PSYCHOTHERAPY USING RELIGIOUS TEXT

The paper presents a method for interpreting religious texts for use in psychotherapy. In particular, the paper takes the example of the pivotal character Arjuna in *Bhagavad-Gita* as exhibiting characteristics suggestive of low frustration tolerance (LFT) and examines how the collective philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Bhagavata Purana*, through six steps of Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), offers strategies to overcome such challenges. Although the paper uses Hindu religious texts, the treatment of these texts will speak to anyone interested in the possibility of integrating religious texts into psychotherapy.

In the philosophy of religion, a central debate revolves around the role of religion in shaping behaviors. Critics like Nietzsche highlight the potential for dogmatic adherence and justification of harmful actions through religious doctrine. On the other hand, philosophers like Immanuel Kant, in his work "*Critique of Practical Reason*," argued for the necessity of concepts like God, free will, and immortality, not as proven truths, but as postulates that ground a meaningful system of morality – things that need to be true for any moral action.

Similarly, within the field of psychotherapy, Sigmund Freud viewed religion as an illusion, while B.F. Skinner saw it as a form of behavioral control, potentially detrimental to mental health. Conversely, Albert Ellis, the founder of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), argued for the compatibility of religion and psychotherapy.[1]

My analysis aligns with Ellis' view, suggesting compatibility of religion with psychotherapy depends on how people interpret and apply religious texts. Using religious texts without reason will allow one to justify all sorts of behaviors, which is what psychologists and philosophers fear. Rather than blind adherence, a reasoned approach can uncover valuable philosophical insights applicable to fostering emotional well-being, similar to the stance taken by Elliot Cohen, founder of LBT.[2] Taking such a positive stance, this paper uses religious resources for fostering better mental health.

I have particularly chosen LBT to demonstrate "integration of religious texts with psychotherapy", for it is a logic-based, philosophical and virtue-oriented approach which provides a methodical framework that can integrate philosophies and virtues delineated in religious texts.

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[1]. Ellis has indicated many striking similarities between some of the major religions and REBT attitudes but distinguished between absolutistic and non-absolutistic religious views as being compatible with REBT. See Ellis, 2000, 29.

[2]. See Cohen, 2019, 166–67.

The main arguments addressed in this paper are:

(1) Philosophical principles and virtues in religious texts resonate well with the religious client.

(2) Moral exemplars within religious texts can serve as guiding role models for behavioral change.[3]

(3) It is possible to tailor multiple empirically proven cognitive-behavioral interventions using the three components found in religious texts – philosophies, virtues, and moral exemplars.

The flow of the paper is as follows: The first section briefly introduces the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Bhagavata Purana* concerning their significance as resources for psychotherapy. Then the key hypotheses and methodology of LBT, highlighting its philosophical foundations, are briefly described. In the subsequent section, a method is proposed to integrate major religious texts with LBT. The remaining part of the paper applies these principles, examining Arjuna's character in the *Bhagavad-Gita* as a case study to demonstrate how LBT offers a framework for overcoming low-frustration tolerance. [4]

GITA AND BHAGAVATA[5]

The *Bhagavad Gita* and *Bhagavata Purana* hold immense cultural significance in India and the diaspora, influencing not only religious practices but also various artistic expressions.

The *Gita* offers profound philosophical insights in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, addressing Arjuna's self-defeating thoughts.

Bhagavata, on the other hand, contains accounts of individuals who sought counsel from wise people and applied such counsel in their lives to overcome various setbacks. As a result, their lives

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[3]. A person who exhibits the highest virtue and embodies philosophy through their activities.

[4]. Low-frustration tolerance (LFT) is defined as incapacity to "stand" or "tolerate" frustration in performing goal-directed behavior, successful completion of which is perceived to be difficult, challenging, or otherwise unpleasant. See Cohen, 2021, 127.

[5]. The religious text "*Bhagavad Gita*" will be referred to as "*Gita*" and as "BG" when referring to a text within the book e.g. (BG 2.7) refers to the seventh text of the second chapter, and the text "*Bhagavata Purana*" will be referred to as "*Bhagavata*" and as "BP" when referring to a text within the book e.g. (BP 2.9.3) refers to the third text of the ninth chapter in the second book.

serve as an example for others facing similar challenges. This paper is the first in treating *Bhagavata* as a source for psychotherapy.

This paper takes the example of Arjuna as having low frustration tolerance (LFT) (BG 6.33–34) and uses therapeutic re-interpretation of narratives and the philosophies from *Gita* and *Bhagavata* within the LBT framework to overcome it.

The following section of this paper briefly describes key hypotheses and methodology of LBT, as a preliminary for understanding the proposed method of integrating religious text in LBT.

LBT METHODOLOGY AND KEY HYPOTHESES

Logic-based cognitive behavior therapy (LBT) is a system of philosophical counseling and a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) that emerged from rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), the first form of CBT, but what sets it apart is its use of logic and virtue theory and allowing different theories of philosophy to bring in positive constructs that can help people do and feel better.

The key hypothesis of LBT is that people upset themselves by drawing self-defeating conclusions from 'irrational premises' that contain self-destructive emotional rules and beliefs. Such irrational premises constitute fallacies; in LBT they are called cardinal fallacies. Some symptoms of so-called fallacies include the irrational thinking expressed in perfectionists and damning language such as *I can't*, *I must*, and *it's terrible*. It is possible to uncover these fallacies using logic and overcome them using virtues and supporting philosophies incorporated into a behavioral plan.

In addition, LBT draws on various established theories and findings such as Aristotle's practical syllogism and virtue ethics (linking actions to desired outcomes and virtues). Austin's speech act theory (understanding the impact of language on thoughts and actions). Frege's sense and reference (distinguishing the meaning and referent of terms). Husserl's phenomenology (exploring subjective experience and consciousness). Sartre's existentialism (emphasizing individual choice and responsibility) and clinical findings on the neurology of behavior and emotion.[6] Taken together these hypotheses support the notion that our

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[6]. A detailed account of hypotheses lies beyond the scope of this paper but to obtain more information readers can refer to the work of Cohen, 2021, 305–10.

behaviors and emotions correlate with the practical reasoning (rational and irrational) that we do ourselves.

Guiding Virtues and Uplifting Philosophies

For each fallacy, in the client's emotional reasoning, LBT provides affective counters and ideals to aspire to as "guiding virtues".[7] For instance, the fallacy of low frustration tolerance disavowal is countered with the virtues of patience and perseverance.[8] To help clients achieve their guiding virtues, LBT uses philosophies that are aligned with clients' existing belief systems to support their practice of these virtues. This approach helps clients move from abstract ideals towards tangible actions. Such philosophies are then defined as "uplifting" in LBT terms. Importantly, LBT recognizes that consistent practice is essential for overcoming deeply ingrained irrational beliefs and behavior patterns.

Behavioral Plan

LBT incorporates Aristotle's virtue theory to show how virtues can be developed using practice, as per the theory any change, positive or negative, is a result of habits formed through practice, that is, repeatedly doing the same thing and thereby introducing conventional cognitive-behavioral interventions to practice those virtues and philosophies. This approach is contained in a six-step procedure that integrates logic, virtues, philosophical insights, and empirically validated interventions from CBT.

This section has shown the key hypotheses and methodology of LBT. In the section that follows, I propose a method to interpret and integrate religious texts with LBT.

INTEGRATING RELIGIOUS TEXTS WITH LBT

A general observation is that each major religion includes canonical texts that serve as the foundation for morality and behavioral guidance for its adherents. These religious texts are broadly classified as texts that – (a) present philosophies and virtues as the basis for living in this world; for

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[7]. There are eleven cardinal fallacies in LBT as identified by Cohen, 2017 – Dutiful Worrying, Demanding Perfection, Damnation (of self, others, life, or the universe), Awfulizing, The-World-Revolves-Around-Me Thinking, Oversimplifying Reality, Distorting Probabilities, Blind Conjecture, Can'tstipation (Capacity disavowal), Bandwagon Thinking, Manipulation.

[8]. See Cohen, 2021, 137.

example, *Gita* in our context and other texts like the Bible, Quran, and Dhammapada; and (b) texts containing narration of how various individuals have emulated those philosophies and virtues in their lives. Both sorts of religious text can be effectively integrated into the six-step method of LBT for a positive cognitive and behavioral change. Below, I have provided more details in this regard.

Cognitive Change Through Philosophical Theories

Philosophical insights in religious texts can offer effective *counter-narratives* to self-defeating thoughts and emotions contributing to psychological distress. However, it is important to emphasize that the uplifting religious philosophy should resonate well with the client. William James highlights the crucial role of internal and subjective emotional appeal in genuine choice and motivation. Therefore, an uplifting philosophy that resonates with one client may not have the same impact on another; for example, a philosophy from the *Bhagavad Gita* is likely to resonate well with a Hindu but may not inspire a Muslim or Christian. Thus, therapists must prioritize understanding their clients' religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds. This allows them to propose tailored *philosophical antidotes* that align with the client's existing worldview and values.

Behavioral Change Based on Moral Exemplars

The theory of developing virtues based on 'moral exemplars' has its roots in Aristotle's virtue theory as outlined in 'Nicomachean ethics'. According to the theory, we have an innate ability to recognize admirable virtues in people and we desire to emulate them. Aristotle defined virtue as a skill that needs to be developed by habituation – doing the right thing repeatedly.[9] However, the way we recognize the right thing in the first place is through moral exemplars - people who already exemplify those virtues.[10] In the beginning, it can be difficult as one tries to emulate the virtues of someone better but over time those virtues will become ingrained in one's character and eventually become second nature. As the *Bhagavad Gita* expresses, "Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues" (BG 3.21).

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[9]. Karl Ameriks, Clarke M. Desmond. *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics.* (Londres: Cambridge University, 2000), 1103b.

[10]. Karl Ameriks, Clarke M. Desmond. *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics,* 1141a20.

A.N. Whitehead, identified the role of moral exemplars in his work, "*Place of classics in education*", where he states, "Moral education is impossible without the habitual vision of greatness."[11] Various other studies also assessed the efficacy of moral exemplars in bringing behavioral change, however, Zagzebski extended this concept to build a standalone "Exemplarist" moral theory.[12]

These works suggest that moral exemplars in religious texts can also help one develop virtues by serving as guides for moral training. For clients caught up in negative emotions or irrational behavior, there are a great number of moral exemplars described in religious texts (*Bhagavata* in our context) to provide inspiration. Such moral exemplars can include God, a saint, sage, ascetic, king, or even an ordinary person who exhibits the highest virtues from the point of reference of a common man. In *Bhagavata*, we have the example of Brahma (demiurge) - who underwent voluntary discomfort by undergoing the penance of controlling his mind and senses for a long time to begin his work of creation—who can serve as a moral exemplar for a client suffering from low frustration tolerance. To name just a few, there are other moral exemplars in *Bhagavata*, like Dhruva who can exemplify steadfast achievement of one's goal; Prithu, patience; Pandavas, tolerance; among others. Although every moral exemplar has a multitude of virtues, there are some that are more salient.

It is not wrong to think that it can be very difficult and even discouraging to emulate the moral exemplars as virtues exhibited by them in various situations, sometimes extreme, are not realistic to match as per human limits. In my view, this may be true if one doesn't have any emotional connection with the moral exemplar. However, religious followers have positive emotions attached to their moral exemplars. They admire them for their virtues and connection with the divine. Such affinity encourages the practice of virtues, even if they are not fully actualized. The experience within religious traditions testifies to this power of emotions that lead to imbibing of virtues of moral exemplars in the lives of devout followers, leading to many instances of significant positive behavioral change and this has also been seen in the lives of people who know them or read narratives about them.[13]

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[11]. Alfred North Whitehead. "The Place of Classics in Education". *Hibbert Journal* 21:248. (1922). 73.

[12]. Linda Zagzebski. *Exemplarist moral theory*. (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[13]. Narrations of such change may also be recorded in various religious texts. A well-known example of this in the Hindu texts is of a hunter, Mrigari, who half-killed animals because it would give him the joy to watch them slowly die in pain, was later transformed into a person who was afraid to even step over ants and took every step cautiously. This change was the result of an encounter and association with a saint named Narada

To apply this in the LBT framework, we first need to a) identify the virtues that needs to be developed; b) present relevant uplifting philosophies from the religious texts to support the guiding virtues; c) give moral exemplars that exhibit those virtues; and introduce cognitive-behavioral interventions based on the above-identified components. Below are combined steps that illustrate this approach. By taking the example of Arjuna as a client with low frustration tolerance, and Krishna as a therapist, who provides philosophies and virtues as antidotes, moral exemplars from *Bhagavata* who exhibit these virtues are introduced and who can serve as an inspiration to bring the overall change in behavioral attitude and emotional reasoning. All this is presented within the six-step methodology of LBT.

METHODOLOGY

A key scene from the *Bhagavad Gita* where Arjuna's low frustration tolerance threatens his progress, "Krishna emphasizes the importance of "mind control" to attain success on the path of yoga (BG 6.18–27) but involves controlling one's emotions and thoughts. However, Arjuna believes this to be more difficult than controlling the wind (BG 6.34), since controlling the unsteady emotions and flickering thoughts requires perseverance and it is not an easy task. He readily dismisses it as "impractical" and "unsustainable" (BG 6.33)." This is a typical case of low frustration tolerance, a state where one tries to escape the discomforts involved in pursuing one's goal. In demand for an easy process of mind control, Arjuna was willing to give up the long-term sustainable benefits of success in the path of yoga. In the text that follows, the six steps of LBT are applied to help Arjuna overcome this low frustration tolerance using the virtues and philosophies given by Krishna in the *Gita* and moral exemplars from the *Bhagavata*.

Elucidating Reasoning

By taking Aristotelian *practical reasoning* and applying it to *emotional analysis*, we identify the primary syllogism chain. Two questions reveal the primary syllogism:

1. *Object (O)*: What bothers the client? (e.g., Arjuna's difficulty with controlling his mind in yoga practice).

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who exhibited the virtue of empathy. Such narratives are in accord with the above-mentioned claims by various researchers that point out the role and attributes of moral exemplars in bringing the desired moral change. For reference to this story, see Goswami, 1973, 227–42.

2. *Rating (R)*: How does the client feel about this object (O)? (e.g., Arjuna finds controlling his mind more difficult than controlling the wind).

The answers to these questions, *O + R*, define the emotional object and the client's feeling towards it.[14]

The reasoning can be modeled as a series of interconnected emotional syllogisms chain, comprising:

1. *Emotional Rule*: Hypothetical proposition linking an object (O) to an emotional response (R) ("If O then R").

2. *Report of O*: Categorical proposition affirming the presence of O.

3. *Deduced Conclusion:* Categorical proposition inferring R based on O and the rule.

Case Study: Arjuna's Difficulty with Yoga

Considering Arjuna's case as an example. His primary syllogism chain A is:[15]

1. *Emotional Rule*: Controlling a fickle mind for yoga (O) is harder than wind control (R).

2. *Report*: Arjuna must control his mind for yoga (O).

3. *Conclusion*: Therefore, controlling his mind is harder than controlling the wind (R).

Further, emotional rules ("If O then R") may themselves be justified by further chains of syllogisms. Challenging the premises can generate multi-tiered chains, revealing deeper evaluative reasoning underlying emotions.

Evaluating Reasoning

In step 2, we expand the primary syllogism chain by identifying upper and lower tiers of the chain.

Upper Tier: Evaluating Reasoning Behind the Emotional Rule

The initial emotional rule in a primary syllogism chain A may itself stem from *core beliefs* in the client's belief system. Therapists can access these by probing the "feeling" (rating) behind the

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[14]. Elliot D. Cohen. *Logic-based therapy and everyday emotions: A case-based approach.* (Lexington Books, 2016).

[15]. The form of the inference is *modus ponens*.

rule, seeking the core belief justifying it. In Arjuna's case, questioning the difficulty rating of mind control reveals a potential core belief: "*I must get what I want easily.*" This generates a further *syllogism tier (Chain B)*, with this core belief as the foundation for the initial emotional rule.

Lower Tier: Evaluating Reasoning Behind the Conclusion

Expanding the *lower tier* of primary syllogism chain, A, involves uncovering hidden reasoning behind the emotional conclusion. Therapists seek to identify evaluative syllogisms and "*speech acts*" (Cohen, 2021) that may block acceptance of responsibility (capacity disavowal).[16] In syllogism chain A, from the conclusion "*difficult than wind*," Arjuna infers "impractical and unendurable," revealing possible disavowal. This chain showcases a cascade of evaluative inferences leading to disengagement from the difficult task as shown in syllogism chain C.

Syllogism Chains

Upper Tier *(syllogism chain B)*[17]

1. (Rule 1) I must get what I want easily.
2. (Rule 2) If I must get what I want easily, then it will be more difficult for me than controlling the wind if I need to control my fickle and strong mind to follow the path of yoga.

Primary Syllogism *(syllogism chain A)*

3. (Emotional Rule 3/Conclusion 1) If I need to control my fickle and strong mind to follow the path of yoga (O) then it will be more difficult for me than controlling the wind (R).
4. (Report) I need to control my fickle and strong mind to follow the path of yoga O).
5. (Conclusion 2) Therefore, it will be more difficult for me than controlling the wind (R).

Lower Tier *(syllogism chain C)*

6. (Rule 4) If it will be more difficult (for me) than controlling the wind, then it is impractical and unendurable.
7. (Conclusion 3) Therefore, it is impractical and unendurable.

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[16]. Disavowals of one's capacity to exercise freedom and accept responsibility for the ways in which one thinks, feels, or acts.

[17]. The form of the inference is *hypothetical syllogism*.

Identifying And Refuting Irrationality in Reasoning

In step 3, we identify and refute self-defeating speech acts (fallacies) in the chain. The therapist identifies the "Cardinal fallacies" in the client's premises, that is, self-defeating speech acts, and then demonstrates that they are irrational. In Arjuna's case these fallacies include:

A. Demanding perfection: the task of mind control *must* come easy.
B. Catastrophizing: controlling the mind is more challenging than controlling the wind.
C. Capacity disavowal: declaring mind control "impractical" and "unendurable" while denying personal agency.

Refutation Strategies

Therapists engage in refutation, demonstrating the irrationality of these fallacies. Two approaches exist on the basis of logical, empirical, or pragmatic reasoning.[18]

1. Indirect refutation: Challenging the core belief (e.g., "quick success") underlying the emotional rule ("difficult than wind").

2. Direct refutation: Addressing the capacity disavowal ("*I can't*") directly.[19]

Indirect refutation involves refuting Arjuna's core belief of demanding quick and easy success that gives rise to the emotional rule that, if mind control doesn't come easy, then it is more difficult than controlling the wind. On empirical grounds, Arjuna can be questioned if he knows anyone who has attained all his aspirations in life quickly and easily?

Direct refutation involves refuting Arjuna's capacity disavowal, "*It is unendurable*" and "*It is impractical.*" Using pragmatic reasoning, Krishna argues that giving up now can result in greater frustration in the future, which implies that if Arjuna doesn't try to face the challenges provided by the mind now, then the path of yoga will indeed become extremely difficult. (BG 6.36)

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[18]. Irrationality can be dismantled in three ways: logically, by exposing internal contradictions; empirically, by demanding and demonstrating a lack of evidence; and pragmatically, by showing how accepting the claim would lead to self-defeating consequences. This three-pronged approach effectively exposes the weakness of irrational arguments.

[19]. Elliot D. Cohen. *Cognitive Behavior Interventions for Self-Defeating Thoughts: Helping Clients to Overcome the Tyranny of "I Can't.* (Routledge, 2021), 30–31.

At this point, Arjuna might acknowledge his fallacies, but refutation alone is not sufficient to overcome irrational emotional thinking. LBT accordingly introduces guiding virtues to help the client embrace a counteractive positive valence.

Identifying the (Applicable) Guiding Virtues

LFT individuals demand comfort, leading to frustration and avoidance when faced with challenges. For this matter, LBT appropriately introduces two guiding virtues for overcoming low-frustration tolerance; they are *Patience and Perseverance*. Cohen defines Perseverance as tenacious persistence, within rational limits, in striving for reasonable goals with a keen awareness that such tenacity can be key to accomplishing those goals.[20] With Perseverance, Arjuna will not give up or become discouraged in the face of a challenging task of mind control.

According to Cohen, Patience involves willpower to sacrifice short-term, fleeting pleasures for more long-term, lasting ones, with appreciation that good things often involve hard work and overcoming obstacles.[21] Arjuna believes that mind control must come easily. This demand for an easy process and quick success can be counteracted by a philosophy of patience. With patience, Arjuna will be willing to forego the short-term pleasure of staying in one's comfort zone over the long term one such as success on the path of yoga, which is self-realization. This mindset will also enable Arjuna to experience less frustration when he does not immediately get what he wants. Cohen also points out that these virtues are ideals, which implies that one can never be perfect at them.[22] No one can be perfectly patient, or perseverant. On the other hand, there is no limit to how much better one can get at them.

Now, from the guiding virtues, a counteractive virtue-based behavioral syllogism can be constructed as follows:

1. (Rule) Don't give in to short-term pleasures at the expense of long-term, lasting ones.
2. (Report) Not trying mind control would give me short-term pleasure of staying in my comfort zone but is likely to cause me more pain in the long run.
3. (Conclusion) Therefore, don't give up.

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[20]. See Cohen, 2021, 144.

[21]. See Cohen, 2021 142.

[22]. See Cohen, 2021, 169.

In line with the guiding virtues of LBT, the religious texts also contain virtues which are similar. For example, Patience and Perseverance are strikingly similar to the virtues of untiring practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*) from the things detrimental for success including the demand for immediate success. In addition, according to the faith of religious followers, there are other virtues that they hold sacred. For example, selfless service (*sevā*), duty (*dharma*), and knowledge (*jñāna*) are considered essential virtues in Hinduism. Such virtues can have the same counteractive capacity to overcome a given fallacy and may be brought in as they may resonate more with the religious clients. For instance, selfless service (*sevā*) can serve as one of the guiding virtues for the fallacy of "The-World-Revolves-Around-Me Thinking" or knowledge (*jñāna*) can serve as a guiding virtue for the fallacy of "blind conjecture."[23] Wherein, LBT's guiding virtues can serve as a basis from which virtues can be mined from religious texts.

Finding Uplifting Philosophical Outlooks from Gita

This section underscores the role of *uplifting philosophies* in fostering *guiding virtues* within LBT framework.[24] These philosophies can foster positive emotions instrumental in reversing the negative polarity of feelings. The uplifting philosophy needs to resonate with the client to be efficacious in promoting a guiding virtue. This section specifically focuses on utilizing the *Bhagavad Gita* for clients receptive to Eastern wisdom. Given the *Gita's* conciseness, elaboration based on triangulation is proposed that combine translations and commentaries from prominent Hindu teachers and translations by academic scholars for broader perspective.

The uplifting philosophy contained in *Gita* for cultivating Patience and Perseverance are as follows:

Two Key Philosophies from the Bhagavad Gita Promoting Patience

1. Gradually, step by step, and not overnight. (BG 6.25)

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23. The-World-Revolves-Around-Me Thinking involves disregarding others and consider oneself as extremely important. Fallacy of Blind Conjecture involves the construction of such unscientific, anti-empirical causal judgments, contrary-to-fact conditionals, and explanations. See Cohen, 2017, 94–95.

24. See Cohen, 2021, 5–7.

Translation: One should not think of immediate success, but gradually, step by step one should try to control the mind. One should take advantage of rational intelligence and fix one's mind on self (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).

Krishna advises Arjuna that perfection in mind control will manifest gradually by degrees and should not be expected to happen immediately. It is not reasonable to demand that difficult goals are achieved easily and quickly. Instead, by diligently taking one step at a time, one can achieve difficult goals. One should not get overwhelmed by constantly contemplating the final goal that appears very far at the initial stage but should maintain patience and continue the path with great perseverance and not get discouraged if there are difficulties or delays.

2. Tolerate the emotional swings (BG 2.14)

Translation: Happiness and distress both are temporary in nature, like changing seasons. One should not be carried away by them when performing any task (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).

Arjuna was evaluating the situation based on personal pain and pleasure. Krishna advocated that pleasure and pain both are transitory, as they come and go and therefore should not be the basis of making important decisions.

Philosophies of Perseverance

These philosophies inspire Perseverance and support Patience when things seem challenging by reframing such perceptions in a positive light.

1. Pursue your goal by untiring practice and detachment (BG 6.35)

Translation: Certainly, it is difficult to control the mind, but with practice and detachment, it is possible (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).

While acknowledging the difficulty of mind control, Krishna advocates *persistent practice* combined with *detachment* from distractions like "demanding ease." He likens practicing with such hindrances to attempting to ignite a wet fire. Guided and regulated practice fueled by detachment is essential for success.

2. Advantage of pursuing long term goals over short term pleasures (BG 6.36)

Translation: It is difficult to achieve self-realization when the mind is unrestrained. However, success is assured for the one whose mind is under control and who strives by the right means. That is My opinion (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).

From this counsel from Krishna, Arjuna comes to realize, 'that if I find mind control difficult and give up trying, then the path of self-realization will become extremely difficult.' In the same way, in pursuing a goal, giving up things that don't come easily and quickly will make achieving success next to impossible.

3. Don't be disheartened during difficulties (BG 6.26)

Translation: From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the self (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).[25]

During the process, one may encounter obstacles or succumb to distractions, but one must not lose hope but instead resume the process from where they have left off. Like one who has exams in a few days, gets caught up in watching TV all day, then it would not be beneficial to spend a lot of time regretting it. Instead, upon realizing the mistake, one should re-orient oneself and again make plans for success. In the same manner, while practicing mind control even if one gives in to the irrational demands of the mind, there is no problem, just bring the mind back in control.

4. Don't be disheartened by failure (BG 6.37–38, 41, 43)

Translation (6.37–38): What happens if someone undertakes the process with faith and determination, but stops due to obstacles, and does not achieve the goal of yoga? Does one not disappear like a fragmented cloud, by failing in both ways, not achieving the goal in spiritual life, and not possessing material success (Arjuna's questions posed to Krishna)?

Translation (6.41): The unsuccessful yogi, is born into this world under circumstances conducive to resume his practice of yoga (Krishna's response to Arjuna).

Translation (6.43): As a result of taking such a birth, one regains consciousness of previous life and tries again to progress and succeed (Krishna's continued response to Arjuna).[26]

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25. See Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, 1972, 293.

26. See Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. *Bhagavad-Gita as it is*, 310.

Hindus believe in the transmigration (passing of a soul into a new body after death) and eternity of the soul/self. Since the soul carries with him the mind, therefore the tendencies of present life remain with the soul and are passed onto the next life. This is to say that if in one life one fails to attain his goals, in the next life one revives his inclinations and pursues his goals again. So whatever progress one makes is resumed in the next life.

Krishna is making this clear to Arjuna that the progress he makes in mind control will never be lost, whether in this life or the future. If he is not able to achieve the goal in this life, in the next life he will be born in conducive surroundings where he can revive his inclinations and resume his practice.

5. Do your best and let divine do the rest (BG 2.47–48)

It is not useful to focus on things that are not in your control, like success and failure, profit and loss. As they are not in our control. For instance, one can partake in an interview for a job but being selected depends upon the review by the panel, or one can write the exam, but it is the teacher who will give the marks. Since the outcome is out of our control, there is no point in worrying about it. The best thing one has at his disposal is to diligently and sincerely carry out one's work and leave the results to the divine.

This is emphasized by Krishna in the texts (BG 2.47–48). Since these texts are compact, each part of the translation is elaborated for ease of understanding.

Translation (2.47): Work alone is your proper business, don't get engrossed in the outcome of your work and never be attached to worklessness (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).

Work alone is your proper business: (a) It is proper for one to be fully focused on work; (b) one needs to do one's best as per one's capacity and remember that one's best is not the same as someone else's best.

Don't be engrossed in the outcome of your work: (a) If one thinks too much about the result one will not be able to fully participate in the work which will negatively influence the outcome; (b) at a deeper level, it leads to bondage to this material world.

Never be attached to worklessness: (a) Don't be lazy in performing your work. Acknowledge that work itself is rewarding. One always learns and grows from working sincerely. Even a failure

contributes to a learning experience that drives one to do better next time; (b) at a deeper level, work is your offering to the divine, therefore it should not be neglected but discharged properly with intense absorption. This is expressed more explicitly in the next text.

Translation (2.48): Perform your work in connection with the divine, thus abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga (Krishna's counsel to Arjuna).

The counsel to perform your work in connection with the divine means: (a) Do your work as an offering to the divine. (b) Don't worry about success and failure in the work; leave it to divine.

Constructing a Cognitive-Behavioral Plan

By now the client knows what the right thing is to do but such deep-rooted beliefs and behaviors that are formed over a long period of time are not easily overcome. Therefore, for a sustained change, it is essential to construct behavioral plans that include guiding virtues, their supporting philosophies, and moral exemplars. In this section, first moral exemplars are listed and shown how they embody these virtues and philosophies; and then some possible cognitive-behavioral interventions are suggested.

Virtues and Supporting Philosophies as Exhibited by Moral Exemplars

1. Brahma as an exemplar for Patience and Perseverance (BP 2.9)

A penance that involved mind control and sense control was necessary for Brahma (demiurge) to start the creation of the universe. In the beginning, Brahma was surrounded only by water and was given the responsibility of creating the universe and populating it with all species. However, neither could he figure out the process for such creation, nor could he determine the proper direction for it (BP 2.9.5). While thinking about it, Brahma heard twice the word "penance" but he couldn't find its source (BP 2.9.6-7). After reflecting on it for some time, he decided to engage in penance. Although there was uncertainty about the outcome and the process involved discomfort, he nevertheless accepted the process, for it was required before embarking on his assigned work of creation. For this reason, he is considered the greatest of all ascetics, having committed a long period of penance of mind and sense control (BP 2.9.8). Later he got the direction and started creating the universe (BP 2.9.39).[27]

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[27]. See Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, 1980, Book 2.

This is a great lesson for people with LFT, that with great positions comes great responsibilities that will involve discomfort. One cannot be situated in an exalted position without having undertaken a regulative life of rules and regulations which may involve moving out of one's comfort zone, going through challenging situations, and giving up the demands of immediate success.

2. Arrow maker - as an exemplar for carrying out one's work (BP 11.9.13)

King Yadu once encountered a mendicant, who appeared quite young and learned. King took the opportunity to ask how he became so learned without undergoing any formal education.

The mendicant replied, "As a result of learning from many teachers, I have gained wisdom and understanding of self by observing their activities."[28] He mentions 24 teachers, and one of them was an arrow maker who served as a moral exemplar for carrying out work.

It is well known that when a king moves on a public street he is accompanied by his entourage and welcomed by loud musical instruments. The arrow maker didn't notice this royal celebration passing right by his workshop. He was not disturbed by the chattering of people, the neighing of horses, or loud sound of various musical instruments. He was intensely engaged and focused in making his arrows straight and pointed.

One can admire the virtue of duty, work, and learn to focus on one's work to transcend obstacles such as discomfort or distractions.

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Low-Frustrative religious Clients

Based on uplifting philosophies and moral exemplars, we can have various cognitive-behavioral interventions such as bibliotherapy, in vivo practice, interoceptive imaginary, etc.[29] Some of them are briefly mentioned below for the present example of low frustrative individuals but detailed analysis on these can be done in separate research. In addition, the below-given cognitive-behavioral interventions are broad classes that can be customized to address other fallacies.

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[28]. This is also an example within *Bhagavata* that shows how one can learn just by observing the moral exemplars.

[29]. See Cohen, 2021, 47–48, 55–56.

Bibliotherapy – giving the client selected portions of religious texts to read, which will contain uplifting philosophies and description of activities of moral exemplar as chosen by the client. This mode of delivery of an uplifting philosophy can be extended to include watching a play about moral exemplars, hearing audio containing narrations of their exhibition of virtues, and thus the desire to emulate one's exemplar is intensified. Bibliotherapy offers a *culturally sensitive and engaging* method for introducing individuals to uplifting philosophies and inspiring role models.

Interoceptive Imagery – intentional mental imagery to move from negative self-talk and emotions (e.g., "mind control must come quickly and easily") towards *positive counter-imagery* centered around guiding virtues and philosophies.[30]

The client mentally revisits a situation where frustration arose due to perceived difficulty (e.g., Arjuna's desire for effortless mind control). They key into the specific *interoceptive feeling* generated (e.g., agitation, impatience). Then, the client can be asked to shift his intentional focus to the positive imagery raised by the guiding virtues, uplifting philosophies, and moral exemplar. For instance, an LFT client can think about his moral exemplar, let's say Brahma who accepted discomforts to do the important work of creating the universe or how the arrow maker was so absorbed in his work that he was unaffected by the various obstacles. These positive images will create a positive valence and the client will experience relief from the negative valence of the first experience. Through practice, he will develop a high tolerance and reverse the negative polarity of original imagery of frustration on encountering tasks that appear difficult.

In Vivo Practice – clients with LFT typically confront challenges daily; through each encounter they can build up their tolerance level. This practice has two parts: a cognitive component and a behavioral component.

The cognitive part involves the client doing self-talk or journaling to contextually identify the fallacies involved in the frustrating experience, such as demanding immediate gratification, catastrophizing, and disavowing capacity that leads to avoidance of activities

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[30]. Elliot D. Cohen. *Cognitive Behavior Interventions for Self-Defeating Thoughts: Helping Clients to Overcome the Tyranny of "I Can't.* (Routledge, 2021), 150.

involving discomfort. These fallacies can then be countered through guiding virtues and reflecting on their respective uplifting philosophies and moral exemplars.

The behavioral part then consists of the client acting by the latter philosophies and moral exemplars, "What would Brahma do in this case? How will the arrow maker handle this situation? I should also try to take up the present task like them."

Concluding Remarks

This paper set out to discuss the possibility of integrating religious text in Psychotherapy. Although the paper focuses only on one example of a behavioral problem, namely, low frustration tolerance, and demonstrates overcoming it using two prominent texts of Hinduism with LBT, the method of interpretation of religious texts and proposed paradigm may well have a bearing on other fallacies and religious texts.

The relevance of moral exemplars in bringing behavioral change is clearly supported by the various studies in the field of virtue ethics. It suggests that the narratives of moral exemplars in religious texts, can effectively be used to introduce cognitive-behavioral interventions.

Regarding the claim that some religions are absolutistic and may be incompatible with psychotherapy (Ellis, 2000), we should take note of the fact that the LBT framework does not have any room for absolutistic views. I submit that each religion has rational components – philosophy, virtues, and moral exemplars that when combined with LBT turn into a coherent counseling system or a form of psychotherapy for religious people. Hence, overall, this study strengthens the idea that when religious wisdom is interpreted and applied rationally, it can be used as a force to do good for others as well as oneself.

In these lines, a further study could usefully explore how the given framework can be used to address other fallacies and even extend to interpret other religious texts for their integration into LBT or other forms of psychotherapy. The methods used to interpret the *Gita* and *Bhagavata* may be applied to other religious texts elsewhere in the world. This interpretation will also be relevant to religious representatives who would like to have a counseling system for their congregation based on rational logic and positive virtues.

This paper has utilized a highly philosophical form of CBT, Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), to demonstrate how the wisdom of *Bhagavad Gita* and *Bhagavata Purana* can be applied to helping those who share the Hindu faith and those who are inclined toward this faith, to overcome low frustration tolerance, a major obstacle to human happiness. Accordingly, while much work still needs to be done in this relatively uncharted field of research, it has taken an important step toward applying the rational components of a religion in psychotherapy.

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