

The Psychotherapy For NPD Through The Wisdom Of The Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā



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Abstract: Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a mental condition where a person thinks they are very special and important, always wants others to admire them, does not care about other people's feelings and emotions and emotionally hurt them for own satisfaction. People who have this disorder feel deeply insecure, so they depend on other's praise and glorification to feel good about themselves. While modern psychotherapy offers valuable treatments for NPD, the Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, an ancient sanskrit spiritual scripture which is regarded as the world's first psychological text, also provides a deeply spiritual path to healing. Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings and advice always guide people toward knowing their true self and becoming humble. Such advice also help to develop empathy for others and free the mind from the grip of the ego. This eternal wisdom directly addresses and counters the ego, which is the main cause of NPD, offering not just treatment but true inner transformation. The Bhagavadgītā teaches Jñāna Yoga (self), Karma Yoga (selfless action), Bhakti Yoga (devotion), and not being attached to results. These teachings help people overcome ego, rudeness, lack of empathy, and self-centeredness, which are commonly seen in narcissism.

Keywords: Mind, Self-knowledge, Self, Narcissism, Narcissist, NPD, Gītā

1.Introduction: People think differently due to factors such as wisdom, intelligence, personal experiences, environment, social and cultural influences, family upbringing, education, and knowledge. Kindness and humility towards others, respect and devotion to elders, consideration for different perspectives, and non-harm— whether physical, verbal, or mental (known as Ahimsā in our philosophy)— can be regarded as the natural characteristic of a truly healthy individual.

Some people have bad qualities that make them seem like a miscreants. They are excessively arrogant, overly self-confident, obsessed with their own praise, and completely intolerant of criticism. They do not hesitate to inflict mental or physical harm on others for their own pleasure and often display a deep sense of insensitivity. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Puraṇas figures such as Rāvaṇa, Duryodhana, Karṇa, Śiśupāl, and Kaṁsa embodied these qualities. Psychologists do not consider such individuals to be mentally healthy. They suffer from a mental disorder known as Narcissistic Personality Disorder. NPD is characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, a deep need for excessive admiration, a lack of empathy for others, and a constant desire for validation. Individuals with this disorder often believe they are superior to others, struggle with criticism, and may exploit people for personal gain. Despite their outward confidence, they are internally fragile and highly sensitive to perceived slights.

However, NPD is not typically treated by psychologists unless the individual seeks help, which

is rare due to their inability to recognize their own flaws. In contrast, Indian tradition never endorses self-centered thinking. Instead, it emphasizes collective and communal consciousness —

**“Om saha nāvavatu
Saha nau bhunaktu
Saha vīryam karavāvahai
Tejasvinā vadhitamastu mā vidviṣāvahai”**

Our rishis consistently rejected self-focused words like 'Mama' (mine) and 'Aham' (I). They not only discouraged such thinking but actively avoided using these words, advocating for a life centered on selflessness and unity. It is said in the Hitopadeś —

**‘Ayaṁ nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghuchetasām
Udācaritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam’**

In other words, We are not saying that the disease of narcissism can be completely cured by the Vedas, Upanishads, or the Bhagavad Gita. However, in the thought culture of the Vedas, Upanishads, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Darśana, a person's surrounding environment is shaped in such a way that they are less likely to experience deep depression. However, there are always exceptions. In our modern life, disorders like NPD can emerge due to a lack of awareness and disconnection from one's own cultural roots. While treatment is necessary, in this article, we will explore how the Bhagavad Gita offers insights into healing.

2. Research Methodology

To examine deeply the psychotherapy for NPD through the sacred knowledge of the *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*, this study uses a 'qualitative interpretation methodology'. A textual interpretive approach will be used in this. This approach will analyze some śloka from the Gīta which are related to self-awareness, managing ego, compassion and empathy and detachment from desire. These will be linked with modern psychotherapy methods for NPD, such as **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Schema Therapy, and Psychodynamic Therapy**. This research paper will discuss the Gītā's teachings and the hallmark traits of NPD to discover how these teachings can help reduce ego, manipulateness, envy, entitlement, and lack of empathy. The methodology focuses on bridging spiritual interpretation with psychological perspectives to offer critical insights.

3. DISCUSSION :

3.1. Self and Self knowledge : Self-knowledge is a term in psychology that refers to a person's understanding of themselves when asking, Who am I? This question holds great significance in Indian philosophy, especially in Advaita Vedanta. In fact, spirituality begins when this question arises in a person's mind. In our philosophy, self-knowledge (*Ātma Jñāna*) is considered the highest wisdom, leading to liberation (*Mokṣa*). The self is often understood as beyond the body and mind, connected to a higher reality. Advaita Vedanta Teaches that the true self (*Ātman*) is identical to the ultimate reality (*Brahman*). In his childhood, When Shankaracharya was asked by his Guru "Who are you"? Shankaracharya's answer -

"..Cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham." ¹

'I am the form of consciousness and bliss, I am Shiva.'² It indicates Shankaracharya had Self-knowledge from his childhood.

In Indian culture, self-knowledge was traditionally taught in the 'Gurukula' system -

Kastvaṁ ko'haṁ kuta āyātaḥ kā me janani ko me tātaḥ

Iti paribhāvaya sarvamasāraṁ viśvaṁ tyaktvā svapna vicāram ³

As a result, the concept of the self has been deeply ingrained in most Indians, both in the past and even today.

In Western psychology, this 'Ātmajñānam' is called Self Knowledge. According to '**Merriam-Webster**', self-knowledge is defined as "knowledge or understanding of one's own capabilities, character, feelings, or motivations."

So It is necessary to have a clear understanding of the self. A person should know their own nature, including their faults, strengths, abilities, talents, and limitations. That is why our sages have repeatedly said, "Ātmānam Viddhi"—know yourself. When people has a true understanding of themselves, life remains balanced. There is nothing wrong if someone writes good poetry and acknowledges it. But if a person pretends to be something they are not just to promote themselves, Psychology views it as a sign of mental instability. When a person has self-knowledge, they do not develop arrogance, pride, or a false sense of superiority. For example, someone may have the ability to sing, but if he starts believing he is Kishore Kumar, the iconic indian playback singer and constantly promotes themselves as such, it becomes evident that they lack a true understanding of themselves. A saying is very famous that 'little knowledge is dangerous.' But 'Fake knowledge is also dangerous.' This is dangerous, as false self-perception can lead to personality disorders. Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a condition that occurs when a person has an inflated self-image and a strong need for admiration.

3.2.Narcissism : The term 'narcissism' comes from the Greek myth of Narcissus, a handsome Greek youth who rejected the desperate advances of the nymph Echo. These advances eventually led Narcissus to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Unable to consummate his love, Narcissus "lay gazing enraptured into the pool, hour after hour," and finally changed into a flower that bears his name, the narcissus.⁴ Appropriate Sanskrit words for narcissism include 'Svānuragī' (self-admiring), 'Ātmaprema' (self-love), and 'Ātmastuti' (self-praise). Havelock Ellis (1898), in '*Auto-erotism: A Psychological Study*', described narcissism as "narcissus-like" behavior related to excessive masturbation. He discussed it as a psychological phenomenon but did not formally classify it as a mental disorder.⁵

In 1914, Sigmund Freud published "**On Narcissism: An Introduction**," where he described narcissism as directing one's sexual energy toward oneself instead of others.⁶

¹ Nirvaṇa Śatkaṁ

² Translated by Sadhguru:

³Bhaja Govindam 23 th verse.

⁴ Wikipedia

⁵ Auto-erotism: A psychological study. *Alienist and Neurologist*, 260-299.

⁶ On Narcissism, 1914 by Freud

Psychologists believe that this Narcissistic tendency is usually more common in children. They often believe they are the center of everything happening around them. They seek constant attention and are highly self-admiring. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychology, considered this mental state normal in children.⁷ But when this mindset persists into adulthood, it is no longer considered normal. From a psychological perspective, it is a form of psychosis known as Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Those who have this condition are called narcissists.

“Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders”, 5th edition, issued by American Psychiatric Association (APA) classifies Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) under Cluster B, defining it by patterns of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy.

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements).
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
3. Believes that he or she is “special” and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions).
4. Requires excessive admiration.
5. Has a sense of entitlement (i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations).
6. Is interpersonally exploitative (i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends).
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her.
9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.

The common characteristics of narcissism are described in the famous book **‘Surrounded by Narcissists’** by **Thomas Erikson**, a Swedish behavioral expert, bestselling author, and lecturer.

- Unrealistic, grandiose self-image
- Incredibly self-centered
- Speak only about themselves
- Feeling special and unique
- Arrogance and haughtiness
- Quick to judge and criticize others

⁷ On narcissism: An introduction. *Standard Edition*, 14, 67–102.

⁸ It's Not You: How to Identify and Heal from NARCISSISTIC People

- Highly sensitive to criticism
- Think the rules don't apply to them
- Constant self promotion
- Feeling entitled to the best of everything
- Value power and fame
- Demand constant acknowledgement
- Will respond with aggression when questioned
- Deceitful and manipulative

Dr. Ramani Durvasula, a narcissistic doctor, says :

“Narcissism is about a deep insecurity and fragility offset by maneuvers like domination, manipulation, and gaslighting, which allow the narcissistic person to stay in control.”⁸

Shabdkosh describes as "Narcissism is self-absorption, an exaggerated perception of one's own qualities, an excessive infatuation with oneself, and a tendency to underestimate the importance of others. It involves a lack of attraction to anyone other than oneself. While narcissism, in a limited form, is a normal part of life, individuals with strong narcissistic traits constantly seek admiration and praise."⁹

Dr. Vikas Divyakirti is a well-known Indian educator, founder and director of Drishti IAS, speaker, and YouTuber. He presents the traits of narcissistic persons in a very simple way:

1. A person begins to feel that there is no one like him.
2. A man begins to feel that the world cannot function without him.
3. A person begins to feel that no constitution or rule applies to him.
4. A man starts praising himself in front of everyone.
5. Gaslighting is a psychological manipulation technique in which a person repeatedly misleads another, causing them to doubt their own memories, thoughts, and understanding.

This personality disorder originated in the West, where most people believe in individualism. As a result, narcissism is more common there. In contrast, Indian educational culture has never supported individualism. India values community, which has led to the development of various philosophical traditions such as the Chārvāka, Jain, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Rasa, and Dhvani schools of thought. Here, individualism is not given special importance. The collective has been valued over the individual. Many sages, poets, writers, and scholars have made significant contributions, yet in most cases, their

⁹ shabdkosh.com

names are not mention on their works. Only their work remains, continuing to be appreciated and respected over time. Even in Indian culture, villainous characters like Asuras and Rakshasas in the 'Rāmāyaṇa' and 'Mahābhārata', Purāṇa display narcissistic traits. Figures such as Rāvaṇa, Duryodhana, Hiranyakaśipu, Kumbhakarna, Śakuni, Kaṁsa, and Karṇa are examples of this.

3.3. Lord Kṛṣṇa's Perspective on Narcissistic Individuals : Narcissism is a tendency in which a person becomes excessively arrogant, egotistical, and considers themselves divine. This tendency has been prevalent among humans for centuries. Although the term 'narcissism' is not exactly mentioned in the 'Bhagavad Gita', the characteristics of a narcissistic person are certainly described. In the 16th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna elaborates on the nature of individuals with demonic tendencies (Asuric Svabhava). To some extent, such individuals share similarities with those suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Lord Krishna also, in the Gita, has described the nature and traits of NPD individuals.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the 16th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

*"Dvau bhūta-sargau loke'smindaiva āsura eva ca Daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuram pārtha me śṛṇu"*¹⁰

"In this world, there are two types of beings—the divine-natured and the demonic-natured. O Arjuna! I have described the divine qualities in detail, now listen to me as I explain the demonic qualities."¹¹

Shree Krishna describes six defining traits of those with a demonic nature: hypocrisy (Dambha), arrogance (Darpa), pride (Abhimāna), anger (Krodha), harshness (Kaṭhoratā), and ignorance (Ajñāna) —

*"Dambho darpo'bhimānaśca krodhaḥ pārūṣyam eva ca Ajñānam cābhijātasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm"*¹²

Lord Kṛṣṇa presents a psychological insight into how demonic-minded individuals think. Such individuals believe:

*Īśvaro ham aham bhogī siddho'ham balavānsukhi*¹³

*Ādhyo'bhijanavānasmī ko'nyo'sti sadṛśho mayā Yakṣye dāsyāmi modishya ityajñānavimohitā*¹⁴

¹⁰Bhagavad Gita 16.6

¹¹ All English translations of the Bhagavad Gītā cited in this article are taken from Swami Mukundananda, *Bhagavad Gita: The Song of God*.

"I am like God; I am the enjoyer, I am perfect, I am powerful, and I am happy. I am wealthy, and I have influential relatives. Who is equal to me? I will perform sacrifices for the celestial gods, I will give charity, and I will celebrate." Thus, they become deluded by ignorance."

NPD is also called God Complex. As, individuals with NPD think them as God. Here, Lord Kṛṣṇa also present the same trait. So we can say unhesitantly that Gita also describes the characteristic of a narcissistic person.

3.4.Cause of NPD

A. Parenting Style: One of the most commonly cited factors in the development of narcissistic tendencies is a problematic early relationship with parents or caregivers. The way a child is treated during formative years can have a significant impact on their sense of self-worth and identity. Some children develop narcissistic traits when they are excessively praised or idealized by their parents. On the other hand, a lack of emotional attention or neglect can also contribute to the development of NPD. When a child's emotional needs are ignored, they may attempt to compensate for feelings of inadequacy by building a grandiose sense of self.

B. Cultural Factors: A society where the individual is valued and glorified is very likely to produce narcissists.

C. Getting Unexpected success: If a person gets sudden success, there is a possibility that narcissism tendency will be seen in him. In today's age, if someone becomes viral and famous on social media, then he can also become a narcissist.

.Many times we see in movies that a kid kills a big gangster in the crime world and then everyone thinks of him as God. That kid then gradually becomes a narcissist.

3.5. Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā: Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā is one of the greatest scriptures in the world. It is an excerpt from the twenty-fifth to the forty-second chapter of the Bhīṣma Parva in the Mahabharata. These eighteen chapters are collectively known as Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā. The Gita represents the ideal of Indian wisdom and provides a profound depiction of human duty (dharma). It is considered the essence of Vedic knowledge— "**Sarvavedamayī gītā**"

The Bhagavadgītā is the ultimate essence of the

¹²Bhagavad Gita 16.4

¹³Bhagavad Gita 16.14

¹⁴Bhagavad Gita 16.15

Mahābhārata. It is said that Maharishi Vyāsa composed the Mahābhārata by drawing wisdom from the four *Vedas*, eighteen *Puranas*, and nine treatises on grammar. He then further distilled the essence of the Mahābhārata and revealed the Bhagavadgītā. Ultimately, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa refined the teachings of the *Gītā* and imparted them to Arjuna—

**“Sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanah
Pārthovatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdhaṁ gītāmṛtaṁ
mahat”**

So leaving aside all the scriptures, it is better to consume only this *Gītā* —

**“Gītā sugītā kartavyā kimanyaiḥ śāstravistaraiḥ
Yā svayam padmanābhasya
mukhapadmātviniṣṛitā”¹⁵**

The Bhagavadgītā is not just a religious text but also a profound psychological guide. It inspires us to attain mental peace, self-awareness, and lead a positive life. The principles of the *Gītā* are perfectly aligned with modern psychology and are highly beneficial for self-development, stress management, and spiritual enlightenment. Acharya Rajneesh Osho said –

“और दुनिया में अनेक-अनेक ग्रंथों में अद्भुत सत्य है, लेकिन गीता फिर भी विशिष्ट है, और उसका कुल कारण इतना है कि वह धर्मशास्त्र कम, मनस्शास्त्र, साइकोलॉजी ज्यादा है।गीता मनुष्यजाति का पहला मनोविज्ञान है; वह पहली साइकोलॉजी है।”¹⁶

That means ‘There are many scriptures in the world that contain profound truths, but the *Gita* is unique. The essential reason is that it is less a religious scripture and more a science of the mind — psychology. ... The *Gita* is humanity’s first psychology; it is the very first psychology.’

3.6. Bhagavadgītā and Psychotherapy for NPD

The teachings of the Bhagavad *Gita* were given by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Arjuna was deluded—he did not want to fight against his own relatives. He was turning away from his duty as a Kṣatriya. At that moment, Lord Krishna imparted the wisdom of the *Gita* to Arjuna in order to remove his delusion and mental confusion. So this sacred text is always applicable for all the human beings, helping to dispel illusion, clear mental

confusion, awaken to courage, clarity, and righteous action, who are going through situations such as confusion, depression, anxiety, fear, hopelessness and mental weakness. That is what psychology does. So there are similarity between the *Gītā* and psychology. Both deal with human emotions. Hence, the *Gītā* can also address mental disorder, such as NPD, which are usually dealt with by the psychology.

Treating NPD is challenging, but modern psychology offers various therapies to help individuals develop self-awareness, empathy, and healthier relationships. Psychotherapy techniques like **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)**, **Schema Therapy**, and **Psychodynamic Therapy** help individuals change harmful behaviors and understand deep-rooted emotional patterns.¹⁷ **Group therapy** encourages narcissistic individuals to interact with others, receive feedback, and develop empathy. **Mindfulness¹⁸ and self-compassion¹⁹** training promote emotional regulation, self-awareness, and reduced defensiveness, while medications can help with related issues like anxiety or depression. Therapy also focuses on improving interpersonal skills and reducing manipulative tendencies, but success depends on the individual’s willingness to change.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* also offers deep psychological insights that can help psychotherapy for Narcissistic Personality Disorder. NPD is characterized by grandiosity, lack of empathy, a constant need for admiration, and difficulty handling criticism. The *Gītā*, with its teachings on self-awareness, detachment, humility, and inner peace, can help in addressing these traits. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says -

**“Abhayaṁ sattva-saṁsuddhir jñāna-yoga-
vyavasthitiḥ
Dānaṁ damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyas tapa
ārjavam
Ahinsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir
apaiśunam
Dayā bhūteṣhv aloluptvaṁ mārdaṁ
hrīracāpalam
Tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛitiḥ śauchamadroho nātimānitā
Bhavanti sampadam daivīmabhiḥjātasya
bhārata”²⁰**

“O Bharat! The sage-like qualities of those with a divine nature are—fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastness in knowledge, charity, sense control,

¹⁵ Gītā Māhātmyam

¹⁶ Gītā Darśan page 32

¹⁷ mountainstherapy.com

¹⁸ Mindfulness is present-moment awareness with calm, non-judgmental observation of thoughts.

¹⁹ Self-compassion means that a person treats themselves kindly during struggles, with understanding and care.

²⁰ *Bhagavad Gītā* 16.1-2-3

renunciation, study of scriptures, austerity, and simplicity."

For a person suffering from NPD, developing self-awareness is extremely important. The divine qualities described by Śrī Kṛṣṇa can serve as a 'therapeutic guideline', which means structured steps to support healing and improve mental health. Mental purity, simplicity, and self-reflection help an individual acknowledge their insecurities and assist in controlling their ego.

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says —

**Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadāchana.
Mā karmaphalaheturbhūr mā te saṅgo
'stvakarmaṇi..'**²¹

"You have the right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your work, nor be attached to inaction."

Individuals who have NPD, generally define their identity through achievements and external validation. This verse teaches the importance of focusing on actions rather than their outcomes. It aligns with the 'reframing' technique in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), helping individuals shift their sense of self-worth from external approval to intrinsic qualities.

The Bhagavad Gītā states-

**Vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini.
Śuni chaiva śva-pāke cha paṇḍitāḥ sama-
darśinaḥ..**²²

"The truly wise see a learned Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a person of low status with equal vision through the eyes of divine knowledge."

Individuals who are suffering from NPD often perceive others as inferior to themselves. This verse teaches that one should view all beings with equality, regardless of their social status or background. Developing empathy is a crucial aspect of NPD therapy, and This principle fits with Schema Therapy, helping people develop compassion and balanced views.

Also-

**"Mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya
Nivasiṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na sanśayaḥ "**²³

"Fix your mind on Me alone and surrender your intellect to Me. By doing so, you will always reside in Me—there is no doubt about it."

**"Arva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śharaṇaṁ
vraja**

**Ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā
śucaḥ"**²⁴

"Abandon all varieties of dharma and simply surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions; do not grieve."

Individuals with Narcissistic Personality Disorder often consider themselves superior to others. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teaching emphasizes that one must let go of ego and surrender to a higher power. This guidance encourages humility and letting go, helping people move beyond self-centeredness.

4.Conclusion

The doctrines of Bhagavad Gītā, as shared by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, work as a profound form of psychotherapy. These sacred teachings counsel individuals who are suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) towards self-awareness, the detachment of ego, emotional balance, compassion, and spiritual awakening. If people merge both modern therapy and the transformative guidance of the Gita into their life, they can over time free themselves from the grip of NPD and attain a more balanced, self-evolved, and peaceful existence. Just as Arjuna's delusion was dispelled merely by listening to the Gītā, an individual can also overcome their mental illusions and ego by embracing these teachings. Arjuna himself expresses —

**"Naṣṭo mohah smṛitir labdhā
tvatprasādānmayāchyuta
Sthito'smi gatasandehah kariṣye vacanaṁ tava"**²⁵

"O Achyuta! By Your grace, my delusion has been destroyed. I am now firmly established in knowledge, all my doubts have vanished, and I shall act according to Your command."

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