



Self in different Roles in the Character of Lord Krishna

Dr Jyotsana Shukla

*Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Integral University,
Lucknow*

Dr Deepa Pandey

*Associate Professor, Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences, Amity university,
Lucknow Campus, Lucknow*

Abstract

Self-concept differentiation (SCD) is defined as an individual's varying self-representation across contexts or social roles (e.g., self as a spouse, self as a parent, self as a student). In Bagwad Gita one can see how Arjuna is moved to action by the great motivator and his sakha, Lord Krishna himself. In the context of Bhagwad Gita, during the Mahabharat we see Lord Krishna and Arjuna in totally different roles; Arjuna as a warrior in perplexity, whether to fight and no to fight with his own kith and kin; and Lord Krishna as Arjuna's Sarathi or charioteer. We can see both of them switching from their roles as cousin brothers and mitra to that of shishya and the guide. In the battlefield, Lord Krishna, is also in the role of Hrishikesh, the philosopher and guide to Arjuna, and is also the one who is ready to take orders and to serve his sakha in a new role. In his other roles . Lord Krishna is seen as a friend, consort, lover, cow protector, etc. The paper discusses this mix of different roles in Lord Krishna, who is at the centre of Bhagwad Gita. The paper also tries to theorise about what if some other characters in the Mahabharat had failed to realize their different roles and what was required of them in those roles, that they failed to make the right decisions based on values and rights of others, that we had to see the Mahabharat, which brought down the Kauravas and left even the Pandavas defeated in more ways than one. The Mahabharat has a lot to tell about our own roles and the choices that we make in these roles, that may make or mar us.



Introduction

As individuals we are all making a sense of our own self. Gradually we tend to think in a certain way about our self, that is, who we are as an individual person. There are many theories about self concept and how it develops (Cherry, 2018B; Gecas, 1982). The two subjects that talk the most about self are psychology and sociology, however, there perspectives are different.

Sociology/social psychology is more focused on the development of self-concept, i.e the role of a person's socialization process and social environment while the field of Psychology is more focused on how relevant and significant the self concept is and its impact, on a person's life (Gecas, 1982).

Self-Concept Clarity (SCC)

SCC refers to the clarity in a person's self-concept. It refers to such aspects of self-concept, such as, clarity, confidence, and consistency (Diehl & Hay, 2011).

Self-concept differentiation (SCD)

SCD makes a reference to a person's self-representation and how this self-presentation varies across different contexts or across social roles (e.g., self in the role of a spouse, self in the role of parent, self in the role of a student).

Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Concept Differentiation are currently significant topics in psychology since they have an impact on what a person thinks and how he behaves. If a person has high SCC, it shows a stable and strong self-concept, whereas low SCC points to a vague self concept, which shows a lack of clarity. Hence the individuals with low SCC may have issues having low self-esteem, lack of self-consciousness, and may border on neuroticism.

However, high Self-Concept Differentiation m(SCD) may be viewed to be not be a desirable characteristic, however, it may help people cope in the modern world where individuals find themselves in many roles.

If SCD is very high, the individual may be seen to wear different mask for different roles, and may indicate an unstable self concept. A very low level of SCD may show that the



person maintains an authentically unique presentation across all roles. However, it may also mean that he is unable to switch from one role to another (Diehl & Hay, 2011). Overall, it can be said that people who can differentiate their roles slightly as well as maintain a clear image of themselves, are able to find a balance. **In life we all carry out certain roles, like that of a “daughter,” “neighbor,” or “employee.”** All these roles are connected with different status in the society.

One faces **role strain**, if too much is demanded of any role, and one faces **role conflict** when one or more roles are contradictory. Thus, a person is often associated with a multitude of roles and the responsibilities. Each role involves a complex array of roles, i.e. a **role set** that comes with a role (Merton 1957).

The Self Presentation of Krishan in Mahabharat



Lord Krishna in a multitude of Roles

The life of Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata demonstrates him as one of the most unselfish person who lived with perfection. His life symbolises action and action which is not for one's own gains.

In his life, he manifested various roles which are as follows

1. Lord Krishna the son of Yashoda Ma (Yashoda nandan)
2. Lord Krishna the son of Devaki Ma (Devakinandan)



3. . Lord Krishna brother to Lord Balaram (Bhrata)
4. . Lord Krishna as the one who killed his maternal Uncle Kamsa (Kansavadha)
5. Lord Krishna who rescued his own people from Kaliya Nag (Kaliya mardan)
6. Lord Krishna who lifted the Govardhan Hillock (Govardhan)
7. Lord Krishna with his Balsakha (Balsakha) (Sudama episode)
8. Lord Krishna as the Gwala, the protector of Cows (Gopala)
9. Lord Krishna with his eternal consort Radharani (Govind)
10. Lord Krishna with the Gopis (Gopikavallabh)
11. Lord Krishna with his wife Rukmini
12. . Lord Krishna the nephew of Mata Kunti
13. . Lord Krishna the cousin brother of Pandavas
14. Lord Krishna Arjuna's sarati/Cahrioteer (Parthasarathy)
15. . Lord Krishna Ajuna's Updeshak /philosopher/guide (Hishiksha)
16. . Lord Krishna fierce in war (Jaydratha vadha)
17. . Lord Krishna as the negotiator with between Duryodhana and Arjuna
18. . Lord Krishna as the supreme judge, who gives the order to Arjuna to fight the war, after all else failed (Virat rupa).

The multiplicity of roles that was played by Lord Krishna as seen in Mahabharat, shows the multidimensional personality of Lord Krishna. In each of his above mentioned roles, he presented himself in a different light. In contradiction of the Self Concept Differentiation theory, which says that if one sees himself in too many roles, one may not be having an integrated self concept, here we see that in each of these roles, Lord Krishna performed to perfection.

Laden with highest values, the portrayal of Lord Krishna in each of these roles shows the upholding of these highest values. Lord Krishna was true to all his roles, living them to



the fullest and fulfilling them altogether. His one role never came in conflict with his duties in other roles as he was clear of the role-set and carried out the role set of each of his roles.

Lord Krishna did not face any conflict in his different roles as he could arrive at decisions regarding what he needs to do in that role and what is required of him in that role. He carried out his actions in alignment with his sense of duty and responsibility towards his particular role. The values which he upheld made him mince no words while clarifying his position and stand in each of his situation and the connected role.

Lord Krishna showed the highest virtue of Nishkama Karma, ie. He took action in each of his role based on highest of values without attachment to the outcome or without the concern for benefitting in any selfish way from any of the outcomes.

He abided by the highest of values in the areas of family, love, friendship, marriage, society, war and peace, across all his various roles mentioned earlier. A lot can be learned from Lord Krishna and his leelas or life in this world which can guide us in performing each of our roles to perfection in our own life, without fear or favor. Only with such high ideals can we ever achieve peace and harmony.

Reference

- Cherry, K. (2018B). What is self-concept and how does it form? Very Well Mind. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-self-concept-2795865>
- Diehl, M., & Hay, E. L. (2011). Self-concept differentiation and self-concept clarity across adulthood: Associations with age and psychological well-being. *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, 73(2), 125–152. <https://doi.org/10.2190/AG.73.2.b>
- Gecas, V. (1982). The self concept. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8, 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.08.080182.000245>
- Merton, R.K. (1957) *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Revised Edition, Free Press, New York.
- Prabhupada, S. B. (2006). *Bhagavad Gita as it is*. Intermex Publishing.