



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Teachings of Bhagavad Gita in Dealing with Suicidal Ideation: A Perspective

***Dr. Priyanka Pathak**

Assistant Professor

P. G. Department of Psychology

Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara

****Prof. Shobhna Joshi,**

Department of Psychology, Banaras Hindu University

Abstract

The Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Indian text, is often seen as a spiritual and philosophical guide. Its teachings offer valuable insights into mental health and well-being, potentially influencing suicidal ideation. Core principles of Gita include fulfilling one's duty (dharma), maintaining detachment and equanimity, pursuing self-realization, and practicing devotion (bhakti). These teachings can provide a sense of purpose, effective coping mechanisms, mental resilience, and community support, all of which are crucial in mitigating suicidal thoughts. Although specific research on the Gita's impact on suicidal ideation is limited, anecdotal evidence and studies on spirituality suggest its teachings can positively influence mental health. Studies often highlight personal transformations attributed to the Gita's teachings, including improved mental health and reduced suicidal thoughts. Its teachings have been analyzed in various contexts, including their effects on overall well-being. The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between the Bhagavad Gita's teachings and suicidal ideation involves understanding how its principles might influence one's mental state and outlook on life.

Key Words: Bhagavad Gita, suicidal ideation, mental health, physical health

Suicidal ideation is a critical issue that demands immediate and compassionate intervention. Recognizing the signs, understanding the risk factors, and providing comprehensive support can save lives. Suicidal ideation refers to thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. It can range from fleeting thoughts to detailed planning. It is a serious mental health issue that requires immediate attention and intervention. Encouraging open conversations about mental health and reducing the stigma associated with seeking help are essential steps in preventing suicide.

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts or considerations of ending one's own life. It ranges from fleeting, passive thoughts about wanting to die to active planning and intent to carry out a suicide attempt. Here are more detailed definitions from various sources:

According to Mayo Clinic - Suicidal ideation involves thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. It can be passive (e.g., wishing to be dead without a specific plan) or active (e.g., having a specific plan and intent to commit suicide).

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) defined as having thoughts about how to kill oneself, which can include having a detailed plan. It's a critical mental health concern that often requires professional intervention to address underlying issues such as depression, anxiety, or trauma. These thoughts can be a symptom of various mental health disorders, including depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders, and they indicate a need for immediate mental health evaluation and support.

Suicidal ideation is recognized and addressed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) as a significant symptom associated with several mental health conditions. In the DSM-5, suicidal ideation is particularly noted in the criteria for major depressive disorder (MDD), but it can also be present in other disorders such as bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), borderline personality disorder (BPD), and others. Here's an overview of the causes, risk factors, signs, and ways to support someone experiencing suicidal ideation

Suicidal ideation can profoundly impact mental health, contributing to a range of psychological issues and exacerbating existing conditions. Here are some key ways in which suicidal ideation affects mental health:

Increased Risk of Mental Health Disorders:

- **Depression and Anxiety:** Suicidal thoughts are strongly associated with major depressive disorder and anxiety disorders. The presence of suicidal ideation often indicates severe levels of these conditions, making them more challenging to manage and treat .

- **Substance Abuse:** Individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts are at a higher risk of developing substance use disorders. Substance abuse can serve as a coping mechanism for distress but ultimately worsens mental health and increases the risk of suicide .

Emotional and Cognitive Impairment:

- **Hopelessness and Despair:** Suicidal ideation is often accompanied by intense feelings of hopelessness and despair. These emotions can create a pervasive sense of helplessness, making it difficult for individuals to envision a positive future .
- **Impaired Decision-Making:** Persistent suicidal thoughts can impair cognitive functions such as decision-making and problem-solving. This cognitive impairment can make it harder for individuals to seek help or engage in effective coping strategies .

Social Isolation and Relationship Strain:

- **Social Withdrawal:** Individuals with suicidal ideation may withdraw from social interactions and isolate themselves. This isolation can reduce the availability of social support, which is crucial for mental health recovery.
- **Strained Relationships:** The distress and erratic behaviors associated with suicidal ideation can strain relationships with family and friends. Loved ones may feel helpless, frustrated, or scared, which can create further emotional turmoil for the individual .

Physical Health Impact:

- **Somatic Symptoms:** Suicidal ideation can manifest in physical symptoms such as chronic pain, fatigue, and changes in appetite or sleep patterns. These somatic symptoms can further deteriorate an individual's overall health and well-being.
- **Self-Harm:** Individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts may engage in self-harm as a way to cope with their emotional pain. Self-harm behaviors can result in physical injury and require medical intervention, adding to the individual's mental health burden.

Causes and Risk Factors - Suicidal ideation stems from a complex interplay of psychological, social, biological, and environmental factors. Key psychological factors include mental health disorders, trauma, substance abuse, chronic pain, and a history of suicide attempts. Social and environmental influences involve isolation, relationship problems, financial stress, and bullying. Biological factors encompass genetic predisposition and neuro-chemical imbalances. Cognitive and emotional contributors include feelings of hopelessness, perfectionism, and impulsivity. Cultural beliefs and media portrayals can impact suicidal

thoughts, while acute stressors like life transitions and legal or academic issues can trigger them. Recognizing these factors is crucial for prevention and support.

Symptoms - symptoms of suicidal ideation include frequent thoughts of death, planning suicide, feelings of hopelessness, social withdrawal, extreme mood swings, talking about suicide, increased substance use, unusual or risky behaviors, intense guilt or shame, and giving away possessions. Recognizing these signs is crucial for timely intervention and support.

The **Bhagavad Gita**, often referred to as the Gita, is a 700-verse Hindu scripture that is part of the Indian epic Mahabharata. It is a sacred text of the Hindu religion, written in Sanskrit, and consists of a conversation between Prince Arjuna and the god Krishna, who serves as his charioteer. The text is set on the battlefield of Kurukshetra just before the start of a great war, where Arjuna is filled with doubt and moral dilemma about fighting in the battle. Krishna imparts spiritual wisdom and guidance to Arjuna, addressing his doubts and encouraging him to fulfill his Kshatriya (warrior) duty as a fighter.

The Bhagavad Gita has had a profound influence on Hindu philosophy and spirituality and has been commented upon by numerous scholars and spiritual leaders. Its teachings have also inspired leaders and thinkers worldwide, including Mahatma Gandhi, who considered it a spiritual reference and guide for life.

It has been studied from various perspectives, including its potential impact on mental health and well-being. Its teachings have profound implications for addressing suicidal ideation, particularly among students and aspirants facing intense pressure and stress. Here are some key teachings from the Bhagavad Gita that can be applied to help alleviate suicidal thoughts and promote mental well-being.

- **Understanding the Eternal Self (Atman)**

The Gita emphasizes that the true self (Atman) is eternal and indestructible. It is beyond physical death and suffering. This perspective can help individuals see beyond their current struggles, understanding that their true essence is not defined by temporary failures or hardships.

- **Performing One's Duty (Dharma)**

The Gita advises performing one's duty (dharma) without attachment to the results. This teaching encourages aspirants to focus on their efforts rather than the outcomes. It reduces anxiety related to performance and failure, promoting a healthier attitude towards life's challenges.

- **Equanimity in Success and Failure**

The Gita advocates for maintaining equanimity in success and failure, viewing them with equal detachment. By fostering a balanced mindset, individuals can better cope with setbacks and avoid the extreme emotional turmoil that can lead to suicidal thoughts.

- **Mental Discipline and Meditation**

The Gita highlights the importance of controlling the mind through discipline and meditation. Practices such as meditation and mindfulness can help calm the mind, reduce stress, and provide clarity, making it easier to manage overwhelming emotions.

- **Surrender to a Higher Power**

The Gita teaches the value of surrendering to a higher power or divine will. This can provide a sense of relief and peace, knowing that one is not alone and that there is a greater purpose or plan, which can be comforting during times of despair.

- **Perspective on Life's Challenges**

The Gita frames life's challenges as opportunities for growth and self-improvement. Viewing obstacles as part of a larger journey can help individuals find meaning in their struggles and foster resilience.

Education on the Bhagavad Gita can significantly reduce negative thoughts by providing individuals with philosophical insights, practical wisdom, and spiritual guidance. The Bhagavad Gita explains the nature of the mind as restless and difficult to control. By understanding this inherent nature of the mind, individuals can develop patience and acceptance toward their own mental fluctuations, reducing frustration and negativity.

The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita have a profound impact on mental health, offering insights and practices that promote psychological well-being. Here are some key ways in which the Gita influences mental health:

- The Gita teaches the importance of performing one's duties without attachment to the results (Karma Yoga). This mindset helps reduce anxiety and stress related to outcomes, fostering a sense of peace and acceptance. Embracing change as a natural part of life helps individuals cope with uncertainty and loss, reducing emotional distress.
- The Gita emphasizes the eternal nature of the soul and the distinction between the physical body and the spiritual self (Atman). This understanding can lead to a sense of inner peace and diminish the fear of death and suffering. Practices recommended in the Gita, such as meditation and mindfulness, enhance self-awareness and tranquility, which are beneficial for mental health.
- Teachings on maintaining equanimity in success and failure (Samatvam Yoga Uchyate) help build resilience against life's ups and downs, improving overall mental stability. The guidance on focusing on the present moment and accepting one's duties without undue worry about the future offers effective coping mechanisms for stress.
- The concept of Dharma, or duty, provides individuals with a sense of purpose and direction, which is crucial for mental well-being. Knowing one's role and responsibilities can bring clarity and motivation,

reducing feelings of aimlessness and depression.] Encouragement to cultivate positive thoughts and attitudes helps combat negative emotions and fosters a more optimistic outlook on life.

- The Gita advises maintaining control over one's emotions and desires, which can lead to better emotional regulation and reduced impulsivity. This is particularly beneficial for managing conditions such as anxiety and depression. Emphasizing the importance of balance in all aspects of life, the teachings help individuals achieve mental harmony and avoid extremes that can lead to psychological issues.
- The Gita's teachings promote spiritual growth and connection with a higher power, which can provide comfort, hope, and a sense of belonging, all of which are beneficial for mental health. The spiritual perspectives offered in the Gita can alleviate existential anxiety by providing a broader understanding of life's purpose and the nature of existence.

The Gita emphasizes the practice of self-awareness and mindfulness, which can help individuals observe their thoughts without getting entangled in them. This practice fosters mental clarity and reduces the impact of negative thinking patterns. The concept of detachment teaches individuals to perform their duties without being attached to the outcomes. This attitude helps in accepting failures gracefully and reduces the tendency to ruminate over negative experiences. The Gita encourages individuals to develop resilience and fortitude in the face of challenges. By understanding the impermanent nature of difficulties and the importance of perseverance, individuals can overcome negative thoughts with greater strength and determination. The Gita offers insights into finding purpose and meaning in life. Understanding one's inherent nature and unique path in life can provide a sense of direction and fulfillment, diminishing feelings of emptiness and negativity.

The Bhagavad Gita encourages seeking guidance from wise mentors. Engaging in discussions about the Gita with knowledgeable individuals or participating in study groups can provide valuable insights and emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation and negativity. Devotional practices, such as surrendering to a higher power can help individuals let go of worries and anxieties, finding solace and strength in their faith. This surrender reduces the burden of negative thoughts and fosters a sense of peace and trust. By incorporating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita into their lives through study, contemplation, and practice, individuals can develop a positive mindset, resilience, and inner peace, leading to a significant reduction in negative thoughts and emotions.

The teachings of Bhagawat Gita can help individuals find a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in life, which is often lacking in those experiencing suicidal ideation. Understanding and aligning with one's dharma can give a person a reason to live and strive. The emphasis on detachment and equanimity can serve as effective coping mechanisms for stress and emotional pain. Learning to accept life's ups and downs without being overwhelmed can reduce the intensity of negative emotions. The philosophical insights into the nature of

the self and the transient nature of suffering can help build mental resilience. Recognizing that suffering is temporary and that there is a deeper, enduring aspect of the self can provide hope and strength. The practice of bhakti and the sense of belonging to a larger spiritual community can offer emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation, which are common in those contemplating suicide.

The Bhagavad Gita offers spiritual guidance and wisdom that can help reduce suicidal tendencies by providing perspective, hope, and a sense of purpose. Here are some shlokas (verses) from the Bhagavad Gita that can be particularly comforting and uplifting:

As written in Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2, verses 20, lord Krishana says "*Na jayate mriyate va kadacin nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*" (For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. It does not come into being, or cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval'. It is not slain when the body is slain). This verse emphasizes the eternal nature of the soul, offering solace by reassuring individuals that there is beyond physical death and suffering.

As written in Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2, verses 47, lord Krishana says, "*Karmanyē vadhikaraste ma phalesu kadachana, ma karma-phala-hetur bhur ma tey sango 'stvakarmani*" ("You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction"). This verse teaches the importance of focusing on one's duties without being attached to the outcomes. It encourages individuals to do their best without being overwhelmed by success or failure.

As written in Bhagavad Gita, chapter 6, verses 5, lord Krishana says, "*Uddhared atmanatmanam natmanam avasadayet atmaiva hyatmano bandhur atmaiva ripur atmanah*" ("Let a man lift himself by himself; let him not degrade himself; for the Self alone is the friend of oneself, and the Self alone is the enemy of oneself"). These verses emphasize self-reliance and self-discipline. They encourage individuals to uplift themselves and avoid self-degradation, reminding them that they have the power to overcome their inner struggles.

As written in Bhagavad Gita, chapter 18 verses 66, lord Krishana says, "*Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah*" ("Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."). This verse emphasizes surrendering to a higher power and seeking refuge in the divine. It offers hope and assurance that through surrender and devotion, one can be freed from suffering and sin. These verses from the Bhagavad Gita convey timeless wisdom and spiritual truths that can provide comfort, guidance, and strength to individuals struggling with suicidal tendencies. By offering a broader perspective on life's challenges, these teachings can help instill hope, resilience, and a sense of purpose, ultimately reducing the inclination towards self-harm.

Review of Literature

Studies specifically examining the impact of the Bhagavad Gita on suicidal ideation are limited. However, research on the broader topic of spirituality, religion, and mental health suggests that spiritual beliefs and practices, including those found in the Bhagavad Gita, can have a positive influence on mental well-being, potentially reducing suicidal ideation. Here are some relevant findings:

Studies have shown that individuals who have a strong sense of spirituality or engage in religious practices tend to have better coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and adversity, including suicidal thoughts (Koenig et al., 2012). Research indicates that religious coping strategies, such as seeking comfort in religious beliefs or engaging in prayer or meditation, are associated with greater resilience and lower levels of psychological distress, including suicidal ideation (Smith et al., 2003).

Positive religious coping, characterized by finding meaning, hope, and comfort in religious beliefs, has been linked to lower levels of suicidal ideation and better mental health outcomes (Exline et al., 2014). Spiritual beliefs, such as those conveyed in the Bhagavad Gita, often provide individuals with a sense of purpose, meaning, and connectedness, which can act as protective factors against suicidal thoughts and behaviors (Nelson et al., 2016). The Bhagavad Gita teaches various meditation and mindfulness practices that can promote mental well-being and reduce psychological distress, potentially mitigating suicidal ideation (Keng et al., 2011). Recent reviews and studies on the integration of the Bhagavad Gita in educational settings have highlighted its potential role in addressing issues like suicidal ideation. The Bhagavad Gita offers profound wisdom on managing mental health, emphasizing self-worth, duty, and spiritual satisfaction, which can provide psychological support and promote mental well-being.

The Bhagavad Gita offers practical advice for managing stress through concepts like detachment, duty, and self-control. In a study Sivakumar and Rajini (2022) highlights, how the Gita's teachings can help individuals cope with stress by promoting mental resilience and emotional regulation. This study includes strategies like focusing on one's duty without attachment to the outcomes, which can reduce anxiety and improve mental stability. It discusses how the text's teachings encourage a balanced lifestyle, which can alleviate symptoms of stress and depression. This integrative approach helps individuals develop a more resilient and positive outlook on life

These studies suggest that incorporating the Bhagavad Gita's teachings into counseling, educational programs, and personal practices can provide significant psychological benefits, helping to reduce stress and suicidal tendencies by fostering a deeper sense of meaning and emotional balance.

Recent studies have explored the influence of the Bhagavad Gita on well-being, highlighting its potential as a psychotherapeutic tool. Research indicates that the teachings of the Gita can provide significant psychological benefits, addressing various aspects of mental health and well-being.

One study reviewed and analyzed 24 articles, emphasizing three primary approaches: comparisons with modern psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and humanistic-existential therapy. The Gita's dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna is likened to CBT sessions, where Krishna helps Arjuna reframe his thoughts and perceptions, thereby alleviating his anxiety and stress. This approach aligns with modern therapeutic techniques aimed at cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation. (Joshi and Sahu, 2023). Another study highlighted how the Bhagavad Gita offers a model for emotional resilience and stress management. Techniques such as self-awareness, intellectual equanimity, and detachment from outcomes, as taught in the Gita, contribute to reducing stress and enhancing emotional well-being. This perspective is particularly relevant in today's context, where managing stress and maintaining mental health are crucial (Pandey and Mishra, 2021).

These findings suggest that incorporating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita into modern psychological practices can provide a holistic approach to mental health, fostering both emotional and spiritual well-being. The Gujarat government has introduced teachings from the Bhagavad Gita into the school curriculum for students from Classes 6 to 12. This initiative aims to instill cultural values and philosophical understanding among students, potentially helping them navigate life's challenges with a more balanced perspective. A study involving higher education academics utilized constructs from the Bhagavad Gita to explore the concept of wisdom in educational contexts. The findings suggested that integrating these teachings could enhance ethical behavior, emotional regulation, and personal integrity among students, thereby contributing to better mental health and resilience (Rampal et al., 2022).

While there may not be specific studies examining the Bhagavad Gita's direct impact on suicidal ideation, the broader literature suggests that spiritual beliefs and practices, including those espoused in the Bhagavad Gita, can play a significant role in promoting mental health and well-being, which may indirectly contribute to reducing suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Overall, incorporating the Bhagavad Gita into educational curricula and personal development practices can offer valuable tools for mental health support, potentially mitigating factors that contribute to suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Practical Applications

Incorporating Gita-inspired meditation and mindfulness techniques can help individuals cultivate mental peace and clarity. By using the main concepts of Gita, therapists can help clients identify their personal duties and responsibilities, encouraging them to focus on their efforts rather than external validations. Through promoting equanimity, Bhagawad Gita focuses on importance of maintaining balance in success and failure can

help individuals manage expectations and reduce stress. By created support groups therapist can provide community support and shared understanding, through discussion on the teachings of the Gita.

The Bhagavad Gita offers timeless wisdom that can be invaluable in addressing suicidal ideation, particularly among those facing intense academic and professional pressures. While there is limited empirical research directly linking the Bhagavad Gita to reduced suicidal ideation, spirituality and religious teachings can play a protective role in mental health. By promoting a sense of purpose, mental discipline, and a balanced approach to life's challenges, the Gita's teachings can help individuals develop resilience, find meaning in their struggles, and cultivate a healthier, more hopeful outlook on life. Integrating these spiritual principles with modern therapeutic practices can create a comprehensive approach to mental well-being. In conclusion, while direct empirical evidence may be sparse, the Bhagavad Gita's philosophical and spiritual teachings can provide a robust framework for enhancing mental resilience, finding purpose, and developing coping mechanisms that may mitigate suicidal ideation. The Bhagavad Gita can help address suicidal ideation by emphasizing the value of life, the importance of duty (dharma), and the temporary nature of suffering. It teaches detachment, mental discipline, and maintaining equanimity. The Gita offers a spiritual perspective, suggesting the soul's eternal nature, and promotes faith in a higher power. Practical applications include using its teachings in counseling, support groups, personal study, and mindfulness practices. While the Gita provides valuable philosophical insights, professional mental health support remains crucial.

References:

- Exline, J. J., Pargament, K. I., Grubbs, J. B., & Yali, A. M. (2014). "The Religious and Spiritual Struggles Scale: Development and initial validation." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 6 (3), 208–222.
- Joshi, P., & Sahu, K. P. (2023). "Psychological well-being from the perspective of Bhagwat Gita." *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(4), 480-485.
- Keng, S. L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011) "Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies." *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31(6), 1041–1056.
- Koenig, H. G., King, D. E., & Carson, V. B. (2012). *Handbook of Religion and Health* (2nd ed.), Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, S. K., Fuller J. A., Choi I., & Lyubomirsky S. (2014). "Beyond self-protection: Self-affirmation benefits hedonic and eudaimonic well-being." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40 (8), 998–1011.
- Pandey, A., & Mishra, P. C. (2021). "Persuit of resilience: A deep analysis in page of Bhagavad Gita." *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(1), 527-531.
- Rampal, S., Smith, S. E., & Soter, A. (2022). "Wisdom in higher education: discussions with education academics utilizing the Bhagavad Gita." *Qualitative Research Journal*, 22(3), 325-339.

- Sivakumar, K. S., & Rajini, G. (2022). “A study of Bhagwat Gita’s approach to stress management.” *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10 (4), 1985-1991.
- Smith, T. B., McCullough, M. E., & Poll, J. (2003). “Religiousness and depression: Evidence for a main effect and the moderating influence of stressful life events.” *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(4), 614–636.
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/suicide/symptoms-causes/syc-20378048>
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention>

