



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY IN PERSPECTIVE OF BHAGWAT GITA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th August, 2015
Received in revised form
12th September, 2015
Accepted 26th October, 2015
Published online 30th November, 2015

Key words:

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy,
Bhagwat Geeta,
Transcendental consciousness,
Self actualization.

ABSTRACT

The Bhagwat Gita offers a valuable literature on Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. It has a determined focus on removing cognitive distortions from the mind of the Arjuna and remotivating him to fight the battle by the therapist The Krishna. The Krishna as a therapist transformed Arjuna's distress narrated in Chapter 1 to liberation and renunciation as mentioned in Chapter 18 through a single REBT session of nearly 2-4 hours. The basic premise of REBT is that our thoughts, not external events affects the way we feel. Both REBT and Bhagwat Gita encourage human beings to pursue happiness and eliminate suffering when possible. They have an existential humanistic orientation and stress holism, at the same time both recognize human limitations. Both consider that humans are frail and need to accept human nature for what it is with unconditional acceptance of reality. Although humans are frail, they also possess the potential to improve themselves. REBT and Bhagwat Gita adhere to the idea that humans are self determined and create their own mental health as well as espouse ethical humanism and self actualization. The REBT model of the Bhagwat Gita contains elements of mindfulness, transcendental consciousness which is far more result oriented that contemporary REBT of modern times. Trust, devotion and complete surrender of patients towards the therapist as done by the Arjuna and emphasis on work with renunciation by the Krishna made REBT more effective and efficient in delivering fair results.

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Citation: Sushama Bhosale, 2015. "Rational emotive behaviour therapy in perspective of Bhagwat Gita", *International Journal of Current Research*, 7, (11), 22612-22613

INTRODUCTION

In the way of background, psychotherapist became more aware and interested in the commonalities between Eastern and Western Psychotherapies in the 1960's. Eastern and Western ways of thinking have dramatically increased (Tweed & Lehman, 2002) as a new eras has been ushered into Western mainstream literature with increased attention to mind-body interconnectedness and attention to similar between Eastern therapies and Western therapies like Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. The spiritual practices were deeply rooted in Bhagwat Gita. The Bhagwat Gita offers a valuable literature on mind relaxation. The epic Mahabharata authored by Veda Vyas dated back to 5000 BC consisting of 100,000 verses is based on the conflict between the two groups of cousins- the Kauravs and The Pandavas. The Pandavas and their supporters with the aid of the Krishna defeated the Kauravs in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The Bhagwat Gita represents chapter 25-42 of this epic. This scripture consists of 18 chapters and 701 verses. The very first chapter of Bhagwat Gita known as ' Arjuna Vishad Yoga' portrays the sorrow and

distress of the Arjuna while 'Moksha Sanyas Yoga' ,18th chapter narrates renunciation, freedom from fear, sorrow and distress after the successful session of REBT by The Krishna. It has determined focus on removing cognitive distortions from the mind of The Arjuna and re- motivating him to fight the battle by the therapist The Krishna. Albert Ellis himself, in his last few years saw the similarities between REBT and spiritual practices from Bhagwat Gita and wrote about them. He pointed out how both the systems help people to consistently work at forgiving self, others and tolerating an often times harsh world (Ellis et al., 2007).

Theory

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy was established by Albert Ellis. It is a comprehensive, active directive, philosophically and empirically based psychotherapy which focuses on resolving emotional and behavioral problems. A main concept of REBT is that human do not get emotionally disturbed by unfortunate circumstances but they do construct their views of these circumstances through rational beliefs and rational behavior. Based on the ABC model, the REBT intervention uses three classes of techniques. To deal with problems at A, REBT uses a large spectrum of "practical problem solving techniques" such as assertiveness training,

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social skills training, decision making, conflict resolution, specific problem solving techniques etc. To deal directly with clinical problems at C, REBT uses a large spectrum of “symptomatic techniques”, such as relaxation, hypnosis, meditation (e.g., REBT-based mindfulness), and other coping strategies that aim to change the C without explicitly targeting underlying cognitions (B). To etio-pathogenetically change dysfunctional consequences into functional consequences, REBT uses “cognitive restructuring” (e.g., disputation, reframing) techniques aiming to turn irrational beliefs into rational beliefs (first specific and then general beliefs).

Method of Study

Both REBT and Bhagwat Gita encourage people to think critically and to pursue truth. The scientific method is encouraged and thought to be necessary, according to REBT people might strive to learn to “train themselves through rigorous thinking about and working against some of their strongest inborn and environmental tendencies” (Ellis, 2005, p 64). People can acquire skills allowing them to debate their irrational thoughts and acquire a realistic view of the world. According to Bhagwat Gita the “Dharma can only gain strength and universally by open –minded, impartial research which is neither credulous nor dogmatically skeptical.” Personal reasoning and experience are one’s ultimate truths; Both REBT and Bhagwat Gita encourage the individual to approach living his/her life from a scientific perspective and to use empirical, logical methods of inquiry.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Both Bhagwat Gita and REBT encourages human beings to pursue healthy life with happiness and eliminate suffering as possible as. Bhagwat Gita teaches us “Karmne Vadhika Raste ma phaleshu kadachan” This is a concept of “Karma Yoga” as mentioned in Bhagwat Gita. This concept is inimitable whereby one performs his deeds in the service of the Lord without affection towards rewards and consequences. In Bhagwat Gita Arjun’s dilemma is outlined. The dilemma is that whether to perform his duty and fight for his right or quit from war to save blood flown of his relatives. In Bhagwat Gita Lord Krishna helped Arjuna to identify his distorted thinking and helped to modify beliefs and emotional responses in a very rational way. The Bhagwat Gita is full of advice on the theory of cause and effect, making the doer responsible for the consequences of his deeds.

It tackles the issues from the grass root level of human thinking because once the basic thinking of man is improved it will automatically enhance the quality of his action and their results. In The Bhagwat Gita, The Arjuna was the patient and The Krishna was the therapist. The Krishna delivered single session therapy to The Arjuna which lasted for 2-4 hours. Bhagwat Gita and REBT both have existential humanistic orientation. At the same time both recognize the human limitations. They consider that humans are frail and need to accept human nature for what it is with an unconditional acceptance of reality.

Although humans are frail, they also possess the potential to improve themselves. Both the systems adhere to the idea that humans are self determined and create their own mental health as well as espouse ethical humanism and self actualization. REBT uses a large variety of cognitive restructuring techniques: (1) logical, (2) empirical; (3) pragmatic; (4) emotive/metaphorical (e.g., metaphors, stories, poems, humor, songs, meditation/mindfulness-based REBT etc.); (5) spiritual; (6) behavioral (fundamental to change not only conscious beliefs, but also implicit processes/unconscious information processing). Moreover, beyond these core REBT cognitive restructuring techniques, REBT agrees with the use of any safe technique borrowed from other psychotherapy schools. These techniques, however, are separated from their original theories, being used in a new “cognitive framework”. REBT thus proves eclectic at the practical level (not at the theory level), a real platform for a possible psychotherapy integration.

Conclusion

In Bhagwat Gita the interaction with Krishna and the Arjuna shows the development of mind from pathetic state of anxiety and distorted thoughts are converted into matured thinking. The ABC model of REBT is effectively used in Bhagwat Gita and It may be a first documented session of REBT in the world.

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