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A Simple Study of Mind in the Light of Bhagavad Gita

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Introduction:

In this paper an attempt is made to establish a link between modern science and the Sastras. For this purpose, a case study, the study of the mind is taken. The Sastric truths and the concepts of modern science are interwoven all over this paper.

First, a simple model of the mind with its interacting components is established using both the modern science and Sastric knowledge. The different types of inputs to the mind are analysed and their effect on the output of the mind are also identified. A simple scientific model of output is considered for further study of controlling the mind. Using these models, the Sastric truth of "How to control the mind?" is explained using the concepts of modern science.

1. Modern Science versus Sastras:

1.1 Modern science, easy to understand but insufficient to study the mind:

Modern science actually does not deal with the mind as much as it deals with the brain. The brain is like a computer hardware and the mind is like a computer software, the operating logic of the hardware. The modern science is very much primitive even in the study of the brain, what to talk about the mind which is the operating logic of the whole system.

1.2 Sastras, tough to comprehend but perfect to study the mind:

The word 'Sastras' used here refers to Vedas, Upanisads, Bhagavad Gita (the essence of Vedas), Vedanta sutras, 18 puranas and other authentic Vedic literatures. The Sastras are potent in their contents, compact in ideas and some times for neophyte students it appears contradictory also. The study of Sastras needs very advanced state of peaceful mind. But, nowadays in this age of Kali it is very tough to get such a steady mind to study and understand these Sastras perfectly. Because as referred in the Srimad Bhagavatham 1.1.10, in this age of Kali, the people are lazy, misguided, unlucky and always disturbed. The study of mind is perfectly done in these Sastras but to get them understand is very tough.

1.3 A Bridge between Modern science and Sastras:

What we need now is a bridge between the Modern science and the Sastras. That means using the concepts of

modern science, try to explain the complicated contents of the Sastras. This paper is a humble attempt in this direction to study the complicated mind as explained by Sastras in terms of modern science.

2. The position of the mind in the structure of the body:

According to Sastras the human body consists of the spiritual body and the material body. The spiritual body is nothing but the Soul or Atma and the material body consists of two layers namely subtle body and gross body. The subtle body consists of the Mind, the Intelligence and the Ego. The gross body is the physical body, the only portion of the body, which is visible to our material eyes.

The nature of the mind is subtle and therefore it is very tough to study the mind with the modern science, which is useful to study only the gross body. The modern science may be useful to study the gross elements but not suitable for the study of the subtle elements like mind, intelligence and ego or for the study of the spiritual element, the Soul.

3. A simple scientific model of mind:

For operating a machine properly, one should know its structure, components, inputs, outputs and operational details. Similarly the study of mind also involves its position, interacting components like inputs and outputs, storage media and the operating sequences.

In Katha Upanisad 1.3.3 & 4, it is said, "The Soul is the passenger in the chariot of the material body, and intelligence is the driver of the chariot. Mind is the driving instrument of the chariot. The senses are the horses pulling the chariot. The Soul is thus the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses."

A simple model similar to that of the computer with its components can be used to describe the functional diagram of the mind.

The mind is the central control unit taking advices from the unit called intelligence. The mind controls all the actions of the body including the senses.

The inputs of the mind unit are from two sources

- (1) The five sensory inputs from ear, nose, eyes, mouth and skin.
- (2) The storage of experiences from this birth and previous births called samkaras.

The outputs of the mind unit are the actions of the material body depending upon the five sensory inputs or sometimes depending upon the experiences stored.

4. The function and the control of the mind:

The mind operates and generates output depending upon the five sensory inputs as well as upon the experiences stored.



Therefore the control of mind to generate the desired good output essentially means

- (1) The control of the five sensory inputs.
- (2) Purifying the experiences stored.

4.1 The control of inputs:

The five sensory inputs play the major role in generating the type of output. Therefore the first choice to control the sensory inputs is to stop the senses from acting and hence stop the input to the mind. This means not to use the senses at all, which is impractical. It is not practical because even though the senses are artificially stopped from functioning, the tendency to act is with in the mind.

The second choice is then to allow the senses freely to act without any restriction. This is other extreme of first choice. This type of unrestricted usage of senses will produce undesired inputs to the mind, which in turn produces agitated outputs.

Bhagavad Gita 2.59 gives the third choice. It says, "The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for the sense objects remains. But ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness." This means regulate the senses for good. That means don't go to extremes like the other two cases but use the senses selectively on higher objects. The senses will not be stopped from acting but are engaged in higher objects. The real higher object is to engage the senses in the service of the master of the senses, "Krishna" as explained in 'Narada Pancaratra'. Therefore the results are perfect. The senses once get higher taste fixed in that consciousness will not long objects of lower taste. Thus one need not to stop the senses totally or allow the senses unrestrictedly but selectively use on the higher objects or goals. That way mind gets proper input and produces proper output.

These three choices are best explained by the simple example of, "How to stop the cry of a crying child". The first choice of totally stopping the senses from acting is equal to closing the mouth of the crying child forcibly even though the child has the full potency of crying. The second choice of unrestrictedly allowing the senses to act freely is equal to allowing the child totally free to do whatever it wants which makes the child totally lost. The third choice of engaging the senses in higher objects is equal to engaging the crying child in a better plaything so that the cry stops naturally.

4.2 Purifying the experiences stored:

Some times even though the senses are perfectly tuned as in the previous step, still there will be uncontrolled output of the mind. This is due to the experiences in the storage. Every thing experienced by the senses is stored as samskaras and they need not to make the immediate effect. But when the time, place and circumstance suit, it will give a trigger, which will be an input to the mind, and in turn, the mind will produce output according to the nature of the storage. If the storage is good, then the output is good and if the storage is bad, then the output is bad.

The experiences in the storage may be a well known one, that means from this birth or may be totally unknown that means from the previous births. Both these types of experiences are to be purified to get a controlled output of mind.

The experiences stored are in any one of the three stages as explained in Padma Purana as manifested (Prarabdha), unmanifested (Aprarabdha), and latent (Kutashta). Manifested stage is that one in which the experiences stored results in visible actions. The Unmanifested stage is that one in which the experiences stored are not in visible actions but they are in potential hidden state ready to act at any time. The Latent stage is that one in which the experiences are totally unknown not even potentially known. The experiences in these three stages are to be purified to have the complete control of the mind.

4.3 Input versus output:

Depending upon the types of input fed by the senses or from the experiences stored, the output is generated.

In Bhagavad Gita 4.17 Lord Krishna tells, "The intricacies of action are very tough to understand. Therefore one should know properly what action (karma) is, what forbidden action (vikarma) is, and what inaction (akarma) is."

Here the Lord Krishna mentions three types of inputs namely action, forbidden action and inaction that can be generated either by the action of the senses or from triggering of the experiences stored. The action means the senses work according to the Sastras resulting in goodness. Forbidden action means the senses work against the Sastras resulting in badness. Inaction does not mean no-action, but action or inaction that does not produce any result, either good or bad.

Action results the mind to output happiness or excitement, where as forbidden action results the mind to output sorrow or depression. The inaction results the mind to output neither happiness nor sorrow.

4.4 A simple scientific model of output:

Consider the ideal case of outputs of the mind in which the happiness and sorrow occurs alternatively of the same magnitude at the equal interval. In such a case the output can be modeled to a simple sine wave with magnitude of happiness represented as positive amplitude and magnitude of sorrow represented as negative amplitude. Therefore the two factors of consideration in this model are the amplitude (magnitude) and the frequency, the interval in which the happiness and the sorrow occurs. The condition of neither sorrow nor happiness is represented by x-axis ($y=0$).

In this model, the amplitude and frequency are the two measures of mental disturbances. If somebody becomes too happy for small things or too sad for small bad things, then the amplitude of the curve is too high which is not a good sign. Similarly, if somebody becomes happy or sad too often then the frequency of the curve is too high which is also not a good sign. Therefore these two factors should be minimized. The ideal thing is zero frequency and zero amplitude. This



means that one should not be totally affected either at happiness or sorrow. This condition can be represented by the line x -axis ($y=0$) of the graph.

In several verses of Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna explains this state of 'free from duality'. In Bhagavad Gita 6.7, He says, "For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquility. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same". Further, He says in Bhagavad Gita 2.38, "Do thou fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat - and by so doing you shall never incur sin."

4.5 How to get the ideal outputs?

One can easily understand that action (Karma) produces happiness, represented by the positive portion of the curve, and forbidden action (Vikarma) produces sorrow, represented by the negative portion of the curve. But, the inaction (akarma) produces neither happiness nor sorrow and is represented by the x -axis ($y=0$) of the curve.

The ideal condition of the mind is that it should not be affected either in the case of happiness or sorrow. Does it mean that one should not do any action (karma), which produces happiness, or forbidden action (Vikarma), which produces sorrow? No, it is not possible, because every thing done in this world will be classified into one of the categories of action or forbidden action.

Therefore the solution is given by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita 6.2, "Better to do the work as yoga than renouncing the work itself". Lord Krishna further says in Bhagavad Gita 18.2, "to give up results of all the works done". Essentially Krishna recommends not to renounce the work, because renouncing the work is impossible, instead suggests not to be selfish but to renounce the results of that work to others.

The question next arises is to whom to renounce the results. The choices may be to renounce to family, relatives, caste, language, country, religion, etc. But all these types of renouncements are not real because there is a hidden happiness or sorrow in all these type of renouncing. In short, all these are called social services of different degrees but really they are expanded selfishness. Therefore these things will not really free the mind but anyway it is a positive move towards the ultimate point of to whom to renounce.

In Bhagavad Gita, 12.8 to 12.11 Lord Krishna clearly says that all these things are progress towards the ultimate goal of renouncing to Him. He says, "Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt. If you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti. In this way develop a desire to attain Me. If you cannot practice the regulations of bhakti, then just try to work for Me, because by working for Me you will come to the perfect stage. If, however, you are unable to work in this consciousness of Me, then try to act giving up all results of your work and try to be self-situated". Also in Bhagavad Gita 18.66. Lord Krishna

says, "Give up every thing, simply surrender to me, I will relieve you from all the sins, don't worry". That means surrender to the Lord the results of all the work done. This is called akarma or inaction or Karma-Yoga, that makes one free from all the reactions of the work done by him and also frees the mind from all the troubles.

Conclusion:

The material of this paper is out of the class notes prepared by the author for an one-semester course on Personality Development for the first year engineering students of Madurai Kamaraj University during the last three years.

The author feels that this paper is a humble attempt in the direction of making modern scientific minds to appreciate the forgotten real science of Sastras. Since we are unable to understand, we are neglecting or discarding the wonderful science of Sastras, which provides the real solution to the hundreds of unsolved modern scientific problems related to mind like tension, depression, drug addiction, etc. a few to quote.

The scientific model presented in this paper is very much simple for the sake of initial study to understand and appreciate the concepts. The author is working on more rigorous models, the result of which will be soon published.

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His Grace Shankhadhari Das got his M.Sc. degree in Applied Mathematics from Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, India. He got his M.Tech. degree with communication specialization from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India. He worked as scientist in Indian Space Research Organization, Satellite Centre, Bangalore and Defence Research and development Organization, Computer Centre, Bangalore for several years. He also worked on the projects of IBM and Pacific Bell for several years. He was in this research and development area from 1980 to 1994.

From 1994 to date, he has dedicated his life to the concept of learning Sastras and giving a scientific mould to them to be accepted by scientific community. He is a full time servant of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) from 1994 onwards. He is a Regional Governing Body Member of India of ISKCON. He also serves as Temple President of ISKCON Madurai and Tirunelveli. He is giving regular classes in more than ten Engineering colleges including Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai and Regional Engineering College, Trichy for the last ten years on sastric concepts in terms of modern science.