Abstract

Addiction, substance abuse and chemical dependency is something that society is becoming increasingly familiar with. On a daily basis, the news reports constantly bombard us with cases of many individuals who purchase drugs, develop addiction and get imprisoned due to substance abuse challenges. Another severe epidemic is mental illness which is a social evil. Western culture in its affluence has increased individual longevity and improved health facilities more than ever, it is ironical that it has brought out a generation of disgruntled youth who feel estranged from the society, from purpose and more so from their own selves. Material profusion has brought about the stagnancy of the progress of the journey towards matters of the soul and spirit. The many negative consequences of Western consumerism are offsetting the many benefits of the materialistic culture.

Spirituality seems to be a simple and spontaneous solution to present day personal as well as social problems in a time period wherein spirituality is steadily on the decline globally and materialism dominates society, ushers in the need for direction and stability thereby making the Gita highly relevant. Previous research has shown how religion and spirituality have proven to have a positive impact on health and well-being.

The Bhagavad Gita is essence of all Indian scriptures, a manual to life and equips us with all necessities to help man promote his consciousness to the topmost level. Lord Krishna expounded The Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna in order to inspire him to stick to the performance of his duty at the time of his dilemma at the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

The Gita advocates the practice of bhakti yoga or the path of devotion to God. This process is purificatory, destressing the individual and it facilitates him to get realization of the Absolute Truth. Not only does it help develop deeper values, it also brings about better individuals belonging to a worldwide community.

One of the most significant practices of bhakti yoga is meditation on mantra or spiritual sound vibration. This chanting has been found to calm the mind, and inspire one to live with deeper understanding to life’s meaning and purpose.

The objective of this study was to test the efficacy of bhakti yoga practice on individual behavior. Seven factors were considered to measure behavioral transformation of bhakti yoga practitioner’s viz. effect on substance abuse, emotional stability, compassion, development of sattva guna, focus and clarity in life, experience of spirituality and life satisfaction. Also the
effect of factors such as background, age, occupation, nationality, gender and marital status on bhakti yoga practice was tested.

This was accomplished by means of a survey questionnaire measuring the seven parameters of behavioral transformation which was further substantiated by qualitative data which was structured interview schedule. The sample was divided into 3 groups namely non-practitioners of bhakti yoga, 2-5 years practitioners and 10 years practitioners. The data was collected by means of online questionnaire which was 150 respondents for each group i.e. 450 total respondents. The answers were measured on Likert’s five point scale that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The pilot study was conducted with 90 respondents showed good reliability. The interview was conducted with 12 respondents from the same categories who were asked to elaborate in detail about the effects of the practice on their personal behavior in terms of the seven parameters measuring behavioral transformation. ANOVA multivariate analysis was applied wherein the practice was significant with the seven parameters indicating that positive behavioral transformation did result of the practice. Also more insight was gained on the relationship of factors like age, background, occupation, nationality, gender and marital status with practice. The results showed that there was a positive impact on behavioral transformation despite of different factors as mentioned above. This research can be used as a recommendation for bhakti yoga practice in society at large especially in rehabilitation of substance abuse afflicted individuals, value education, human resource training, youth upliftment, etc

Key words: Behavioral transformation, bhakti yoga, Bhagavad Gita, compassion, focus and clarity, emotional stability, compassion, experience of spirituality, substance abuse, development of sattva guna.