. This viewpoint of the mental health is guided by hedonic and eudaimonic domains of mental health. Hedonic domain talks about positive emotions, whereas eudaimonic domain is related with positive functioning. Positive functioning is conceptualized as working productively and fruitfully in personal and social context of life.

Hence, on the basis of above description it can be said that mentally healthy individuals perceive social life as meaningful life, consider society as a proper place for their potential growth, have feeling of belongingness to their community, have capacity to accept all ingredient of society, and perceive themselves as a contributor to their society. The World health Organization defined mental health as a "state of well-being in which individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2001, p.1). But modern materialistic and money oriented society and the hardships of modern life are enhancing feeling of jealousy, betraying, feeling of possessiveness,

negative competitions, uncontrolled desires etc. which results in disequilibrium in mental health or mental health problems.

The mental health problems, arising in the present circumstances result in breaking one's mental equilibrium peace of mind. It affects the whole thought process of an individual and thus the whole mental health gets affected. There is no such thing in a life that is free from hardships. Individuals should experience hardships of life appropriately so that they can handle them. But unless individuals are unaware of their inner strength and the actual cause of negative feelings, they will find themselves in a situation where one difficulty gives rise to another, and they will ultimately be crushed by their weight. These problems emerge within individuals and become the challenge for whole community. In this way mental health problems influence society as a whole, not only those who suffer from mental disorder. Therefore, mental health problems or disequilibrium in mental health is major interruption in the cultivation of universal brotherhood. So, it is necessary to analyze that how individuals can maintain their mental health in modern materialistic and money oriented society where difficulties and stressors pervaded everywhere. The intention of the present review paper is to explore about some techniques that may applicable in the enhancement of mental health such as behavioral peace and inner journey, spirituality, and teaching of *Bhagvad Gita*, so that feeling of universal brotherhood can be enriched within individuals.

### **Acquisition of Mental Health with Behavioral Peace and Inner Journey**

Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In social sense, peace is commonly used as a condition in which lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups exist. There is another branch emerged in the field of psychology named 'Peace Psychology.' Peace psychology refers to peaceful thinking and emotions which is a necessary precursor to establish "behavioral peace." This behavioral peace facilitates mental health and sound thinking and emotions. It is also believed that the peaceful behavior of an individual is sometimes manifests from one's 'peaceful inner disposition.' Psychological or inner peace refers to a state of being internally at peace which helps in maintaining one's well being and mental health in life.

Inner journey is a journey of self-exploration to know about one's self better and a process of paying attention to what is within. Through inner journey one can integrate his personality and can attain clarity about oneself. Such integrity and clarity about oneself makes one's life free from stresses and one can deal his inner conflicts easily. This is a wonderful journey which one takes alone to discover the spontaneous happiness and which has no travel expense. When an individual starts this explorative journey towards inside this influence his external world also. Through this inner journey his life fills with hope, positivity, opportunities, optimism, love, and happiness which ultimately improve his mental health and wellbeing.

### **Acquisition of Mental Health through Spirituality**

Spirituality is a set of beliefs in the existence of supreme power in this universe, awareness about the purpose and meaning of life, development of moral values in life, and a sense of interconnectedness, with all living creatures of universe. According to Puchalski et al. (2014) "Spirituality is a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which person seeks ultimate meaning, purpose and transcendence, and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature and significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions, and practices". A broad definition of spirituality was put forwarded by Myers et al. (2000), who defined spirituality as "personal and private beliefs that transcend the material aspects of life and give a deep sense of wholeness, connectedness and openness to the infinite". This definition includes deep faith in a power apart from oneself, infinite related activities such as prayer, meditation etc., meaningful life, life filled with optimism and hope, love and kindness to others, moral and ethical guidelines, and divine experience. Lewis (2001) conceived spirituality as the life affirmed in a relationship with God, self, community and environment which results in continuation and celebration of heartiness and integrity.

In Indian tradition *Vedic* sages are asserted the initial master of spirituality on earth. These *Vedic* sages conveyed the message of spiritual predisposition to Indians which provide them the essentials of honorable life. In India, spirituality is defined as science of soul and the great understanding which lead individuals beyond worldly sufferings. A spiritual person keeps himself/herself detached from the dual effect of *karma* (victory and defeat), perceive God everywhere, and always tries to communicate with God. He/she is deputy of supreme power and protector of mankind.

Spiritual experience is the most important aspect of spirituality. Spiritual experience is a feeling of spiritual person about supreme power, who is omnipresent (present everywhere) and omnipotent (all powerful). Individuals who have spiritual experiences always realize that all of the living beings including human beings, animals, birds, trees etc. of this universe are attached to one another and with supreme power (God). Awe, gratitude, mercy, compassionate love and sense of inner peace are indicators of spiritual experience. According to Bhajanananda (2011) "for the present-day spiritual seekers any experience which transforms one's life inwardly and provides a higher understanding of reality is spiritual experience" (p. 89). Sarvabhutananda (2011) says that the optimum goal of human life is to experience spirit (attaining spiritual experience). Sarvabhutananda (2011) further demonstrates that human beings struggle to rise above from the extremities of the body and mind and ultimately realize their identity with the infinite consciousness, the spirit, and the ultimate reality. People, who realize their identity with ultimate reality, have mental equilibrium, have good mental health and live their life in harmony. Moreover, spirituality is a sacred realm of human experience. It increases love for one another, honesty, patience, tolerance, compassion, faith, hope and feeling of detachment in individuals and these qualities improve mental health and happiness.

### **Acquisition of Mental Health as per *Bhagavad Gita***

*Bhagavad Gita* is the most eminent Indian script which takes into consideration about all aspects of the mental health of human beings. *Gita* focuses on many techniques such as right knowledge, selflessness, high consciousness, faithfulness to God, detachment from worldly pleasure, blessings, acceptance for the truth, and goodness for the improvement of mental health. *Gita* emphasizes on three principles i.e. management of mind, management of duty, and the principles of self-management. Out of these three principles one, i.e. management of mind talks about the ways of sound mental health. According to *Gita* "the mind acts like an enemy for those who do not control it." The major obstructions in the control of mind and continuation of sound mental health are longing to attain power, position and wealth, jealousy from others success and achievement, arrogance about one's own achievement, and apprehension. It is explained in *Gita* (Chapter 3, Verse 34) in this way-

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।

तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥ (3:34)

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Mind determines the mental health of individuals. Inspired mind can makes a person cheerful and uninspired mind leads individuals towards depression and anxiety. If one's mind is in one's control, he/she can attain sound mental health. But it is very difficult to control mind. It is explained in *Gita* (Chapter 6, verse 35) that mind can be controlled by "practice and detachment" in this words-

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।  
असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।  
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ (6:35)

The pathway of detachment is helpful in the management of mind because it teaches that real happiness comes not from material things, but rather from a loving relationship with God. Hence, if we become detached from material desires, we can control our mind. Following verse of *Gita* (Chapter 3, verse 19) explains this in this words-

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।  
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पुरुषः ॥(3:19)

Another teaching of *Bhagavad Gita* is that perform your work without caring for the fruits arising out of that work for the enhancement of mental health. In other words, Individuals have right to perform their duty but they should not think about entitle to the fruits of their actions. They should concentrate themselves on their duty. It is explained in *Gita* (Chapter 2, Verse 47) in this way-

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगो अस्त्वकर्माणि ॥ (2:47)

Another verse of *Gita* describes that one should perform one's duty with equanimity without caring about success or failure. Individuals should do their duties effectively with devoted mind without any fear of success or failure. This equanimity is called *Yog* or union with Supreme Power.

Some another tips from *Bhagavad Gita* for the acquisition of sound mental health are development of purity in feelings, establishment of faith in supreme power, meditation, awareness about one's temperament, and development of equilibrium between head, heart and hand and development of integration in personality because disintegration becomes the cause of stress and integration provides enormous satisfaction in life.

### Empirical Evidences

Three domains of spiritual well being (i.e., personal and communal, environmental, and transcendental) were negatively correlated with symptoms of psychological distress namely depression, anxiety and stress (Leung & Pong, 2021). Singh (2015) reported that spiritual practices were positively and significantly correlated with psychological well-being. Brown et al., (2013) reported significant negative correlation between spiritual well-being and two psychological variables namely depression and anxiety. Moreover, individuals who reported higher levels of spirituality and spiritual well-being experienced a reduction in mental and emotional illness. Sreekumar (2008) reported that two aspects of religiosity (religious beliefs and religious practices) and spirituality were significantly and positively correlated with subjective wellbeing. Pardini et al. (2000) conducted a study to explore the relation between religious faith, spirituality, and mental health outcomes in individuals recovering from substance abuse and reported that recovering individuals tend to report high levels of religious faith and religious affiliation, but choose to rate themselves as being more spiritual than religious. They also reported that higher levels of religious faith and spirituality were associated with more optimistic life orientation, greater perceived social support, higher resilience to stress, and lower levels of anxiety.

Divine principles of *Gita* are applicable in mind management and human resources (Ashtankar, 2016). Instructions of *Gita* are helpful in the treatment of depression, anxiety, and stress (Sharma, 2014). Banth & Talwar (2012) reported that individuals who scored high on *Anasakti* (detachment) showed high orientation towards meaningful and engaged life and low orientation towards pleasurable life. The study also confirmed that the people who were *Anasakt* (detached) from material world experience better psychological and subjective well being. Reddy (2012) found that psychotherapeutic approach practiced in *Bhagavad Gita* has protective influence on patients with specific problem of distress. Jha (2002) reported that *Asakti* positively correlated with insecurity, depression, anxiety, and hostility. The subjects who scored high on *Anasakti* (detachment) showed lower levels of distress (Pande & Naidu, 1992).

### Conclusion

The modern society is materialistic, money oriented and competitive which leads individuals towards mental health risk behavior such as depression, anxiety, stress,

restlessness, nervousness, anger, frustration, sleep disturbance etc. Moreover, in the modern society cultural and racial hostility is pervading everywhere. In this complex situation, maintenance of the feeling of universal brotherhood within individuals has become difficult. In order to remain the existence of feeling of universal brotherhood individuals should have a sound mental health which comes from behavioral peace and inner journey. Through inner journey one can know and understand one's actual emotions and meaning of life. Moreover, spiritual experiences and involvement in spiritual activities are also applicable in the elevation of the mental health. Spiritual individuals try to find peace and mental harmony in their life through spiritual involvement, experience content with life, try to connect themselves with transcend reality beyond the realm of physical world, and believe in higher power. *Bhagavad Gita* is also an encyclopedia of mental health education.

It teaches the ways of mental health elevation through practice and detachment, mediation, self-realization, and faith in supreme power. Moreover, it tells that one should perform one's own work without thinking about its result and without thinking about success and failure. Through this teaching individuals can protect themselves from those grief and happiness which emerges from failure and success. It is also explained in *Gita* that for better mental health one should hear one's inner voice and should apply this voice in his practical life. All these techniques may helpful in the improvement of good mental health and happiness among individuals. Mentally healthy and happy individuals have a feeling of interconnectedness with the people of whole universe and they consider the whole universe as a family. These feelings within individuals are essential antecedents to establish universal brotherhood.

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