

Harmony in Matrimony: A Study of Values for Marital Happiness and Life Satisfaction from Bhagwat Geeta



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Abstract:

Marriage is a significant aspect of human life, and satisfaction and happiness in marital life have a huge impact on the overall life satisfaction of the individuals. In Indian tradition, marriage is a sacred relationship between two souls. Research has shown numerous physical and emotional benefits of a happy marital life, and The Bhagavad Geeta, a sacred scripture of Hindu philosophy, contains profound wisdom and values that can contribute to happiness in marital relationships. In this context, this research paper aimed to analyze the content of the Bhagavad Gita and its applicability in fostering happiness and satisfaction within the context of marriage, extracting practical lessons that couples can apply to enhance the quality of their marital relationships. This study tried to explore the timeless spiritual wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita through an analytical and arts-based hermeneutic lens, uncovering foundational values that contribute to marital happiness and life satisfaction. Amidst the modern challenges of marriage, from emotional conflict to shifting expectations, the paper proposes that the Gita offers a deeply relevant framework for relational harmony. can foster resilience, emotional balance, and shared purpose within marital life.

Keywords: Character strengths, happiness, marriages, values

1. Background

The pursuit of happiness and life satisfaction is a universal quest- engaging individuals across cultures and centuries. According to Lyubomirsky, 'Happiness is the experiences characterized by joy, fulfilment, or positive well-being, and sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and rewarding' (cited by Kleinman et al., 2014) and marital happiness is one of the parameters of the overall happiness of the individual and is associated with better health and longevity (Lawrence et al., 2018).

In the contemporary discourse surrounding marital satisfaction and well-being, much of the focus remains on psychological compatibility (Chioma & Sulong, 2022), communication styles (Du Plooy & De Beer, 2018), and socio- economic dynamics. While these factors are undeniably important, there is a growing recognition of the role that deeper values-spiritual, ethical, and philosophical play in sustaining meaningful and resilient marital relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2004). In this era, increasing rates of marital discord and emotional disconnection are found. There is an urgent need, especially in urban and fast-paced societies, to reimagine the foundation of marriage not merely as a social arrangement but as a sacred and transformative partnership. Studies in positive psychology also backed this sentiment, suggesting that character strengths, moral virtues, and a sense of purpose are important predictors of long-term

marital satisfaction (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Fowers & Owenz, 2010). In this light, the Gita's emphasis on virtues such as samatvam (equanimity), vairagya (detachment), and bhakti (devotion) becomes especially relevant.

As part of ancient wisdom, the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred scripture in Hindu philosophy, offers profound insights into the foundations of a fulfilling life. Bhagavad Gita is a rich treasure and source of values and principles that surpasses religious boundaries. According to Bhatia, the Gita can be used as a therapeutic tool (Bhatia et al., 2013). Additionally, Hegde referred to the Bhagavad Gita as "A living philosophy for the happiness of mind and peace" (Hegde, 2018).

The Bhagavad Gita is a part of the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata comprising 700 verses and 18 adhyaya, also known as the "Song of the Divine". Lord Krishna preached it to Arjuna, who was in 'vishad (grief)' on the battleground to show him the path of karma and dharma. This verse stands out as a powerful source of unfathomable principles that extend beyond cultural and chronological boundaries as scholars investigate the fusion of ancient wisdom with contemporary science. According to Prabhupada, (1989), the Bhagwat Geeta is a widely accepted source of wisdom and knowledge worldwide. Similarly, a scholar from the West, Fosse, praised it, saying that people still listen

to and read the Bhagavad Gita today, across centuries, across oceans, and beyond linguistic, religious, and cultural barriers (Juneja, 2022). These justifications support the claim that the Bhagavad Gita is a comprehensive philosophical treatise applicable to all of humanity. Deeply interpreted, it offers us extensive philosophical ideas and hypotheses. It would not justify if we looked at Geeta as a religious myth. Many thinkers referred to it as the "manual for mankind", and it has been praised highly not only by leading Indians such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi but also by Aldous Huxley, Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Carl Jung and Herman Hesse. It is also considered one of the most significant texts in the history of literature and philosophy (Dhillon, 2023).

Geeta can show the path to live a spiritual as well as material life. Although Lord Krishna preached it on the battlefield before the war, its relevance in the present scenario is still meaningful and significant. According to some thinkers, the battlefield represents our body, where a constant fight between good and evil forces, worldly pleasures, and the pursuit of finding meaning and purpose (Manickam and Sharma, 2025). One of the studies showed statistically significant increased scores for strengths like Hope, Optimism and Resilience in the Bhagavad Gita intervention group, which included profound ideas and "Mantras" compared to the control group (Dabas & Singh, 2018), so there is a need to make efforts to bring out the hidden knowledge from scriptures and use this knowledge and wisdom for improving our relationship and gain happiness through the meaningful engagement within it.

In this context, the current study proposes a return to timeless spiritual sources, particularly the Bhagavad Gita, to explore values that may contribute to marital harmony and life satisfaction.

2. Objective:

This research paper aims to analyze the contents of the Bhagavad Gita and their applicability for couples to foster happiness and satisfaction within the context of marriage.

¹ śhreyān swa-dharmo viguṇ aḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣ hṭ hitāt swa-dharme nidhanam śhreyah para-dharmo bhayāvahah

² yadā sanharate chāyam kūrmo 'ngānīva sarvaśhaḥ indriyāṇindriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

Scope:

Examining key teachings relevant to personal virtues, duties, and interpersonal relationships would help married couples to live happy and satisfied life.

3. Methodology

This study adopted an arts-based hermeneutic methodology, which merges interpretive textual analysis with aesthetic, emotional, and symbolic engagement. Rooted in the traditions of philosophical hermeneutics and enriched by creative inquiry, this approach recognizes that sacred texts such as the Bhagavad Gita are not merely static artefacts to be dissected but living expressions of wisdom to be encountered, experienced, and internalized (Thompson, 1997; Frazier, 2008). This method also honors the Indian philosophical tradition itself, which often conveys knowledge through allegory, symbolism, and narrative rather than abstract theorizing. As such, an arts-based hermeneutic design offers an epistemological match with the aesthetic and experiential style of the Gita. The researcher approaches the text creatively and sympathetically, allowing meaning to develop naturally by reflection, intuition, and affinity.

Textual Selection and Interpretation

While the entire Gita possesses great philosophical wisdom, researchers purposively selected verses based on their thematic relevance with the values that nurture marital harmony and life satisfaction.

These themes include:

Dharma (sense of duty and ethical responsibility)

Vairagya (non-attachment or emotional maturity)

Bhakti (devotion and relational grace)

Samatvam (equanimity or balance amidst dualities)

The selection of these verses followed a reflective reading process in which the researchers repeatedly engaged with the text in varied moods and settings, read and reread several times, and noted symbolic connections and contemporary parallels. Throughout this process, researchers took interpretive notes to record new information and queries, and on that basis, themes emerged.

4. Discussion

Although traditionally considered a spiritual text and composed in the midst of the battle, it is essentially a text about inner life that teaches us how to live sensibly, behave morally, and remain grounded, calm, and composed even in the face of adversity. Continue to perform duties without overly thinking about the fruits of that karma. It tells that 'You are

your own best friend and your own worst enemy. All the problems can only be solved by you. When interpreted through a value-oriented lens, these teachings can also offer profound insights into interpersonal relationships, including marital bonding. Drawing upon contemporary literature and interpretive hermeneutics, this section tried to explore how Gita's teachings on dharma, vairagya, bhakti, and samatvam offer significant insight for long-lasting, loving marital happiness and life satisfaction in today's complex relational landscape. Following themes are emerged from our study.

4.1 Dharma and the Sacredness of Relational Duty

The emphasis on dharma, or sacred duty, is one of the Gita's most enduring lessons. It discusses fulfilling one's duty towards oneself and society. Krishna declares:

"It is better to fail in one's own duty than to succeed in the duty of another. Better is death in one's duty; the duty of another brings danger (Adhyaya3, verse 35¹)."¹

Dharma, in the context of marriage, refers to the various duties and moral obligations that each spouse has; these are followed not because they are imposed by social norms but rather consciously chosen out of love, compassion, and understanding. It also serves as a reminder that a genuine marital partnership is based on each partner accepting and carrying out their specific role with clarity and sincerity.

A recent study by Kalia, Jaiswal, and Sharma (2025) has confirmed the applicability of this instruction, as it highlighted how Gita's dharma framework promotes marital stability through role clarity and mutual respect, which is align with modern psychology's need for ethical alignment and value-based living. Rather than relying on societal role, partners cultivate a climate of accountability and interior harmony by adhering to swadharma which is one's own moral responsibility.

³ *adveṣ hṛ ā sarva-bhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇ a eva cha nirmamo nirahankāraḥ sama-duḥ kha-sukhaḥ kṣ hamī*

santuḥ hṛ aḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛ iḍ ha-niśchayaḥ mayy arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ

⁴ "Samatvam yoga uchyate."

4.2 Vairagya: Emotional Balance and Letting Go

The concept of "Vairagya" in the Gita is often misunderstood as giving away all worldly pleasures. In actuality, it is about internal liberation from overly firm emotional reliance and responsiveness. Emotional reactivity, possessiveness, and unmet expectations are common problems in modern partnerships. Krishna illustrates this beautifully

"As a tortoise draws in its limbs, so does the wise one withdraws their senses from sense-objects" (Adhyaya2 verse 58)²

points to the emotional regulation needed in a healthy marriage. Relationships resonate profoundly with this metaphor. Vairagya manifests in marriage as emotional maturity, or the ability to respond deliberately instead of rashly. It assists couples avoid being overtaken by ego-driven reactions, expectations, or old grievances, as well as overly depending on the satisfaction of physical needs. Love can blossom unconditionally when there is emotional space. People make room for trust, forgiveness, and genuine intimacy when they let go of control, blame, and possessiveness.

Vairagya, according to Swami Sivananda (2000), advocates for a prudent disengagement from egoic urges rather than the renunciation of existence. Additionally, vairagya encourages people to maintain emotional awareness without becoming emotionally trapped, which is crucial in preventing marital breakdowns, according to Chakraborty and Chattopadhyay (2023). For these reasons, the Gita encourages mindful balance, which allows partners to respond rather than react—a quality that is increasingly valued in modern relationship treatment.

4.3 Bhakti: Devotion as Relational Offering

Bhakti, or loving devotion, is one of the spiritual values that Gita preached. Although it seems superficially related to the Divine, the importance of devotion can also be reflected in human relationships, especially in marriage. True devotion (bhakti) in the Gita transcends ritual—it is about loving engagement. Krishna describes a true devotee as:

"One who is free from hatred, kind and compassionate, humble, content, and forgiving—such a devotee is dear to Me." (Bhagavad Gita Adhyaya12 verse13–14)³

Though these strengths of characters are used in spiritual terms, these qualities are also crucial for harmonious marriages. Daily life is full of both joy and misunderstanding, ups and downs; devotion (bhakti) can be expressed not just towards the Divine but toward each other. Seeing the divine in

each other transforms marriage into a sacred practice of daily seva (selfless service); it should be a shared experience between both partners. Forgiving a partner for small mistakes and content in any situation will definitely help partners in long-lasting loving relationships.

Contemporary Vedanta teacher Swami Dayananda Saraswati often said, "Love is not something you fall into; it is something you grow by giving." In this light, bhakti in marriage is about consciously offering love as a gift, not a demand (Transcribed from a speech Swami Dayananda Saraswati at Chennai in 1998). Kumaar (2025) posits that modern love has become transactional, often driven by superficial expectations, yet Gita's teaching of bhakti helps realign love with surrender, compassion, and selflessness- the qualities essential for emotional intimacy. This is echoes in Day and Impett's study (2016) which showed that individuals who sacrifice for their romantic partners with a sense of autonomy and goodwill experienced increased happiness and relational harmony. This resonates with the Bhagavad Gita's guidance on selfless action and emotional discipline as pillars of harmonious living. Studies also have shown the positive effect of practicing forgiveness, which results in reduced anger, anxiety and depression and increased self-esteem (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Wade et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2022)

The foundation of a happy marriage is love, forgiveness, and humility. The emphasis shifts from entitlement to service when one sees their partner as a sacred other, rather than a means to achieve self-fulfillment. As an act of spiritual care, bhakti thus becomes a live practice of giving love without expecting anything in return and fostering the relationship.

These attributes are both essential for relationship necessities and spiritual virtues. When the couple exhibits dedication in marriage through acts of service, forgiveness, and affection, the emphasis shifts from self-interest to the couple's well- being.

4.4 Samatvam: Equanimity in Shared Life

Another key concept in Gita is 'Samatvam'. Krishna frequently reminds Arjuna of the need to enhance the capacity to balance the state of mind amidst life's fluctuations. Krishna urges Arjuna to act with equanimity, saying:

"Evenness of mind is called yoga." ⁴(adhyaya 2 verse 48)

Samtvam is also one of the important teachings of Geeta. Krishna has given a long description of the 'sthita prajña'-a personal characteristic such as steady wisdom and composed mind, which is associated with 'Samtvam'. Couples go through a

variety of experiences in their married lives, including happiness and sadness, as well as success and failure. During these changes, Samatvam promotes inner peace and fortitude. It advises partners to refrain from being unduly tied to highs and lows or overreacting during arguments; instead, they learn to provide steady, perspective-based support to one another. In a time of emotional instability and performance-based love, the teaching of Samatvam is becoming increasingly relevant. Conflict resolution and emotional resilience are fostered by marital equanimity. It helps couples to see difficulties as opportunities for personal development rather than as threats.

This notion is also supported by existential psychology developed by Viktor Frankl (1959), which holds that the ability to endure and rise above suffering is frequently the source of life's purpose. This concept is now referred to as emotional intelligence, which is the ability to identify, manage, and respond to emotions in a way that maintains interpersonal harmony (Sahu, 2024).

4.5 Surpassing the Ego: Achieving a Common Goal

The Gita's invitation to transcend ego-driven motives is potentially the most transformative concept. Krishna's constant urging to act without attachment (nishkama karma) invites a shift from self-gratification to selfless service in relationships.

In today's world of materialism, marital happiness often emphasizes self-fulfillment and emotional gratification. Although these are important components in marital happiness, when relationships experience crises or existential changes it may not be sufficient. The Gita presents an alternative: marriage should serve as a platform for the spiritual journey of self- transcendence in which the ego is tempered, the heart is enlarged, and selfless service becomes the standard.

This idea echoes Martin Buber's (1958) notion of the "I-Thou relationship," in which two people interact with one another as sacred others rather than as objects. Modern authors, such as Buber and an article in the Times of India (2024), contend that marriage is a sacred union in which both parties strive for personal growth. When couples view marriage as a spiritual partnership rather than a personal enterprise, they begin to cultivate what the Gita calls yogic love—love grounded in awareness rather than desire for liberation.

4.6 Transitioning from Individual Satisfaction to Collective Goals

Marriage in contemporary culture is frequently seen as a path to personal fulfilment. However, Gita offers

a broader perspective, arguing that transcending the ego gives life purpose. It entails developing a we-centered mindset as opposed to a me-centered one in a marriage. Marriage becomes a spiritual experience when both spouses view the union as a sacred space for personal development and contribution.

This vision is echoed again by philosopher Martin Buber (1958), who also described authentic relationships in which each person is seen as sacred and whole—not as an object to be used but as a soul to be honored. The Gita's call to act selflessly, remain grounded in inner peace, and see the divine in all beings directly supports this view.

5. Implications for Contemporary Marriages

Through the principles of dharma, vairagya, bhakti, and samatvam, the ageless advice Bhagavad Gita has provided for developing a strong, kind, and purposeful marriage. These lessons can be summarized as follows-

- Encourage shared responsibility grounded in mutual respect
- Promote emotional awareness and non-reactivity
- Inspire acts of love as offerings rather than expectations
- Build strength through inner balance and long-term vision

By applying these insights, couples can not only manage conflict more wisely but also deepen their spiritual connection and life satisfaction. Through the Gita, people can learn lessons to view marriage not just as a social arrangement but as a path toward inner peace and joint awakening.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on a relational hermeneutic perspective and contemporary thoughts on relationships, research suggests that Bhagavad Gita provides timeless principles that couples can intentionally apply to contemporary marital situations. The incorporation of current knowledge confirms the Gita's applicability today:

Kalia et al. (2025) link dharma to moral alignment and role responsibility.

Chakraborty and Chattopadhyay (2023) advocate emotional detachment as a tool for conflict regulation. Kumaar (2025) highlights the need for selfless devotion in the age of transactional relationships.

Sahu (2024) and Times of India (2024) promote spiritual insights for lasting love.

Together, these sources suggest that the Gita's

values are not only philosophically and spiritually profound but also emotionally practical. By integrating dharma, vairagya, bhakti, and Samatvam, couples can build a marriage that is not only enduring but enriching—anchored in inner awareness, mutual respect, and shared transcendence.

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