

THE GITA AND MENTAL HEALING

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Since Sigmund Freud, psychotherapy has undergone many tentative and ratified modifications. This article in its first half tries to establish a comparative superiority of the two-chair gestalt therapy, to which the *Gita* agrees essentially. The latter half of the article explains experimental validity of Gitaite mottoes apropos two-chair technique and other relevant researches.

Psychologically we are drug-laden today - be it a psychotherapeutic drug or a psychotropic one. That many maladies find their origin in psychological maladjustments is established by a horse-load of research and many of these papers place psychotherapy (cure without chemicals) ahead of psychopharmacology especially for less severe cases(1)

Even these psychotherapeutic trends are altering apace since Sigmund Freud, who has been known as the father of psychotherapy in general and psychoanalysis-psychodynamincs in particular. This speciality was followed by two more, namely, behaviouristic-existential therapies.

Freud felt a favourable role of 'insight' in psychotherapy late in his life. Thenceforth, this 'insight' has been carried through several therapies but the original secularism attached to it is slowly sidelined by religion. The latter is now "a virgin field pregnant with possibilities" and increasing role thereof on psychotherapy is acknowledged by academicians(2) or laymen(3) alike. Even a standard cognitive behaviour therapy rates better by substituting religious imageries(4).

A research comparing various psychotherapies finds a humanistic-existential stream (called client-centered therapy) as the best for the most(5). Actually in the sea of society this iceberg of psychopathy has its 90% mass under the water of vague and meagre problems like stress, depression, aggression, obsession, anxiety, tension and so on... on which this choice therapy fares well.

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Concerning the same subnormal group soon another paper surfaced, affirming a still better performance by two-chair gestalt therapy for less reactive patients(6). Subsequently other techniques under gestalt stream of humanistic - existential therapy (viz. focusing, empathy or a combination of the two) and other streams under behaviourism (like cognitive behaviour therapy) were assessed comparatively, rating this two-chair model again at the top.(7)

Under the influence of Einsteinian relativity Frederick S. Perls had conceived this idea of *gestalt* (a German word that means "a mental configuration"). Here, two chairs represent a bifurcation of personality - one is an assertive and righteous topdog while the other is a complaining but manipulative underdog. Though this theory is well limited within this century, nearly each of its tenets is seen enshrined in the *Gita* that was written over 3000 years ago.

For example, two chairs of Aujuna's personality are seen in the very first session of psychotherapy (SBG 1.22-23 versus 1.36-46) when a warrior proud enough to scrutinize the arms of miscreants in opposition soon turns to pathos over expected loss of kinsmen. Moreover, all the three steps of a standard gestalt therapy, namely, opposition (of patient's idea into that of the therapist: upto chapter 2, SBG), merger (of patient's idea into that of the therapist: upto chapter 11, SBG) and integration (the final conclusion over which both are in unison: vide SBG 18.72 and 18.73 are in due course. But coming to crux of the *Gita*, (especially *Visvarupa-darsana*), a psychotherapist might sniff at the authoritarian attitude that necessarily undoes the outcome.(8)

The most rigorous comparison of psychotherapeutic procedures statistically values 'paradoxical intentions' (= welcoming an aversion, so that the patient is gradually desensitised to it) as no one. Two-chair gestalt therapy and other experiential confrontations just follow that, and the last consistent finding (as no other than these three is significant statistically) of effectiveness comes from interpretations (= explaining the harsh realities in a heartening version).(9) To avoid any implosion (= emotional flooding, and undoubtedly counter-productive (10) technique) *Krsna* wanted to settle preliminaries well before any imagery. That's why *Visvarupa-darsana* (a paradoxical intention, the top ranker remedy

hypnotising Arjuna into a prevision of the genocide SBG 11.26-27,34) was delayed upto chapter 11 while the runner-up approach (i.e. two-chair approach (i.e. two-chair gestalt therapy) was applied at the very beginning (as already explained). The last strategy of interpretation is seen woven throughout as a groundwork of the whole persuasion process. On persuasion and healing we have separate treatises(11) but such a level of excellency is rarely reached.

After Freud, the dream-analysis is again taken up by this two-chair therapy, though the latter's angle of vision varies quite a lot. Even the *Gita* hints a similar approach when it talks about *Bhutagramam* (SBG 8. 18-19), i.e. a part of vitality (awareness) that dies out in the night and revives back in the morning. The matter is more evident when a compliance of awareness with dreams is ordained (SBG 6.17). Likewise, the *Gita* comprises many more basics of this therapy e.g. emphasis on 'here and now' (SBG 2.31 - 37 and 18.59 - 60), etc.

Similarly, various other improvements in psychotherapy, not recognised until recently, are foretold in the *Gita*. For example, after-effects of a behaviour therapy with or without insight is the same upto six months; but a four year's follow-up clearly establishes that the therapy without insight is not at par(12). Moreover, compared to intelligence and reflection induced self-help, result-oriented (= seeking sooner comfort and prosperity) heuristic strategies are much less effective in the long run(13). That's why Krsna in the *Gita* insists on insight that detaches actions from results and never offers any direct help on his own behalf. Findings like utility of respiratory training to cure panic attacks(14) and comparative superiority of relaxation therapy over-imaginal exposure or cognitive restructuring or a combination of the both(15) are already used (cf. concepts of *pranayama* and *anasakti*) in the *Gita*.

Actually, many of our activities are just for pleasure's sake, indifferent to results. The intrinsic motivation thereof which ensues a pleasure of performance is seen ceasing when a benefit is attached to actions (then what to talk about a loss !). Our pleasure gets gradually replaced by a stress of work, tensions to succeed, anxiety of betterment(16). ... That's what we are destined for! In this age of cut-throat competition everyone is trained by baits - an attachment of

price - tag to each and every thing. We just can't consider a work without benefit (that's why there are all errors of omission commonly called negligence, or officially, red-tapism), or conversely if there is an assured benefit, we can't consider the work (and that's why all the errors of commission commonly known as crimes are there).

Thus, on one hand good deeds are on rapid decline and on the other, bad deeds are soaring sky-high. This ratio can be reversed or even polarised upto 'all well' only if we deter from results and feel pleasure in our righteous duties. Such a universal extension of social psychology is not the sole peculiarity that the *Gita* has.

Coming to another common walk of life, a labour or virtue is often seen ending in smoke (or even fire !) while inactions and vices are seen burgeoning. This disparity acts like a two-edged sword - for some it ensues frustration, depression or suicide and for others envy, aggression or crime. But anyhow if we succeed in convincing each other that there are past as well as future cycles of births through which results might get transmitted, we kill two birds with one shot. Non - deserved rewards ascribed to better deeds in the past birth cycles (SBG 6.43) and irrational losses explained as a due for the future birds (SBG 6.40) (similarly causeless calamities and unjustified impurities can be explained) would be really helpful - be it a reality or not. Thus in a society replete with inequality, the theory of rebirth is at first a psychological expediency (similarly the God is to a non-omnipotent human being) and that's why I accede - "if the bias fits, wear it".(17)

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