

PSYCHOTHERAPY IN INDIA

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Current Status...

Counseling is not a novel institution in India. The first counselor was Lord Krishna himself and the Bhagawad Gita embodies the finest principles of counseling for all lands, all ages and all times. The Gita or the song celestial explains how Arjuna, whose mind was in great conflict, was helped to overcome this conflict through an insight into him. Arjuna's conflict was one of "mine and thine", that is between Sva and Para. The conflict was solved through self-understanding or through self realisation



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One has to act in accordance with his Swadharma. Man should act in accordance with the demands of his situation and his duties in life. Self realisation understood in the context of Gita is not the same as what we understand by Rogerian or Existential sense. Man has to realise his inner nature, that is, his spirituality which reveals oneness with the ultimate. This helps to overcome the illusory difference between the Atma and the Parmatma. In the pursuit of the higher spirit, man is concerned with freedom, freedom to obtain self realisation. In modern times the word freedom is used in a different sense. Its connotation is limited to action, speech, religious faith as well as freedom to find its fullest expression of one's potential. In this sense of the term, we are immediately concerned with material existence and the physical world.



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The Indian society became highly traditionalistic and conventional. The Vedic prayer lost its significance in the degeneration of the during the the colonial period in India. Freedom and independence have been substituted with dependence. The youth in India even today is dependent on adult members for such important decisions as the choice of residence, choice of a job and choice of a marital partner to mention a few. The important sources of behaviour change namely industrialisation, urbanisation; mass media communication and the like have battered the traditional social conventions and institutions and have made several dents on them.



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Compared to 19th century Western society, contemporary Indian society is more radical and provides enormous choice of opportunities for individual choice of action. The kind of counseling assistance sought for and provided in the western world is not necessarily applicable to the Indian society. However, counseling is as much needed in India as it is elsewhere in the world.



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In the recent past has seen a significant increase in the demand for counseling services at the national level. Counseling was also identified an essential service by the national framework curriculum in 2005 by the NCERT ((National Council for Educational Research and Training). The strongest attention for counseling has arisen from the school sector. During its 2001 National conference, the CBSE resolved that it would be mandatory for all its schools to have trained school counselors.



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Training opportunities have become available over the past few years and range from full time post graduate degree programs to certificates and diplomas. Post graduate degrees are offered by a small number of university departments of psychology, education and social work. NCERT, Government of India offers a post graduate diploma in guidance and counseling. Private organisations offer post graduate diplomas and certificates in specific branches of counseling.



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Certificate courses are available through distance education mode. In length these courses range from short 12 day certificate and diploma courses to full time 2 year post graduate courses. Students have the option of specialising in a specific client group. Some common specialisations are marital therapy, counseling adolescents, career counseling, and educational counseling. The better courses require students to obtain internship experiences in organisations that deliver counseling services. In addition to facing a written examination, a common requirement is for students to submit detailed case reports of a prescribed number of clients they have seen.



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Finally, the need for counseling in modern India manifests itself against the background of social change, the nature and pace of which are indeed unprecedented. A decade of economic reforms has pushed India towards becoming one of world's fastest growing economies. This in turn has given counseling a new look. The effect of rapid globalising of the world, is increasingly coming under the control of free market economy, has also arrived at the doorsteps of Indian counselor. Economically empowered women for instance, no longer need to silently accept abuse and disregard. Age old values are being questioned. The belief that marriage is a lifetime commitment, for better or for worse is no longer unshakable as it was before.



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Counseling needs in the Indian context emerge against the background of tremendous social change. In addition, the last ten years of economic reform have enhanced the pace of these changes and further transformed life styles. Counseling services are poorly defined and presently anyone at all with little or no training can offer these services. Available counseling services are largely based on Western approaches to psychology. These approaches have been widely criticized as not being relevant to the Indian cultural context. A relevant and culturally valid counseling psychology therefore has remained a fledgling discipline. Psychological thought is not new to India, and ancient traditions present ideas and constructs that are rich in possibilities for application.

