



The Principles Laid Out in 'The Geetarahasya': Gen-Z and Atmanirbharata

Prof. (Dr.) Geetali Tilak

Officiating Vice-Chancellor

Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

doi: 10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si4.1220

ABSTRACT:

India is a country with a legacy of a rich heritage and takes pride in its scriptures and the study of Brahmadnyan which present answers to the curiosity, enquiry and confusion that arise in the minds of Generation Z (Internet Zoomers) adolescents, regarding the human existence, relevance of life, the cosmos, and the diversity in society and its impact on the human relation. The myths surrounding them have left many clueless and the young minds wander in delusion looking for a source of authentic information. Little do they know that Geetarahasya is the only source of information fulfilling the very need of mankind. During the British Raj, the Indian education system was destroyed and people were forced into learning what was essential for operating the British administration. Hence during this era, Indian society moved far away from spiritual treasures. This store of knowledge was brought out by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak in his well-written epic "*Geetarahasya*" wherein he explained the Hindu Philosophy of Life. Geetarahasya helps one to perform his duty ethically. Today the mission and vision of India is Atmanirbhar Bharat and to attain this we need to create young minds who are focused on their individual and country's development with values because they are the ones who will build a strong and resilient society. This study attempts to study how the principles laid out in the Geetarahasya could be relevant to Gen Z and how these principles could help in their march towards Atmanirbharata.

Keywords: Generation Z, Geetarahasya, Atmanirbhar, Mental well-being, Stress

I. INTRODUCTION

The younger generation, the world over, faces multiple emotional challenges due to various factors such as diminishing value systems, crumbling family structures and lack of quality education. Uncontrolled access to technological appliances and applications has further aggravated the problem. Adolescent minds are often unable to differentiate right from wrong and easily fall into trap of the virtual world created by the Internet and other forms of technology. They do not learn to accept no as an answer and start demanding and expecting everything at a click of a button.

Thus, they lack patience. As a result, many behavioural issues like decreasing sense of responsibility, attention deficit, excessive anger, technology dependence, drug abuse, open defiance; and above all most prevalent 'I don't care' attitude are becoming more and more common among youth. The tendency of some parents of appeasing their children by providing them with everything on a platter has further exacerbated the problem. Pressure on kids to succeed and excel in everything they do, many times proves too costly. It hinders natural growth and leads to various behavioural issues. Such deviant behaviour of teenagers is increasingly becoming a cause of concern for society as a whole. Concerns of increasingly restless and perpetually dissatisfied young minds can be addressed and the strength of their character be built if teachings of ancient Indian scriptures like Bhagavad Geeta are inculcated in them.

Geetarahasya contains rich and unfathomable words of wisdom, which can be accepted and appreciated by today's youth if its practical aspects are presented to them in a relatable and digestible manner. The knowledge of Geeta, thus, has to be made available to teenagers interestingly and engagingly. Such knowledge can help young ones in preparing themselves to cope with challenges they face or are likely to face in future.

Geetarahasya is the guidebook to a successful life. It has directed individuals not to run away from the struggles of life. One should work hard without worrying about the results. The doctrine of karma (the law of cause and effect) i.e. as one sows so shall he reap; can motivate everyone to do good. Geeta teaches equanimity of mind.

Teaching a child to accept failure with grace is as important as telling him to handle success, with humility. Such an understanding can help him/her in reducing anxiety levels and avoiding emotional outbursts. It also enhances his/her capability of coping with different situations.

As per Bhagavad Geeta, the mind is a powerful instrument in hands of man through which he can rise to great heights or fall to immeasurable depths. Mind is the best friend of those who have conquered it, but it proves to be the worst enemy of one who fails to control it. If this message of self-restraint and self-discipline is instilled in the initial years, one can face all challenges of life boldly.

Geeta has emphasised the importance of anger management. Lust, greed, jealousy, fear etc. are stated to be the worst enemies of man. By keeping such vices under check, one can obtain serenity of the mind; and thus flourish in life. The concentration of mind, taught in Geeta, is quite helpful to students in channelizing their energies towards achieving their goals in life. Bhagavad Geeta has preached the unity of the Divine and the oneness of mankind. If such a concept is understood at a young age; one becomes more humane. Feelings of love, empathy, trust and kindness arise naturally. When a child understands that there is only one Supreme Power, he starts respecting every religion.

Statement of Problem

Society has dramatically moved away from the knowledge content of Vedanta and the scriptures and has been, unfortunately, stopped midway and has gotten entangled in rituals and biased knowledge about Hindu Philosophy. Unfortunately, knowledge is imparted by half-baked gurus who, because they acquire siddhis, want blind followers and not studied students seeking enlightenment. Just like many misleading leaders in politics today. The Hindu philosophy is the oldest and richest in the world. It is a science. It is 'Vidnyana' विज्ञान specialized knowledge about Existence consciousness and Bliss. This knowledge is the basic crux of our existence and it is this that has led us through the tyranny of all kinds and has built our strength from the inside, making some lion-hearted leaders like Lokmanya Tilak.

This strength should have been built upon society after independence, but unfortunately, generations thereafter got carried away by the fantasy of the glittering world of the West and desires went haywire. People were caught in the tangles of quick fixes like easy rituals and it crumbled the actual values systems that India cherished. All the material changes do not bring the peace and happiness that one seeks throughout life. Lokmanya says happiness, lies within us, in our values beliefs and actions.

This journey is from constantly looking outward to looking inwards to understand ourselves and our relation to the world and our responsibility towards society and the world. If the education system could plant thoughts of the Philosophy of Life, Ethics and Religion in the minds of Gen Z, in their adolescence, it would help them to be responsible citizens and guide them for taking up responsibilities in their profession, family and society.

The principle of Karmayog that Geetarahasya speaks of - अविष्कार --- आत्मज्ञानाच्चाग्निआत्मनिर्भरतेच्चाAnything, any work, undertaken with atmadyana and with a determination of being Atmanirbhar will always create something beautiful and wholesome and fascinating.

Generation Z Stressed

Every generation is classified by the impact it makes on the culture and society. GenZ is the newest generation and includes people born between 1997 and 2015 — and encompasses 1.8 billion people, which represents almost a quarter of the global population. “India stands out with a population that includes 375 million people — 27% of the total — in Gen Z.

Members of Generation Z, defined as being between the ages of 10 and 25, report feeling more emotionally distressed than those of any other generation. One-quarter of Generation Z respondents rated their mental health as poor or very poor, according to a survey released by consulting firm McKinsey and Company earlier this year. That's almost twice the amount of Millennials and members of Generation X who felt the same way (13 per cent each). Only 8 per cent of Baby Boomers reported such feelings.

Every generation has endured traumatic events. But as digital natives, members of Generation Z are the first to be bombarded constantly through their cellphones with news, opinions, conspiracy theories and falsehoods that they are left to decipher. Facebook, the iPhone and Twitter all were introduced and gained traction during their childhoods.

Employers are taking note of this generation's background and mindset as they continue their march into the workplace. By 2030, the oldest members of Generation Z—those currently between the ages of 20 and 25 will make up 8.3 per cent of the workforce, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics. They are the most ethnically and racially diverse generation, and they say they want that reflected in the workplace. They also want good pay and a sense of purpose. They demand much, considering that 40 per cent of them plan to leave their employers within two years, according to a study by Deloitte. (Only 24 per cent of Millennials said the same.)

"The oldest in Gen Z have already seen a recession and a war on terrorism. They've seen politics at its worst. And now they've seen a global pandemic and are about to see recession again," says David Stillman, who wrote *Gen Z @ Work: How the Next Generation Is Transforming the Workplace* (Harper Business, 2017) with his 23-year-old son, Jonah. "They are survivors."

Stillman says Millennials, who preceded Generation Z, were coddled by their parents. He maintains that Generation Z's parents were more truthful, telling their offspring, "You're going to have a really tough time out there, you have to work super hard," which he says created "the most competitive generation in the workforce since the Baby Boomers."

Literature Review

Bal Gangadhar Tilak Geetarahasya: The Hindu Philosophy of Life, Ethics and Religion. (17th Edition 2017). Bal Gangadhar Tilak a freedom fighter and philosopher believed that Geeta was the Philosophy of Life Ethics and Religion, and narrated only to propagate the correct meaning of Karmayoga as against the belief in society at that time that it was written for Sanyas yoga. He has in this volume taken up issues right from the creation of the universe to the guiding principles of how one finds answers to 'To do or not to do' in life. This work was completed by him while under detention at Mandalay, where reference books were not easily available to him.

Geeta Vachaspati Sadashiv Shastri Bhide: ShrimadBhagwadgeetartha Rashasyadeepika Publisher Geeta Dharma Mandal 2005 He was the founder of Geeta Dharma Mandal which was established to spread the knowledge of Karma yoga and Rashtira dharma amongst the common man. He has in his book examined all the shlokas in the Geeta about Karma yoga and explained the essence of all the shlokas.

Janardan Sakharam Karandikar Geetatatvamanjiri athava Nirlep Geeta Shastra: Publisher Geeta Dharma Mandal 2008. J. S. Karandikar was a contemporary of Tilak and he took up the task of not only writing down the meanings of every shloka but after Tilak's statement of Karma Yoga, there were plenty of commentators who thought that Tilak's thoughts were a breach of Sanyas yoga and they raised many issues about the same.

Unfortunately, Tilak was busy in the freedom struggle and was not blessed with a long enough life to answer the commentators. Therefore, J. S. Karandikar took it upon himself to answer the commentators and satisfy their queries through the Geeta tatva Manjiri and also quoted the works of Jnaneshwar alongside. This commentary of his reconfirms the thoughts laid out by Tilak.

Arun Tiwari: A Modern Interpretation of Lokmanya Tilak's Geetarahasya Sakal Media Publication 2017. Arun Tiwari is a scientist and was associated with A P J Abdul Kalam, who too was highly influenced by Tilak's writings. Under his tutelage, Arun Tiwari has brought forth the thoughts of Geetarahasya, their interpretation and how they are of great value today, and in the society of tomorrow.

Swami Ranganāthānanda: Universal Message of the Bhagwad Gita. An exposition of the Gita in the light of Modern Thought and Modern Needs Volumes I, II, III Publisher Advaita Ashram 2016. Swami Ranganāthānanda was the President of the Ramakrishna Math and travelled all over the world propagating the thought of Vedant. He delivered verse-by-verse lectures on the Geeta every Sunday from 1988 to 1990. These lectures were packed with stimulating and delightful refreshing ideas, drawing upon the works of eminent poets, scientists, authors and historians. He firmly believed that India needs to rise from slumber and get 'TO WORK' following the principles of Karmayog.

Swami Ranganāthānanda: Eternal Values for a Changing Society II Great Spiritual Teachers Publisher Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Ramakrishna Math 1994. There have been numerous Spiritual teachers and leaders in our society who have interpreted our ancient texts in different ways which suited the situation at that given time. This book offers a reference to all those great teachers and their teachings over centuries.

Vidyaranya Swami: Sartha Panchadashi Commentary by D V Joag, Published by M D Joag 2016. Vidyaranya Swami was the soul behind the formation of the Vijayanagar Dynasty. He was an ardent follower of Shri Shankaracharya and has many excellent books to his credit. This book was written by him towards the end of his life, which explains the creation of the human body, its use and the reason why we exist as individuals and as a society. He speaks of Sankhya Yoga which is vastly referred to in Gita Rahasya too.

Anant Damodar Athavale: Shree Upanishadārtha Kaumudi: Shwetashwatar and Mahanarayan Published by Shri Radha Damodar Pratishthan 2012. All the above five books are the commentary by Anand Damodar Athavale on the 12 most important Upanishads. The Brahmasutras, the Upanishads and the Gita are the 'Prasthantraye' or the three most important guiding texts of Indian Philosophy.

Lokmanya Tilak refers to these in his Geetarahasya and it is said that the Geeta carries the essence of the Upanishads largely. The Upanishads were written largely at that time when our society was being caught in the wrong grip of rituals. The Upanishads have brought ethics and values to society and have proven without a doubt that Adhyatma vidya is a science and should be studied in the same spirit.

David Chalmers: Reality + Virtual worlds and the Problems of Philosophy Penguin 25th January 2022. This is the latest book by David Chalmers who is a University Professor of Philosophy and Co-Director of the Centre for Mind, Brain and Consciousness at New York University. He is known for formulating the Hard Problem of consciousness. Consciousness is a subject that even leading scientists are unable to comprehend. However, our philosophy of Advait Vedanta, spelt out by Lokmanya in Geetarahasya has already solved it with reference to the principles laid out by our Rishis centuries ago. This is the turning point of Geetarahasya and the principles are dealt with in this book.

Carlos Rovelli: The Order of Time: Penguin 2019

Carlos Rovelli: Reality is not what it seems: Penguin UK 2017. Carlos Rovelli is a theoretical physicist who has made significant contributions to the physics of space and time and is currently directing the quantum gravity research group of the Centre de physique theorique in Marseille France. His books are translated into 41 languages. He explores how the universe was formed at the deepest level, and talks of the principles of time-space etc, which strikingly resemble the thoughts in Geetarahasya as laid out by Lokmanya Tilak. He also does refer to our philosophy in his books.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, from the above discussion, we can sum up that today the vision and mission of making India 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and to accomplish this we must create young minds who are determined on their own and their country's development with values because they are the only generation that will make a strong and resilient society. In this study, we have observed how the ideology and philosophy laid down in the Geetarahasya could be relevant to Gen Z and how these beliefs possibly will help in their march towards Atmanirbharata. Geetarahasya is the book of wisdom to lead a successful life. It has taught individuals not to flee from the struggles of life. One ought to work rigorously without thinking about the results. The dogma of karma (the law of cause and effect) i.e. as one sows so shall he reap; can motivate everyone to do good to others.

REFERENCES:

1. Bal Gangadhar Tilak Geetarahasya (17th Edition 2017). The Hindu Philosophy of Life, Ethics and Religion.
2. Geeta Vachaspati Sadashiv Shastri Bhide (2005) Publisher Geeta Dharma Mandal ShrimadBhagwadgeetarth Rashasyadeepika
3. Janardan Sakharam Karandikar (2008) Publisher Geeta Dharma Mandal Geetatatvamanjiri athava Nirlep Geeta Shastra
4. Arun Tiwari, (2017) Media Publication, Sakal. A Modern Interpretation of Lokmanya Tilak's Geetarahasya

5. Anant Damodar Athavale (2012) Published by Shri Radha Damodar Pratishtan. Shree Upanishadartha Kaumudi: Shwetashwatar and Mahanarayan
6. Swami Ranganāthānanda (2016) Publisher Advaita Ashram, Universal Message of the Bhagwad Gita. An exposition of the Gita in the light of Modern Thought and Modern Needs Volumes I, II, III Vidyaranya Swami: Sartha Panchadashi Commentary by D V Joag.
7. David Chalmers January 2022, published by Penguin, Reality + Virtual worlds and the Problems of Philosophy
8. Carlos Rovelli (2017) Penguin UK, Reality is not what it seems.
9. David Chalmers 25th January 2022, published by Penguin. Reality + Virtual worlds and the Problems of Philosophy