

## Triguna-Based Psychospiritual Rehabilitation for Victims: A Srimad Bhagavad Gita-Inspired Intervention

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### Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of a six-week *Bhagavad Gītā*-based psychospiritual intervention on Triguna traits and psychological well-being among adult trauma victims in the Rajasthan (India). Grounded in Indian philosophical psychology, the intervention combined shloka contemplation, guided meditation, cognitive reframing, and affirmation journaling. A total of 20 participants (10 males, 10 females) were assessed pre- and post-intervention using the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) and Ryff's 42-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB). Paired-sample *t*-tests revealed statistically significant increases in Sattva ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.83$ ) and significant decreases in Rajas ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = -2.22$ ) and Tamas ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = -2.00$ ). Similarly, all six domains of psychological well-being showed significant improvements, with the strongest effects in Purpose in Life ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.95$ ) and Self-Acceptance ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.09$ ). The results suggest that the *Gītā*-based module serves as an effective psychospiritual rehabilitation tool by fostering inner clarity, emotional regulation, and positive identity reconstruction. This study contributes to the growing field of Indian indigenous psychology and offers an empirically supported intervention model for trauma recovery.

**Keywords:** Triguna, Bhagavad Gītā, Psychospiritual Intervention, Psychological Well-Being, Trauma, Indian psychology

### 1. Introduction

Victims of psychological trauma, including those affected by abuse, violence, or chronic emotional distress, often endure long-term consequences that extend beyond immediate emotional pain. These may include anxiety, identity confusion, existential crisis, and impaired self-concept (Herman, 1992). Conventional psychological approaches to trauma recovery focus on symptom reduction and cognitive restructuring, but they frequently overlook spiritual or metaphysical aspects that are vital to holistic healing, particularly in the Indian cultural context (Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008).

Indian philosophical psychology offers profound insight into the nature of human suffering and transformation. Central to this indigenous framework is the Triguna theory, which originates from the Sāṃkhya Darśana and is elaborated extensively in the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā. The theory posits that three fundamental forces—Sattva (purity, balance, clarity), Rajas (activity, restlessness, desire), and Tamas (inertia, ignorance, confusion)—govern human personality, cognition, and behavior (Murthy & Kumar, 2007). These gunas co-exist in varying proportions in every individual and fluctuate in response to thoughts, actions, and spiritual orientation. According to the Gita, cultivating Sattva while reducing Rajas and Tamas leads to inner peace, clarity of purpose, and liberation from psychological bondage (Bhagavad Gita, Gita Press, 2015, 14:6–8).

The Triguna model is a foundational concept in classical Indian thought, particularly in the Sāṃkhya philosophy and the Bhagavad Gita, which outlines the three constituents of nature (prakṛiti)—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—as fundamental psychological forces (Bhagavad Gita, Gita Press, 2015, 14:5). These gunas are not static personality types but dynamic forces that influence one's behavior, thoughts, emotions, and spiritual orientation. Sattva is characterized by clarity, balance, self-discipline, contentment, and harmony; Rajas manifests as restlessness, passion, craving, and ambition; and Tamas represents darkness, ignorance, inertia, and confusion. The Gita presents this framework as not only descriptive but also transformative, suggesting that liberation from suffering (mokṣa) becomes possible when one consciously cultivates Sattva while transcending the influence of Rajas and Tamas (Bhagavad Gita, Gita Press, 2015, 14:6–8; 14:20).

The Bhagavad Gita also functions as a dialogic model of existential psychotherapy. Arjuna's emotional collapse, overwhelmed by grief and moral conflict (Bhagavad Gita, Gita Press, 2015, 1:28–30), is addressed by Lord Krishna through layered cognitive, ethical, and metaphysical interventions. Krishna confronts distorted thinking, re-establishes identity through the ātman concept, teaches action without attachment (karma-yoga), and emphasizes surrender (śaraṇāgati) and faith in the divine (Bhagavad Gita, Gita Press, 2015, 2:13; 2:47; 18:66). This process mirrors modern psychotherapeutic principles such as cognitive reframing, emotional regulation, and existential insight (Ranganathananda, 1985; Vahia, Doongaji, & Jeste, 1973). These elements provide a rich psychospiritual model for trauma recovery.

Empirical efforts to operationalize Triguna theory have led to the development of the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) by Wolf (1998), which measures the relative dominance of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas using a psychometric scale. Studies using

the VPI have shown that Sattva correlates positively with mindfulness, well-being, and ethical behavior, whereas Rajas and Tamas are associated with emotional reactivity, anxiety, and maladaptive coping (Misra & Mohanty, 2002; Sharma & Sharma, 2010). This supports the idea that shifting one's guna balance can serve therapeutic purposes.

Additionally, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB) model (Ryff, 1989) provides a multidimensional framework that aligns well with Indian psychological ideals. It includes six domains: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These dimensions resonate with Indian philosophical principles such as svadharma (self-determined action), svasthya (inner balance), and moksha (liberation). While widely used in Western and global contexts, Ryff's PWB has yet to be fully integrated with indigenous frameworks like the Triguna model in empirical research.

Despite the theoretical convergence of these tools and concepts, few empirical studies have evaluated the Bhagavad Gita as a structured psychotherapeutic intervention. Preliminary studies have used Gita-based education and values training with some success, but interventions using a combined approach—shloka contemplation, guided meditation, cognitive reframing, and spiritual journaling—remain largely unexplored. Vahia et al. (1973) were pioneers in exploring the Gita's therapeutic potential, and Indian scholars have since called for systematic frameworks that blend classical texts with empirical validation (Dalal, 2001; Misra & Mohanty, 2002).

This study responds to that call by designing a six-week Gita-based psychospiritual intervention for trauma-affected individuals. The intervention includes weekly themes derived from Gita verses, experiential practices like meditation and journaling, and guided group discussion. Participants select affirmations in a language of their comfort (Sanskrit, Hindi, or English), though only English-language affirmations are used for reporting and analysis in this manuscript for consistency.

The study adopts a within-subjects pre-test/post-test design to evaluate the impact of the intervention on both spiritual (Triguna) and psychological (PWB) outcomes among 20 trauma-affected adults from Rajasthan (India). The use of validated tools—VPI and PWB—ensures that the research remains rooted in both indigenous knowledge and scientific methodology.

In summary, the literature and theoretical foundations point to the strong relevance and potential of the Bhagavad Gita—particularly the Triguna theory—as a source of transformative insight for victims of trauma. The current study is a step toward filling that empirical and therapeutic gap in Indian psychology by integrating ancient wisdom with structured psychospiritual care.

## 2. Research Purpose and Rationale

### 2.1 Justification for the Study

There exists a significant gap in empirically validated, culturally relevant frameworks for trauma recovery in the Indian context. Most existing interventions in trauma psychology focus primarily on cognitive and emotional symptoms without addressing the spiritual and existential dimensions of suffering, which are central to Indian worldviews. The *Bhagavad Gita*, with its emphasis on self-knowledge, ethical action, and inner transformation, offers a psychospiritual paradigm that aligns with indigenous understandings of healing. The integration of this wisdom into a structured intervention enables a holistic approach to victim rehabilitation. Moreover, the use of psychometrically validated tools such as the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) allows for the assessment of both spiritual and psychological outcomes, thereby bridging traditional insight with scientific methodology.

### 2.2 Objectives

- To assess the impact of a *Bhagavad Gita*-based psychospiritual intervention on the dominance of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, as measured by the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI).
- To evaluate pre- and post-intervention changes in psychological well-being, as measured by the 42-item version of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB), in trauma-affected individuals.

### 2.3 Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant increase in Sattva guna post-intervention.
- **H2:** There will be a significant decrease in Rajas and Tamas gunas post-intervention.
- **H3:** Participants will demonstrate a significant improvement in psychological well-being scores post-intervention.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The present study employed a **within-subjects pre-test/post-test design** to assess the effectiveness of a six-week *Bhagavad Gita*-inspired psychospiritual rehabilitation intervention. The design facilitated the measurement of intra-individual change in participants' Triguna profiles and psychological well-being before and after the intervention.

#### 3.2 Participants

A total of 20 adult participants (10 males and 10 females), aged between 18 and 50 years, were purposively selected from the Rajasthan (India). All participants had experienced psychological trauma due to interpersonal violence, emotional abuse, or prolonged distress.

#### Inclusion Criteria

- Minimum age of 18 years
- History of emotional or interpersonal trauma (self-reported or counselor-referred)
- Ability to understand spoken English or Hindi
- Willingness to engage in a spiritual-psychological program

#### Exclusion Criteria

- Diagnosed psychiatric disorders requiring clinical supervision
- Severe cognitive impairment
- Active substance addiction or dependence

Participants were recruited through NGOs, support centers, and informal mental health networks. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were briefed on the study's objectives, format, and their rights as participants. The study adhered to the **ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017)**.

Although the intervention content was based on teachings from the *Bhagavad Gita*, a Hindu scripture, it was presented in a **non-sectarian, psychospiritual framework** focused on emotional healing, self-regulation, and inner growth. Participants from **all religious and cultural backgrounds** were welcomed, and no religious rituals or

doctrinal beliefs were required. Teachings were delivered symbolically and psychologically, and participants were given the choice to engage with affirmations in **Sanskrit, Hindi, or English**, while the study documentation used **English-only affirmations** for consistency.

### 3.3 Tools

#### **Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI)**

The **Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI)** developed by Wolf (1998) was used to assess the Triguna profile—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The inventory comprises **56 items**, each rated on a **7-point Likert scale** (1 = not at all true, 7 = very true).

- **Sattva subscale:** 15 items
- **Rajas subscale:** 19 items
- **Tamas subscale:** 22 items

Scores for each guna were computed by averaging the relevant item scores. The guna with the highest average score was considered the dominant personality tendency. The VPI has demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha > .80$ ) across multiple studies (Wolf, 1998; Sharma & Sharma, 2010).

#### **Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (42-item version)**

The **42-item version of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale** (Ryff, 1989) was used to assess six core dimensions of well-being: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, Self-Acceptance

Each dimension includes seven items, rated on a **6-point Likert scale** (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). Subscale and total scores were computed for both pre- and post-intervention assessments. The scale has demonstrated strong psychometric reliability and cross-cultural utility (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

### 3.4 Intervention Procedure

Participants took part in a **six-week Gita-based psychospiritual rehabilitation program**, with one session held per week. Each session lasted approximately 90 to 120 minutes and followed a structured protocol that combined scriptural reflection with contemplative and cognitive exercises.

## Weekly Components

- i. **Shloka-Based Contemplation** (selected verses from the *Bhagavad Gita*)
- ii. **Cognitive Reframing** based on Krishna–Arjuna dialogic themes
- iii. **Spiritual Self-Concept Exercises** focusing on *ātman*, *karma*, and *dharma*
- iv. **Guided Meditation (Dhyāna)** incorporating visualization and affirmation
- v. **Reflective Journaling**
- vi. **Mood/State Awareness Check-in**

Although participants were free to use affirmations in Sanskrit, Hindi, or English during the sessions, all responses were analyzed regardless of language. For consistency in the English-language manuscript, only the English versions of the affirmations are presented in the reporting and analysis.

### 3.5 Weekly Thematic Breakdown

The six-week intervention was structured around weekly themes derived from selected verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* (Gita Press, 2015), each aligned with a specific psychological objective and supported by a guided affirmation in English.

In **Week 1**, the verses 2:13 and 2:47 were used to emphasize the principle of *Detachment and Right Action*. The corresponding affirmation, “I am responsible for my effort, not the outcomes,” was used to help participants shift focus from outcome-driven anxiety to purposeful action.

**Week 2** incorporated verses 4:13 and 4:38 to promote *Self-Knowledge and Inner Purity*. The affirmation, “My inner wisdom is the purest source of healing,” was intended to cultivate clarity and self-trust.

In **Week 3**, the focus was on *Inner Regulation*, with verses 6:5 and 6:26 encouraging participants to elevate their state through inner strength and discipline. The associated affirmation was, “I will lift myself through my own inner strength.”

**Week 4** addressed *Bhakti and Emotional Healing* using verses 12:13–14, which promote compassion, humility, and forgiveness. Participants reflected on the affirmation, “I open my heart to compassion and unconditional love.”

In **Week 5**, the session centered on *Understanding Trigunas* through verses 14:6–14:8. The affirmation, “I recognize the play of the gunas and choose to nurture Sattva,” supported greater self-awareness and sattvic regulation of behavior.

Finally, **Week 6** explored the theme of *Surrender and Liberation* with verse 18:66, where the affirmation, “I surrender my burdens into divine hands and trust the higher path,” facilitated emotional release and acceptance.

Each session included facilitator-led discussions, contemplative silence, shloka reflection, and experiential activities grounded in Indian psychological principles and spiritual insight.

Pre- and post-intervention data were analyzed using **paired-sample t-tests** to examine changes in scores on the VPI and PWB scales. **Effect sizes (Cohen’s *d*)** were calculated to evaluate the magnitude of observed changes. The level of statistical significance was set at  **$p < .05$** . Additionally, qualitative responses from participant journals and group reflections were subjected to **thematic analysis** to identify patterns related to emotional transformation, spiritual insight, and shifts in self-concept.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics revealed substantial improvements across all key variables following the six-week Bhagavad Gita-based psychospiritual intervention. As shown in **Table 1**, participants demonstrated increased Sattva traits and psychological well-being, alongside significant decreases in maladaptive personality dimensions (Rajas and Tamas).

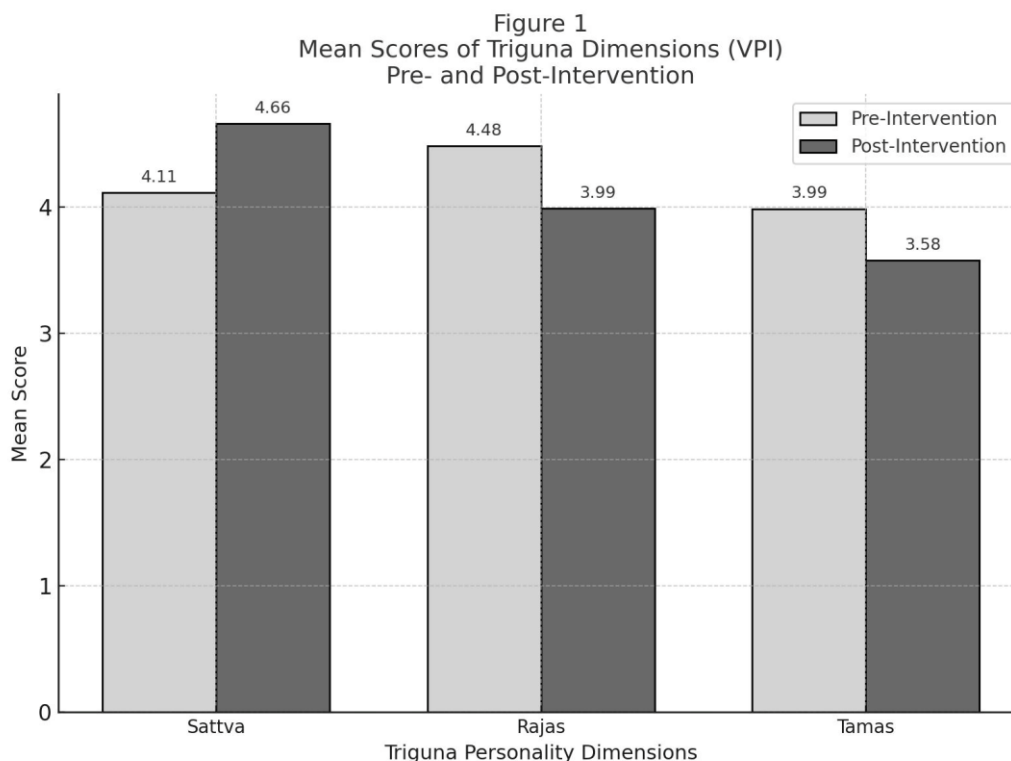
Among the **Triguna dimensions**, the mean score for **Sattva** increased from  $M = 4.11$  to  $M = 4.66$ . Conversely, **Rajas** decreased from  $M = 4.48$  to  $M = 3.99$ , and **Tamas** from  $M = 3.99$  to  $M = 3.58$ , indicating reduced restlessness, emotional reactivity, and inertia.

All six subscales of **Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being (PWB)** showed gains. The largest changes were found in **Purpose in Life** ( $M = 3.76$  to  $M = 4.35$ ), **Personal Growth** ( $M = 4.17$  to  $M = 4.56$ ), and **Self-Acceptance** ( $M = 3.82$  to  $M = 4.26$ ), suggesting positive existential and emotional realignment. Other subscales such as **Autonomy**, **Environmental Mastery**, and **Positive Relations with Others** also reflected consistent improvements.

**Table 1**  
Descriptive Statistics of VPI and PWB Scores Pre- and Post-Intervention (N = 20)

Variable	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
<b>Sattva</b>	4.11	4.66
<b>Rajas</b>	4.48	3.99
<b>Tamas</b>	3.99	3.58
<b>Autonomy</b>	3.76	4.17
<b>Environmental Mastery</b>	3.77	4.21
<b>Personal Growth</b>	4.17	4.56
<b>Positive Relations</b>	3.95	4.18
<b>Purpose in Life</b>	3.76	4.35
<b>Self-Acceptance</b>	3.82	4.26

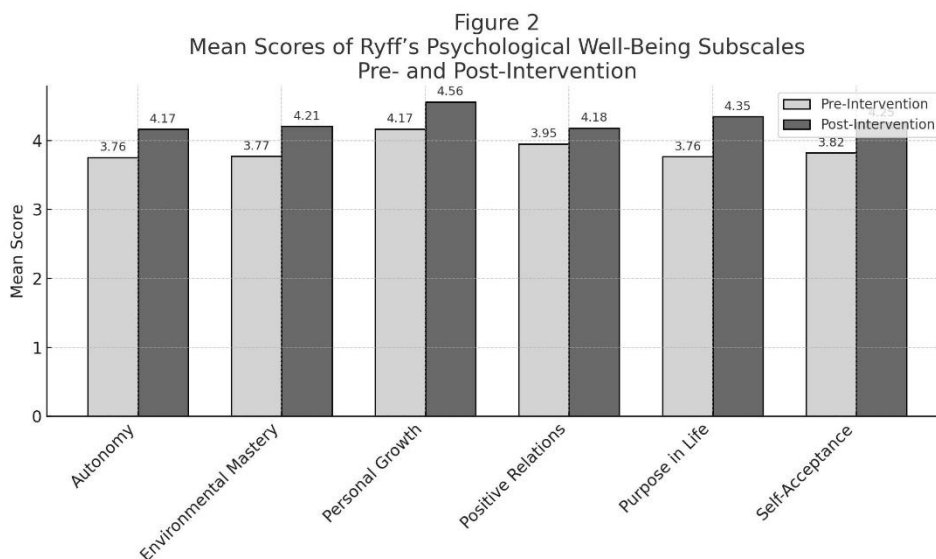
As illustrated in Figure 1, participants demonstrated a marked increase in Sattva and reductions in Rajas and Tamas following the intervention.



**Figure 1**  
**Mean Scores of Triguna Dimensions (VPI) Pre- and Post-Intervention**

The bar graph displays the mean scores of the three Triguna personality dimensions—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—before and after the six-week intervention (N = 20). Sattva increased, while Rajas and Tamas decreased post-intervention.

Improvements across all six psychological well-being dimensions are depicted in Figure 2, highlighting increases in personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.



**Figure 2**  
**Mean Scores of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Subscales Pre- and Post-Intervention**

The bar chart shows mean pre- and post-intervention scores on six dimensions of Ryff's PWB Scale: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance (N = 20).

## 4.2 Inferential Statistics with Effect Sizes

Paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted to determine the statistical significance of pre- to post-intervention differences. All variables showed statistically significant improvements ( $p < .001$ ). Cohen's *d* was also calculated to assess the **magnitude of change**.

Among the **Triguna traits**, the increase in **Sattva** was associated with a **very large effect size** ( $d = 2.83$ ), while decreases in **Rajas** ( $d = -2.22$ ) and **Tamas** ( $d = -2.00$ ) also showed large effects, indicating robust shifts in personality patterns.

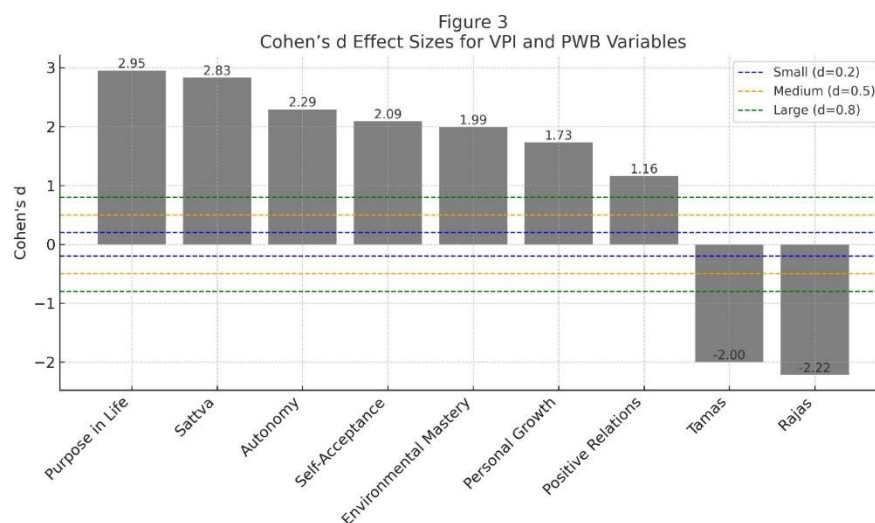
For **psychological well-being**, all six subscales demonstrated **large effect sizes**, with **Purpose in Life** ( $d = 2.95$ ), **Autonomy** ( $d = 2.29$ ), and **Self-Acceptance** ( $d = 2.09$ ) reflecting the most substantial gains. Even **Positive Relations** ( $d = 1.16$ ), typically more stable, showed significant positive change.

These findings confirm that the Gita-based psychospiritual module had both statistically and practically meaningful effects on participants' psychological and personality functioning.

**Table 2**  
**Paired Sample t-Test Results with Effect Sizes for VPI and Ryff's PWB Variables (N = 20)**

Variable	$t(19)$	$p$ -value	Cohen's $d$
Sattva	-12.65	< .001	2.83
Rajas	9.95	< .001	-2.22
Tamas	8.95	< .001	-2.00
Autonomy	-10.23	< .001	2.29
Environmental Mastery	-8.90	< .001	1.99
Personal Growth	-7.33	< .001	1.73
Positive Relations	-4.61	< .001	1.16
Purpose in Life	-13.65	< .001	2.95
Self-Acceptance	-8.96	< .001	2.09

A summary of Cohen's  $d$  values is visually represented in Figure 3, demonstrating large effect sizes across all variables.



**Figure 3**

## Cohen's $d$ Effect Sizes for VPI and PWB Variables

The bar graph displays effect sizes (Cohen's  $d$ ) for each outcome variable measured pre- and post-intervention. The reference lines indicate conventional thresholds for small ( $d = 0.2$ ), medium ( $d = 0.5$ ), and large ( $d = 0.8$ ) effects ( $N = 20$ ).

### 4.3 Summary of Findings

All three hypotheses were supported. The intervention significantly increased Sattva and psychological well-being, while reducing Rajas and Tamas. These findings affirm the efficacy of a Bhagavad Gita-inspired psychospiritual framework for trauma rehabilitation.

## 5. Discussion

The current study examined the impact of a *Bhagavad Gītā*-based psychospiritual intervention on both personality traits (Triguna) and psychological well-being in trauma-affected individuals. Evidence from paired  $t$ -tests and substantial Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes demonstrated significant enhancements across all targeted domains. This supports our hypotheses and underlines the practical and theoretical value of integrating ancient Indian wisdom with contemporary psychological practices.

### 5.1 Interpretation of Findings

- **Personality Transformation through Triguna**

The marked increase in **Sattva** ( $d = 2.83$ ) and reductions in **Rajas** ( $d = -2.22$ ) and **Tamas** ( $d = -2.00$ ) affirm the modulability of Gunas through psychospiritual intervention. These shifts echo Triguna theory, which frames personality as dynamic and responsive to contemplative influences (Murthy & Kumar, 2007). Correlational studies have previously highlighted the association between higher Sattva and emotional balance, as well as between Rajas and Tamas with distress, reinforcing our finding that increasing Sattva fosters emotional resilience and clarity (Stempel et al., 2019).

- **Enhanced Psychological Well-Being**

Consistent improvement across all six Ryff domains, especially in **Purpose in Life** ( $d = 2.95$ ), **Autonomy** ( $d = 2.29$ ), and **Self-Acceptance** ( $d = 2.09$ ), signals robust intervention effects. This finding aligns with meta-analytic evidence showing that interventions rooted in Ryff's model yield moderate to large gains, particularly in

environmental mastery, personal growth, and self-acceptance (Weiss et al., 2016). It also surpasses typical behavioral intervention effect sizes (e.g.,  $d \approx 0.44$  across interventions) (Weiss et al., 2016), underlining the potency of spiritually grounded practices.

## 5.2 Theoretical Contributions

By operationalizing Triguna using the Vedic Personality Inventory and illustrating its change over six weeks, this study adds to the empirical foundation of Indian personality theory—an area needing more integration with mainstream psychology (Rao et al., 2008). Further, these data demonstrate how sacred scriptural engagement can catalyze positive transformation in well-being domains, thereby reinforcing the utility of eudaimonic spiritual psychology.

## 5.3 Clinical and Practical Implications

The intervention model (drawing on cognitive reframing, guided meditation, shloka-based reflection, and affirmation journaling) demonstrated consistent and sizable improvements across personality and well-being variables. The large effect sizes make it a strong candidate for manualized, culturally adapted psychospiritual interventions, particularly in contexts where spirituality and philosophical coherence are valued.

## 5.4 Limitations and Future Directions

The study's small purposive sample ( $N = 20$ ) and absence of a control group limit causal generalizability. Additionally, the six-week duration precludes insight into long-term sustainability of effects. Future research should employ randomized controlled trials with larger samples, include control or active-comparison groups, and extend follow-up assessments. Qualitative components, such as participant reflections, would deepen insights into how participants internalize spiritual transformation and link them to trauma recovery (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996).

In summary, a *Bhagavad Gītā*-based psychospiritual intervention yielded significant, large-magnitude improvements in Triguna balance and psychological well-being. These results contribute to bridging ancient spiritual insight and modern evidence-based psychology, reinforcing the potential of culturally rooted, spiritually informed methods for trauma rehabilitation.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study explored the psychological and spiritual impact of a six-week *Bhagavad Gītā*-based psychospiritual intervention on adult trauma victims residing in Rajasthan (India). Grounded in Triguna theory and Vedic philosophy, the intervention targeted Sattva enhancement, reduction of maladaptive Guna traits (Rajas and Tamas), and the promotion of holistic psychological well-being. Utilizing validated tools—the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale—the study revealed statistically significant improvements across all domains, with large effect sizes affirming the clinical and psychological significance of these changes.

The structured module, which integrated verse-based contemplation, guided meditation, cognitive reframing through the Krishna–Arjuna dialogue, and affirmation journaling, facilitated measurable personality transformation and eudaimonic flourishing. In particular, the elevation of Sattva alongside meaningful gains in Purpose in Life, Self-Acceptance, and Autonomy suggests that the ancient wisdom of the *Gītā* can offer a culturally congruent and spiritually nourishing route to post-trauma recovery.

By empirically validating a scriptural intervention grounded in Indian psychology, this study not only contributes to the integration of indigenous philosophical frameworks into mental health practice but also responds to the growing need for context-sensitive trauma rehabilitation models. The findings underscore the potential of spiritually integrated psychological approaches, especially in multicultural, pluralistic societies like India.

Although limited by sample size and the absence of a control group, the results lay the groundwork for future controlled studies, long-term follow-up research, and broader application in clinical and correctional settings. The study reaffirms the transformative capacity of the *Bhagavad Gītā*—not merely as a spiritual scripture but as a therapeutic text capable of guiding individuals from suffering to self-realization and psychological harmony.

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