

Chapter III

Phase I- Analysis of Equanimity in the Bhagavad Gita & Buddhism

Introduction to Chapter III

Phase I of the study focused on the analysis of equanimity from the scriptures of the Bhagavad Gita and in Buddhism. In Phase A, the method and analysis of the construct of *Samatva* as explicated in the text of Bhagavad Gita is analyzed in depth. In Phase B, the construct of *Upekkha* as described in the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions is examined in detail.

Cross-cultural researchers have proposed that in order to produce meaningful social science theories, research should be performed on populations other than Western cultures, and their worldview and views should be taken into account (Marsella, 1998; Tirandis, 1994). Theoretical views founded in native culture, literature, and folk wisdom are the emphasis of such an emic-embedded approach (Morris et al., 1999). Our ancient scriptures and philosophies dealt extensively with the rich and in-depth examination of mental states in order to help individuals in their quest for self-realization. Indigenous scriptures and philosophies have been seen as an important part of Svadhaya, or self-learning, and may be considered as a knowledge mine that can help the modern individual navigate life's ups and downs (Bhawuk, 2010).

A wide spectrum of both Western and Indian philosophies and texts such as Stoicism, Vedas, Upanishads, may suggest or indicate equanimity. Given the time stipulation limitation of this research, the scope of the study was intentionally limited to the interpretation of equanimity in the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist philosophy, as the cultivation of equanimity has been significantly suggested in these schools of thought. Also, the allied concepts from the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhism such as *Karma yoga*, non-attachment, and mindfulness have been suggested and indicated in both Western and Indian psychological research. Hence, the study was limited to the understanding of equanimity as explicated in the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhism.

3.1. Objectives of Phase I of the Study

- 1) To explore and understand *Samatva* as a distinct construct as explicated in the text of the Bhagavad Gita

- 2) To explore and understand in-depth the construct of *Upekkha* as delineated in the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions

A] Method & Analysis of *Samatva* from the Bhagavad Gita

The method and findings of the construct definition of *Samatva* from the Bhagavat Gita described here have been published as a journal article (Jijina et al, 2020).

3.2 The Vedantic World-view and the Text of the Bhagavad Gita

Vedanta, is one of the six systems (*darshans*) of Indian philosophy and in Sanskrit the term Vedanta means the “conclusion” (*anta*) of the Vedas, the earliest sacred literature of India. The three fundamental Vedanta texts are: the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. Several schools of Vedanta developed, distinguished by their beliefs on the nature of the relationship between the eternal core of the individual self (*atman*) and the absolute (*brahman*). The Vedanta schools do, however, hold in common a number of beliefs such as the desirability of release from the cycle of birth and death and that the self (*atman*) is the agent of its own acts (*karma*) (Britannica, 2015). Vedanta philosophy emphasizes the divinity of the self and the experience of oneness, in which there is the divine experienced in every being, and in which all existence is experienced as inter-connected, and there is no distinction from the individual *atman* (Sharma, 2004).

The Bhagavad Gita is an important source of knowledge and wisdom throughout the globe, and has been translated into 80 languages (Bhawuk, 2020). It is a dialogue between Arjuna, a warrior, and Lord Krishna, his charioteer set against the backdrop of a fratricide war demonstrated through the course of 700 verses. The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita was read in the translations and commentaries by Swami Tapasyananda (1984). This text was chosen as the writing of the author is easy to understand, free from ambiguity, and has been cited in scholastic research (Adhia et al., 2010).

3.3. The Method for Analysis of *Samatva* from the Bhagavad Gita

The process of construct definition was based on Bhawuk's work, which spanned a decade (Bhawuk, 2010, 2017, 2019 & 2020). Bhawuk's work is recognized as one of the important contributions to Indian psychology (Dalal & Misra, 2010), and for the development of systematic

techniques for extracting models from the indigenous scriptures. Using these approaches, he has developed indigenous constructions such as *Lajja* (Bhawuk, 2017), *Lokasamgraha* (Bhawuk, 2019) and *Shraddha* (Bhawuk, 2020).

The researcher attended a one-day workshop on ‘Construct building in Indian Psychology’ held in 2018 in New Delhi. In the construct development of *Samatva* from the Bhagavad Gita, all the above references were referred to and the learnings from the workshop were amalgamated. The method followed is as below:

i) Linguistic Analysis

Samatva is examined linguistically in Sanskrit, Pali, and English, along with an analysis of its synonyms as it provides the basic framework to begin the search in the scriptures and the necessary depth to appreciate a construct.

ii) Content Analysis

A Content Analysis of the verses highlighting *Samatva* was carried out across the 700 verses. Thirty-nine verses were identified which referred to *Samatva*.

iii) Analysis of the Themes and Mining Models

The context in which the 41 verses were described was examined in order to fully comprehend the construct. Six themes emerged from the examination of the verses and their context. Some of the verses yielded raw models, which led to the construction of emic-embedded models. The emic viewpoint emphasizes insights and analytical views based on indigenous culture, literature, and folk knowledge (Morris et al., 1999).

iv) Synthesis of the Emic-embedded Models

In the next step, the emic embedded models were synthesized with existing psychological literature. Doing so enables the development of universal theories within cultural contexts.

v) Triangulation in the Research Process

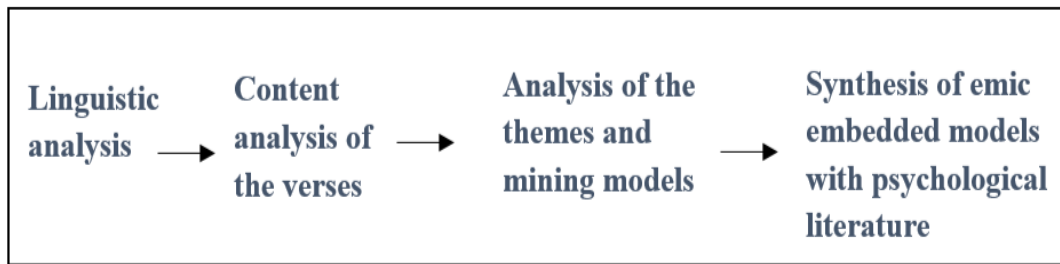
The study procedure followed two forms of triangulation proposed by Patton (1999) for qualitative research: analyst triangulation and theory triangulation. The technique of using two or more analysts is known as analyst triangulation. It's used to evaluate the findings for selective bias and

blind spots in the study, as well as to converge numerous approaches of choosing and interpreting the data (Patton, 1999). An academic expert in Sanskrit verified the selection of verses from the Bhagavad Gita and their correct interpretation carried out by the researcher. Thus, multiple analysts reviewed the verses and themes to provide a check on selective perception in the interpretive analysis.

Multiple theoretical views are used to evaluate and interpret data in theory triangulation (Patton, 1999). The raw models were combined with diverse theoretical views from the fields of Social Psychology and Cognitive Psychology. Thus, the above methodology was followed in the analysis of *Samatva* from the Bhagavad Gita and are presented in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7

Method of the Construct Definition of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita



Using the above methodology, resulted in a rich description of *Samatva*. In the next section, the findings are elaborated as below:

3.4. Findings of the Analysis of *Samatva* from the Bhagavad Gita

The findings of the analysis of *Samatva* from the Bhagavad Gita are elaborated in-depth below.

3.4.1. Linguistic Analysis of *Samatva*

In the Monier-Williams dictionary, the Sanskrit words *Sama*, *Samata*, or *Samatva* are translated as equanimity. The root *Sam* (*union/equal*) is used as a prefix in various synonyms, for example, *Samabuddhi* is esteeming all things alike; *Samabhava* refers to the equability of feelings; *Samadrishti* denotes even vision, and *Samadarshita* is understood as impartiality (Monier-Williams).

In the Pāli language, equanimity is translated as *Upekkhā*, which means observing without interference. In the English language, the origin of the word equanimity is from Latin *aequanimitas*: *aequus* 'equal' + *animus* 'mind'; that is understood as equal mind denoting a sense of fairness or impartiality. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines equanimity as i) evenness of mind especially under stress and as ii) balance.

In summary, the connotations of equanimity in various languages are similar and refer to evenness of mind, neutrality, and balance (Webster, 2006).

3.4.2. Content Analysis of Samatva in the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita text consists of 700 verses spread out across 18 chapters. The Content Analysis revealed thirty-nine verses referring to *Samatva* across twelve chapters as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Content Analysis of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita

Chapter		Chapter		Chapter		Chapter		Chapter		Chapter	
II		III		IV		V		VI		X	
2.14	2.15	3.26	3.30	4.22		5.3	5.18	6.3	6.7	10.5	
2.38	2.45	3.34				5.19	5.20	6.8	6.9		
2.48	2.49							6.29	6.33		
2.50	2.51										
2.53	2.56										
2.57	2.64										
2.70											
Chapter		Chapter		Chapter		Chapter		Chapter		Chapter	
XII		XIII		XIV		XV		XVII		XVIII	
12.13		13.9		14.22		15.5		17.17		18.23	
12.15				14.23						18.26	
12.17											
12.18											

Note. From Construct description of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita: Implications for Holistic Well-being. Jijina, P., Vasa, V., & Biswas, U. N. (2020). *PURUSHARTHA-A Journal of Management, Ethics, and Spirituality*, 12(2), 1-20.

3.4.3. Themes derived from the Verses

From the analysis of the verses and their context, seven themes were derived which presented a thick description of *Samatva* (Jijina et al., 2020). The themes are as elaborated below:

- i. *Samatva* as a state of even-mindedness and rising above the dualities
- ii. The inter-personal dimension of *Samatva*
- iii. *Samatva* and the understanding of the temporality of experience
- iv. Associated cognitive-affective cultivation practices of *Samatva*
- v. Suggested health and spiritual implications of *Samatva*
- vi. *Samatva* and transcendence of *Trigunas*

Each of the themes is elaborated in detail below.

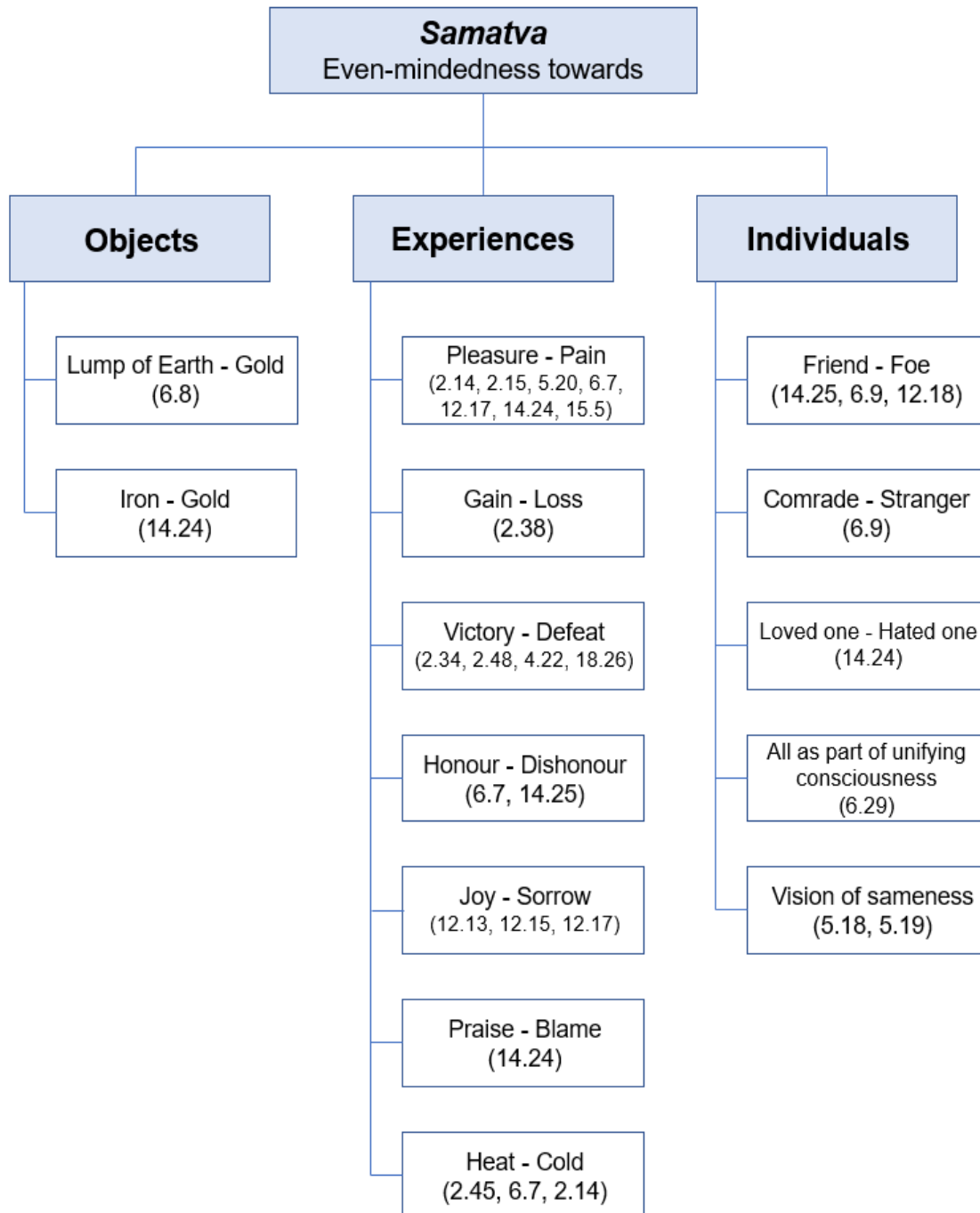
i) Samatva: Even-mindedness and rising above the dualities

Samatva is described in the context of even-mindedness and being stable in the dualities, according to an analysis of the 39 verses. Even-mindedness toward objects/things, experiences, and all living beings has been expounded upon in the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita discusses being stable and indiscriminate toward items of drastically differing worth, such as a lump of dirt and gold, as depicted in Figure 8 below. The method is further explained in verse 6.8¹. The Yogi must instinctively feel and receive insight from the scriptures (Jnana), rather than mechanically reading them (Vijyana). With knowledge (Vijyana), the senses are calmed, cravings are suppressed, desires reduce and the Yogi does not differentiate between objects based on their attractiveness.

The most detailed definition of *Samatva* is that it refers to maintaining balance in life's many experiences, such as pleasure-pain, honor-disgrace, and gain-loss. In Verse 2.48², Shree Krishna refers to the equipoise that allows one to stay stable in dualities as Yoga, or connection with the Supreme. Shri Krishna also discusses the importance of having a clear vision and treating everyone with respect and without prejudice, bias, or discrimination. He underlines that a person with even vision will treat everyone equally, including friends and foes, comrades and strangers. Verse 6.29³ emphasizes that this evenness of vision is facilitated by the insight that all sentient beings are fragments of the underlying consciousness and therefore divine. Hence, with this insight, a person with *Samatva* goes beyond the superficial outer appearances, does not discriminate, and sees all beings as part of a unifying consciousness (Jijina et al., 2021). The tripartite conceptualization of equanimity as described above is illustrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

Tripartite Conceptualization of Samatva in the Bhagavad Gita



Note. From Construct description of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita: Implications for Holistic Well-being. P. Jijina, V. Vasa, & U. N. Biswas (2020). *PURUSHARTHA-A Journal of Management, Ethics, and Spirituality*, 12(2), 1-20.

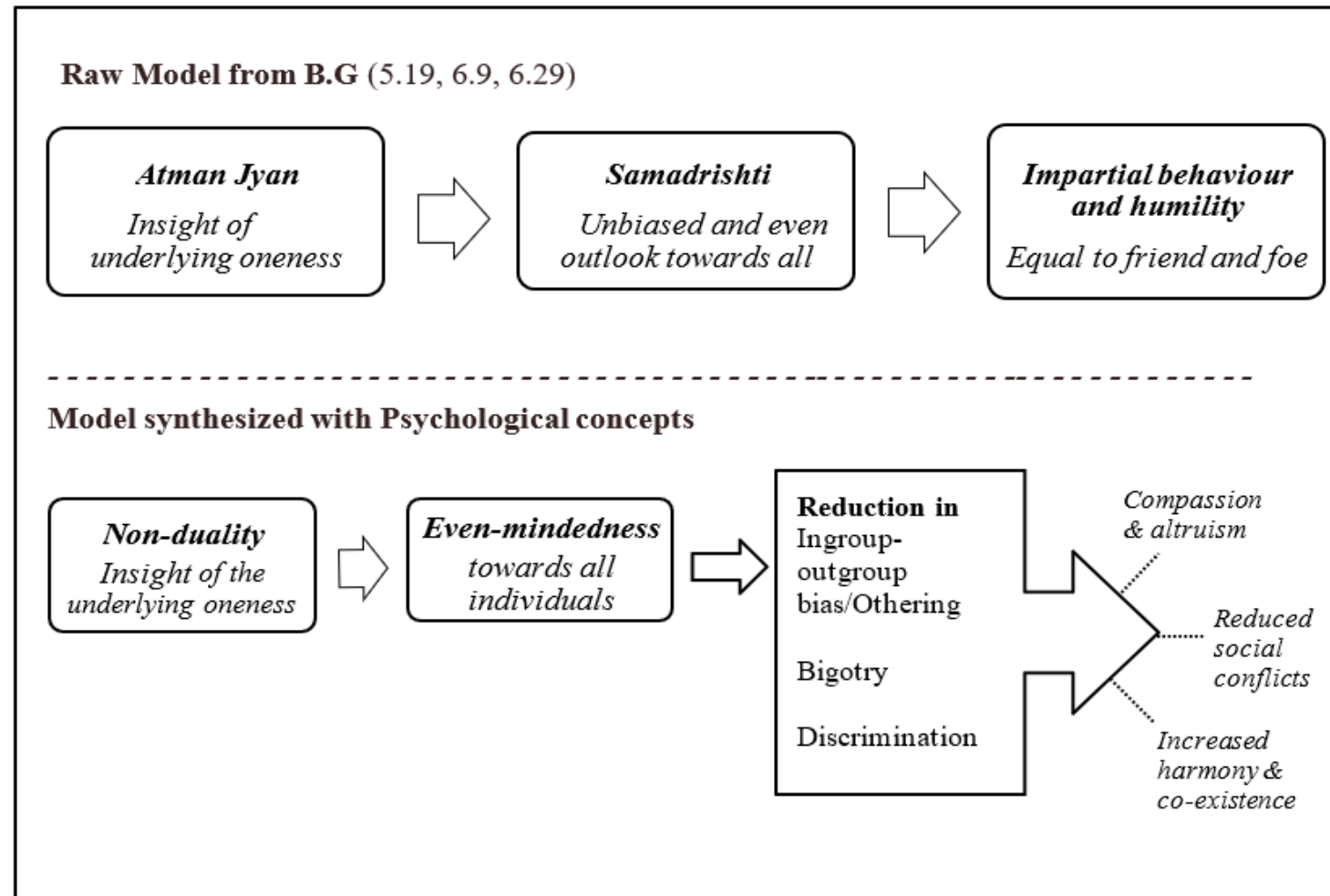
ii) The inter-personal dimension of Samatva

Shri Krishna adds that the one with even-mindedness will treat both friends and foes equally. To describe this process, a raw model was derived from verses 5.19⁴, 6.9⁵, and 6.29³, as shown in Figure 9 below. With the knowledge that all sentient creatures, regardless of their form, shape, or colour, are part of the underlying awareness, a person may view all with an unbiased perspective. As a result, in his actions, he will treat everyone equally and impartially, and with humility.

As seen in the lower half of Figure 9, this raw model has been refined using psychological principles. When one understands the oneness that underpins all sentient creatures, they recognize that we are basically the same, with the same basic needs and concerns. The divisions between 'them' and 'us' are lessened as a result of this understanding. It is suggested that in-group and out-group biases decrease the process of othering (viewing others as distinct from oneself / own kin and clan) at the cognitive level. Prejudices, animosity, and bigotry may decrease on an emotional level, resulting in less discriminating behaviour. Consequently, compassion and altruism may increase leading to reduced social conflicts and increased coexistence (Jijina et al., 2021).

Figure 9

The Inter-personal Dimension of Samatva



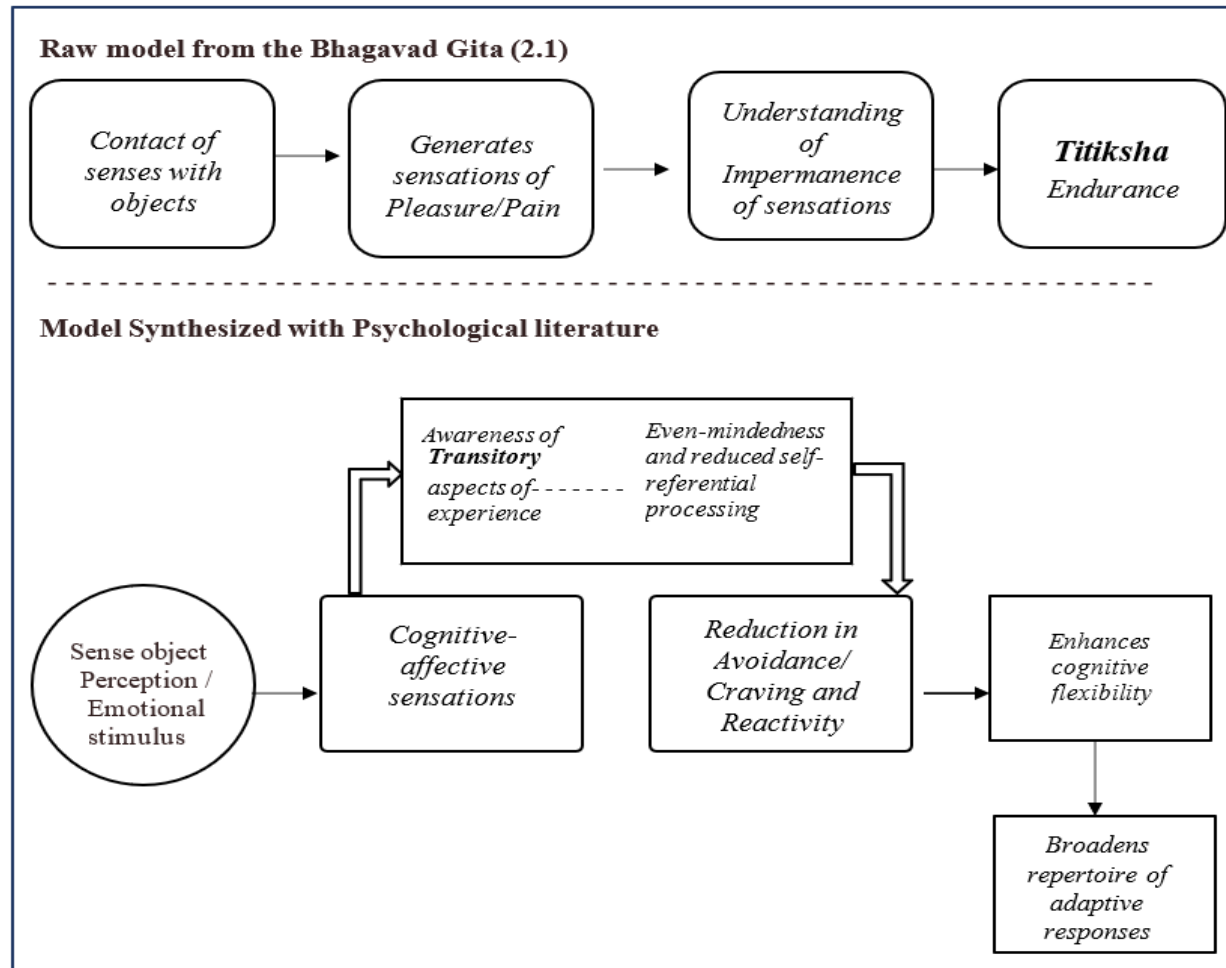
Note. From Construct description of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita: Implications for Holistic Well-being. P. Jijina, V. Vasa, & U. N. Biswas (2020). *PURUSHARTHA-A Journal of Management, Ethics, and Spirituality*, 12(2), 1-20.

iii) Samatva and the Temporality of Experience

The term *Titiksha*, which implies the ability to endure the dualities, is used to represent Samatva in verse 2.14⁶. The impermanence of sensations are emphasized in this verse. There are five basic senses in the human body. When these senses perceive different objects, they produce pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Krishna stresses that the pleasure and misery felt via the senses are fleeting and temporary, and that one should not grow overly attached to them. For example, whereas cold water is enjoyable in the summer, it is unpleasant in the winter. The raw model extracted from Verse 2.14⁶ is shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10

The Temporality of Sensations and its relation to Samatva



Note. From Construct description of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita: Implications for Holistic Well-being P. Jijina, V. Vasa, & U. N. Biswas (2020). *PURUSHARTHA-A Journal of Management, Ethics, and Spirituality*, 12(2), 1-20.

In the lower portion of Figure 10, the raw model has been combined with psychological literature. When one sees an emotionally provoking input with equanimity, he or she may become aware of its transient characteristics. The stimulus's significance decreases as a result of this knowledge, as does ruminative self-referential processing. This reduces reactivity even further, while increasing cognitive flexibility and increasing the likelihood of an adaptive behavioural response (Desbordes et al, 2015).

As an example, imagine Priya is insulted by her manager at work. Priya is initially hurt, but she eventually realizes that this criticism is not fixed and permanent, and that her manager had previously commended her. With this knowledge, Nisha will be less likely to attach the critique to her ego and ponder on it incessantly. Rather than getting defensive in the face of criticism, she may consider the criticism's aim and work to improve. Thus, the recognition of transience and impermanence is stressed as a crucial step in the development of equanimity (Jijina et al., 2021).

iv) Cognitive-affective Cultivation Practices associated with Samatva

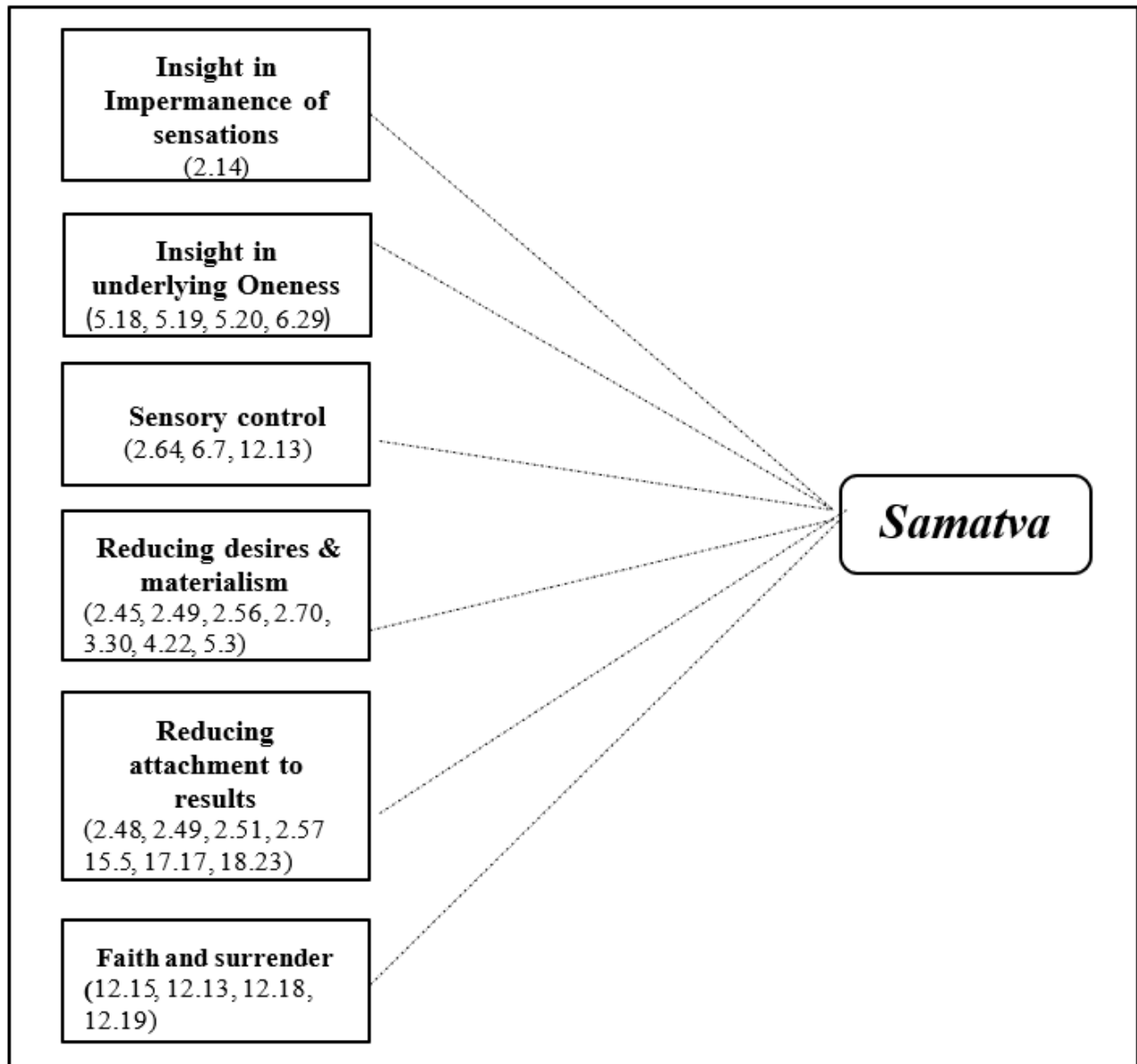
Many cognitive-affective cultivation methods linked with Samatva have been expanded on in the Bhagavad Gita. The belief in impermanence is emphasized in chapter two. When one understands the fleeting nature of events, one becomes less connected to them and can tolerate both happiness and sorrow with ease. The concept of impermanence may serve as an anchor, guiding us through the ups and downs of life. The insight (*Vigyana*) into the fundamental unity of consciousness is another cognitive anchor that has been explored. This understanding allows us to build an impartial perspective towards all people, regardless of their skin colour, nationality, gender, or ethnicity.

Reduced wants and materialism, as well as reduced attachments to the outcomes of our actions, have been highlighted at the emotional level. According to Shri Krishna, we have the right to our actions, but not to the result of those actions. This is related to working in a detached manner and decreasing our sense of agency or ego involvement. Finally, Shri Krishna emphasizes the need of sensory regulation. In today's age of hyper-stimulation, information overload, and internet addiction, it's critical that we have control over the information flowing into our senses and delay gratification to be in a state of equipoise (Jijina et al., 2021).

Faith and surrender are two more indirect paths to *Samatva* that are discussed in Chapter 12. A perfect devotee is described as being balanced in both happiness and grief (Verse 12.13⁷). In verses 12.18 -12.19⁸, it is said that an ideal *Bhakta* is equal and impartial towards everybody, and is balanced in both favorable and unfavorable situations. A real devotee has trust and faith and has submitted his actions and their results to a higher power. As a result, they may be equipoised in any situation. Figure 11 elucidates all of the following cognitive-affective cultivation methods connected with *Samatva*.

Figure 11

Cognitive-affective Cultivation Practices associated with Samatva



Note. From Construct description of Samatva from the Bhagavad Gita: Implications for Holistic Well-being. P. Jijina, V. Vasa, & U. N. Biswas (2020). *PURUSHARTHA-A Journal of Management, Ethics, and Spirituality*, 12(2), 1-20.

v) ***Suggested health and spiritual implications of Samatva***

Various health and spiritual implications of cultivating *Samatva* have been specified in the verses of the Bhagavad Gita. Verse 2.70⁹ highlights the peace, tranquillity and mental ease one may attain with *Samatva* with the metaphor of the ocean. The rivers and its tributaries constantly empty themselves into the ocean but the ocean maintains its undisturbed state, despite being inundated

by the flow of rivers into it. Likewise, the individual who is steady despite the flow of desirable objects all around him attains peace.

The individual with equanimity abandons attachment to the fruits of actions and reduces the desire for selfish gains. By working in such consciousness, they have reduced suffering or transcend the state of suffering (Verse 2.51¹⁰). Arjun had expressed his fear that by participating in the fratricidal battle he would incur sin. In response, Shree Krishna advises Arjun to do his duty, without attachment to his actions and doing so with equanimity would free him from any karmic reactions (verse 2.38¹¹).

The equanimity that allows us to accept all events with tranquilly is so important that Shree Krishna refers to it as Yog, or oneness with the Divine, which may also be translated as Self-realization, in verse 2.48². Many passages (2.15¹², 2.51¹⁰, 5.3¹³, and 5.19⁴, 15.5¹⁴) imply that a person with equanimity can be freed from the bonds of life and death. This is one of the highest spiritual goals, emphasizing the significance of the cultivation of *Samatva*.

To summarize, the major implications of *Samatva* in the Bhagavad Gita have been enumerated as peace, reduced suffering, self-realization freedom from karmic reactions, and liberation from bondage (Jijina et al., 2021)

vi) Samatva and transcendence of the Trigunas

The Trigunas, or three qualities of Nature, are the three ways in which *Prakriti* (nature) manifests itself in matter. They are *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. Wisdom, spirituality, calmness, compassion, and selflessness are all characteristics of *Sattvic* states. Desire, worry, excitement, ambition, turmoil, and restlessness are all qualities associated with *Rajas* guna. *Tamas* represents ignorance, dullness, sloth, greed, attachment, and heaviness, and is the lowest of the *trigunas*.

In Chapter 14, Arjun inquires of Shri Krishna about the attributes of a person who has transcended these three gunas or a *Trigunatita*. Sri Krishna answers that a person who has transcended the gunas is not disturbed when they observe the gunas working and their consequences showing, nor are they worried in regard to their absence (Verse 14.22-23¹⁵). We associate intensely with pain and pleasures in physical consciousness, oscillating between joy and sadness. Those who have

transcended the gunas, on the other hand, are aware of the world's dualities yet are unaffected by them. As a result, they are balanced towards friend and foe (Jijina et al., 2021).

In summary: The goal of the study was to explore the construct of *Samatva* as explicated in the Bhagavad Gita. *Samatva* is defined as being even-minded toward objects, experiences, and individuals, according to the rigorous methodology utilized. *Samatva* was defined as a state of even-mindedness and transcendence of dualities. Reduced wants and attachments to the outcomes or consequences of one's actions were among the cognitive-affective paths to the cultivation of *Samatva*. In regard to the cultivation of *Samatva*, beliefs in the underlying unity of consciousness, and awareness of transience are important. The possible physical and spiritual benefits of developing *Samatva* are peace, tranquility and self-realization.

The next section of the findings focuses on the conceptualization of equanimity in the Buddhist tradition.

B] The Construct of Equanimity as elaborated in the Buddhist Traditions

Different schools of Buddhism arose after the Buddha's death (c. 483 BCE) to promote his teachings, and three major schools of Buddhism are focused upon today:

- Theravada Buddhism (The School of the Elders)
- Mahayana Buddhism (The Great Vehicle)
- and Vajrayana Buddhism (The Way of the Diamond)

The sage Buddhaghosa (5th century C.E.) is the central figure of Theravada Buddhism whose name means “Voice of the Buddha” for his ability to interpret the Buddhist doctrine. The central texts of Theravada Buddhism are in Pali, and this school emphasizes a more monastic understanding of the Buddhist path.

The Mahayana school was founded almost 400 years after Buddha's death, and the sage Nagarjuna is considered the central figure of the school. Aspirants from the Mahayana tradition seek to attain the state of emptiness (*sunyata*) that enables one to recognize that all things are devoid of intrinsic existence, and lasting meaning. The Mahayana school believes that all human beings possess a Buddha nature and can become a *Bodhisattva* (enlightened being), who foregoes his liberation to help others. The Vajrayana school is often considered an offshoot of Mahayana Buddhism and is

sometimes referred to as Tibetan Buddhism. According to the Vajrayana tradition, emptiness is the wisdom that possesses an indestructible or diamond-like (*vajra*) nature beyond all duality (Britannica, n.d.). Similar to Mahayana traditions, in Vajrayana Buddhism, it is understood that everyone already has a Buddha nature and one only has to realize this to fully awaken (Mark, 2020).

3.5. Method of Understanding *Upekkha* in the Buddhist Traditions

Buddhist philosophy is vast and has varied approaches and texts describing equanimity. This research focuses on the Theravada and Mahayana conceptualizations of equanimity as these schools have emphasized its cultivation and due to the prevalence of these branches in the current psychological literature.

- i) After consultation with experts, a few key books and journal papers were referred to (Bodhi, 2005; Bhikkhu, 1996; Tsering, 2006; Wallace, 2010; Thera, 2008; Buddhaghosa, 2014; Lama & Vreeland, 2008; Tsong Kha Pa, 2004).
- ii) The conceptualizations of equanimity in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions were analyzed and five major themes were derived which presented a thick description of *Upekkha*.
- iii) The analysis was sent to an expert in Buddhist studies for feedback. His feedback and suggestions were incorporated by the researcher.

3.6. Findings of the Analysis of *Upekkha* as elaborated in the Buddhist Traditions

In the Buddhist tradition, the term equanimity, *Upekkha* in Pali means “gazing upon” or observing without interference. In the Theravada Buddhist literature, equanimity refers to the state of mind that is not swayed by biases and preferences. Equanimity also refers to the neutral feeling which neutrally experiences the object or phenomena and leans neither towards pleasure or pain (Desbordes et al., 2015). Thus, *Upekkha* is also known as *adukkhamasukkha vedana* which refers to neither a pleasant nor painful feeling. In addition, the ideal form of equanimity in Buddhism entails having an equal attitude towards all beings, without any bias, discrimination, and prejudices (Bodhi, 2000) and without the boundaries that we normally draw between friends, strangers, and enemies (Tsering, 2006).

Buddhism distinguishes between ‘mere equanimity’ and ‘uncommon equanimity. Mere equanimity is common in both Theravada and Mahayana traditions and is described as an even-mindedness towards the various phenomena and toward everyone devoid of attachment or avoidance. Uncommon equanimity goes beyond mere equanimity. Uncommon equanimity entails having an equal attitude towards all and in addition, actively being beneficial towards all beings without drawing the boundaries which we normally draw between a friend or enemy. This type of equanimity is developed specifically in the Mahayana context (Berzin Archives, n.d.).

The five themes derived from the analysis of equanimity in the Buddhist traditions are as follows:

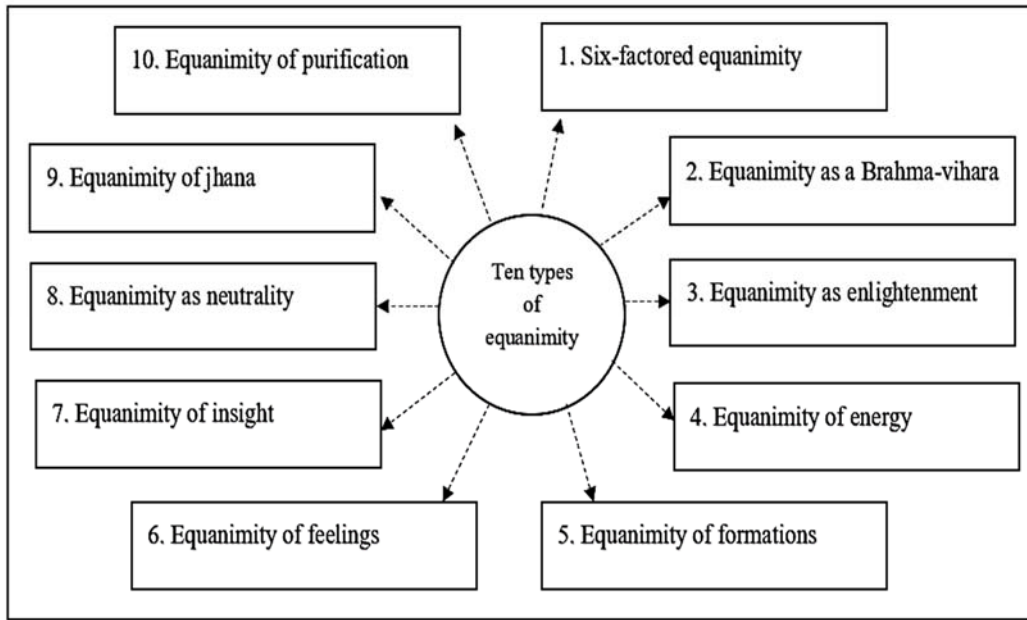
1. The various facets of equanimity
2. Equanimity as a *brahma vihara*
3. Key analytical contemplations for the cultivation of *Upekkha*
4. Insight and concentration practices in the cultivation of *Upekkha*
5. Equanimity and universal compassion

3.6.1. The Various Facets of Equanimity

In commentaries of the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa (2014) provides a multi-faceted understanding by illustrating equanimity in ten different ways as illustrated in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12

Ten Types of Equanimity given by Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa



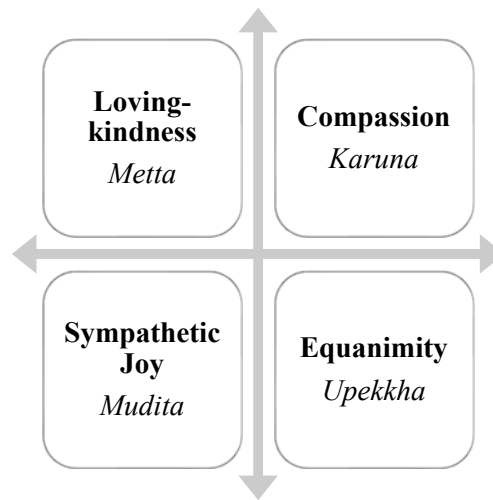
Each of these ten types of equanimity is elaborated on below.

i) *Six-factored Equanimity: Chalangupekkha*

The six-factored equanimity links *upekkhā* to each of the six senses related to sight, sound, touch, etc. As an illustration of this state of equanimity, Buddhaghosa (2014) describes how a monk is neither elated nor depressed about what is experienced through the six senses. An insight into the gross and conditioned nature of all sensory experiences may help in maintaining equanimity towards sensory objects. In the final stages of training, the labels of agreeable or disagreeable are left behind and only clear equanimity remains.

ii) *Equanimity as a Brahma vihāra: Brahmaviharupekkha*

The Buddha has taught four sublime states of mind: Loving-kindness (*Metta*), Compassion (*Karuna*), Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*), and Equanimity (*Upekkha*). In Pali, these four states are known as the *brahma viharas* (divine abodes) or *Appamatta* (boundless states) as they are cultivated toward all beings, and are not bound by selective preferences. The cultivation of the *brahma viharas* facilitates the reduction of the boundaries that we habitually draw between ourselves and others (Thera, 2008). The four sublime states are described below in Figure 13.

Figure 13*The Four Brahma-viharas*

Loving-kindness (*Metta*) aims for the well-being, welfare, and prosperity of all beings without a desire for anything in return. Compassion (*Karuna*) enables us to notice the suffering and plight of others along with the desire to alleviate the suffering of all beings. Universal compassion also empowers a bodhisattva to sacrifice his liberation for the good of all beings. Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*) arises from the wish to rejoice in the happiness of all beings. Equanimity (*Upekkha*) is characterized as promoting the aspect of being neutral and even-minded towards all phenomena and beings irrespective of race, gender, nationality (Miller, 1979).

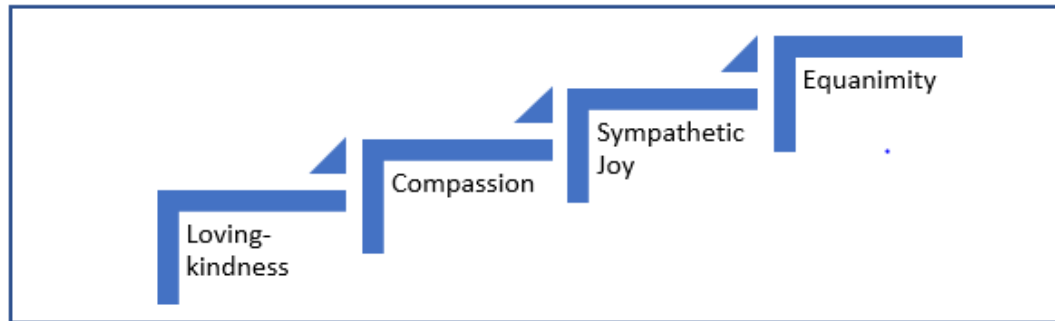
Equanimity rooted in insight is the stabilizing factor for the other three sublime states. Equanimity enables compassion to face intense misery and despair. It also protects loving-kindness and sympathetic joy from being consumed by uncontrollable emotion. The other three sublime states, if unconnected with equanimity, may diminish due to lack of a stabilizing factor (Thera, 2008). Wallace (2010) also suggests that equanimity is indispensable for one's practice of the Brahma viharas. To feel genuine compassion, joy, and loving-kindness for all beings, one must remove any partiality from our attitude towards them. Hence, the brahma viharas are known as the Immeasurables in the sense that they have no bounds and reach out to every sentient being.

The specific order of cultivation of the brahma viharas was suggested by Buddhaghosa (2014) in which each is the respective base support for the other. The practice of loving-kindness is the first place to start because it promotes well-being. Compassion should be cultivated upon witnessing

that the beings whose welfare has been thus wished for are suffering. Furthermore, sympathetic joy should be cultivated as a result of watching the prosperity of individuals whose well-being and removal of suffering were desired for. Finally, all of this should be practiced impartially, and hence equanimity should be cultivated.

Figure 14

Order of Cultivation of the Brahma viharas in the Theravada tradition



Thus, Buddhagosa (2014) describes equanimity as an outcome of the first three *brahma-vihāras* as shown in Figure 14. In this way, it is compared to building a roof, which requires scaffolding and the framework of beams. In other words, without the foundational faculties of loving-kindness, sympathetic-joy, and compassion, equanimity could easily regress into maladaptive states, such as indifference (Murphy, 2017).

iii) Equanimity as an Enlightenment Factor: Bojjhangupekkha

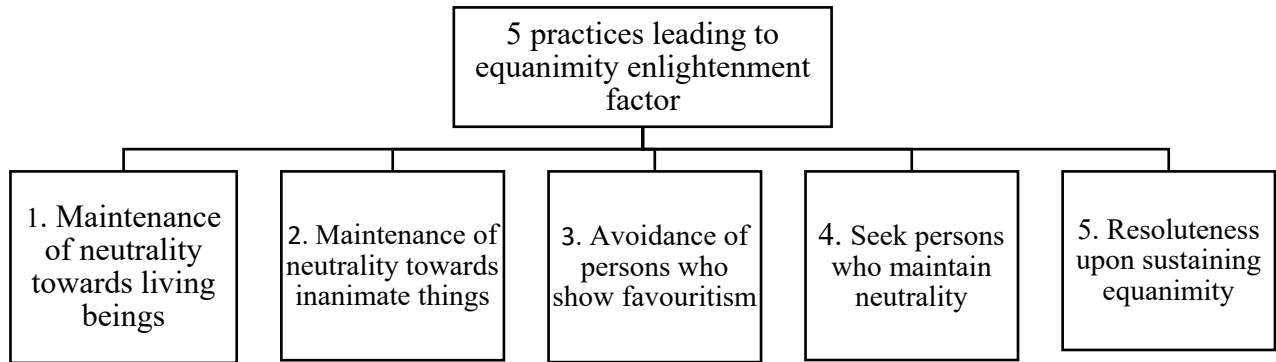
Equanimity is listed as one of the seven enlightenment factors. The seven enlightenment factors which lead to the awakening of the mind are (1) Mindfulness (*sati*), (2). Investigation of states (*dhammavicaya*), (3) Energy (*viriya*), (4) Rapture (*pīti*), (5) Tranquility (*passaddhi*), (6) Concentration (*samādhi*) and (7) Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

The enlightenment factors are interdependent. For example, mindfulness as an enlightenment factor supports equanimity as awareness is the foundation on which equanimity may be facilitated. Further, equanimity as an enlightenment factor balances the other factors of energy and tranquillity. Thus, equanimity as an enlightenment factor is inter-connected with the other enlightenment factors, contributing towards the awakening of the mind (Murphy, 2017).

In the commentaries of the *Visuddhimagga*, Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa (2014) states that five practices are leading to the equanimity enlightenment factor as shown in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15

Five Practices leading to the Equanimity Enlightenment Factor



Thus, as shown in Figure 15 above, a commitment to maintaining complete neutrality, including the seeking of others who maintain neutrality, are the practices suggested leading towards the equanimity enlightenment factor.

iv) Equanimity of Energy: Viriyupekkha

Equanimity of energy is the fourth type of equanimity in Buddhaghosa's (2014) list and is described as the midpoint between the two opposing mental states of laziness and restlessness. It is the optimal performance point between low and high energy levels. In meditation, it is difficult to develop mindfulness when one is feeling too restless or too lethargic. Here, equanimity has a central role in meditation practice to find the optimal point to help overcome both restlessness or laziness (Murphy, 2017).

v) Equanimity about Formations: Sankharupekkha

In the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, the nine types of insight knowledge are listed as shown in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16

Nine Insight Knowledges

1. Knowledge of rise and fall	2. Knowledge of dissolution	3. Knowledge of the fearful
4. Knowledge of danger	5. Knowledge of disenchantment	6. Knowledge of desire for deliverance
7. Knowledge of reflective contemplation	8. Knowledge of equanimity towards formations	9. Knowledge of conformity

These nine-insight knowledge are known through the experiential understanding of suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and non-self (*anatta*). With the knowledge of all formations as suffering (*dukkha*) and transient (*aniccā*), equanimity as neither attraction nor aversion towards all formations is developed (Bodhi, 2000).

vi) Equanimity as a Feeling: Vedanupekkha

The natural tendency of individuals is to respond with attraction or clinging when experiencing a pleasant sensation and with aversion or avoidance to a painful sensation. In the context of equanimity as a feeling, one tries to become aware of this natural tendency and reduce clinging towards pleasant sensations and repulsion of unpleasant sensations. Thus, equanimity as a feeling offers a stable ground by reducing the fluctuation between the opposing states of pleasant and unpleasant feelings (Murphy, 2017).

vii) Equanimity about Insight: Vipassanupekkha

The culmination of equanimity as an outcome of progressive insight is a recurring theme in the Vipassana discourses. Vipassana meditation leads the practitioner through progressive stages of insight into the conditioned nature of all experiences. The teaching in Vipassana meditation practice is to notice all the mental processes that arise neutrally and impartially, which allows for greater equanimity to one's cognitive and emotional experiences. (Pagis, 2015).

viii) Equanimity as specific neutrality: *Tatramajjhattupekka*

Upekka is listed as one of the 52 mental factors elaborated in the *Abhidhammattha-sangaha* text as seen in Table 3 below. These 52 mental components are characterized as parts of the mind that perceive the quality of an object and are methods of being aware of an object.

Table 3

The 52 Mental States in the Abhidhammattha-sangaha

52 Mental States (<i>Cetasika</i>)						
13 Unmoral		14 Immoral	25 Beautiful or Moral			
7	6	14 Immoral	19 Beautiful	3	2	1
Universals	Particulars			Abstinences	Illimitables	Wisdom
1 Contact 2 Feeling 3 Perception 4 Volition 5 Focus 6 Psychic life 7 Attention	1 Initial Application 2 Sustained Application 3 Decision 4 Effort 5 Joy 6 Conation	1 Delusion 2 Shamelessness 3 Fearlessness 4 Restlessness 5 Attachment 6 Misbelief 7 Conceit 8 Hatred 9 Jealousy 10 Avarice 11 Worry 12 Sloth 13 Torpor 14 Doubt	1 Confidence 2 Mindfulness 3 Shame 4 Fear 5 Non-attachment 6 Good will <u>7 Equanimity</u> 8 Tranquillity of mental states 9 Tranquillity of mind 10 Lightness of mental states 11 Lightness of mind 12 Pliancy of Mental states 13 Pliancy of Mind 14 Adaptability of Mental states 15 Adaptability of mind 16 Proficiency of Mental states 17 Proficiency of mind 18 Rectitude of mental states 19 Rectitude of mind	1 Right Speech 2 Right Action 3 Right Livelihood	1 Compassion 2 Sympathetic Joy	1 Wisdom

Equanimity is included as one of the 19 universal beautiful factors (*Sobbanasadharana*) and is described as *Tatramajjhatsupekkha*- a mental attitude of balance, detachment, and impartiality (Murphy, 2017). Its function is to prevent partiality and is manifested as an attitude of neutrality. It also entails treating all beings as equal without prejudices and discrimination. The text also cautions that due to ignorance or a lack of understanding, equanimity should not be misunderstood as indifference or cold detachment (Bodhi, 2000).

ix) *Equanimity of Jhana: Parisuddhupekkha*

In Buddhist meditation, four stages, called *dhyanas* in Sanskrit or *jhanas* in Pali, are described in the transition of attention from the outward sensory world towards the state of equanimity. In the first jhana, when one can maintain single-pointed focus without the mind wandering, one may first experience great pleasure, as the mind suspends the arising of negative thoughts and there is a detachment from the external world. In the second jhana, this pleasure enhances as the concentration deepens and the mind lets go of conceptual thinking and reasoning. In the third jhana, the pleasure matures and a sense of ease and profound sense of happiness remains while in the fourth jhana all ease and happiness pass, and a state of mental equanimity are established. Thus, the fourth *jhāna* transcends feelings of pleasure and pain or the emotions of joy and grief and manifests as a completely impartial state of mind (Murphy, 2017).

x) *Equanimity of Purification*

Equanimity of purification refers to the purifying effect of equanimity on the mind. A mind purified by equanimity is suggested to be bright, steady, and steadfast. Cultivating equanimity is thus a process analogous to the purification of gold. By burning the contaminants, the mind becomes bright, calm, and steady (Buddhaghosa, 2014).

Thus, the ten types of equanimity by Buddhaghosa discussed above provide a rich and multi-faceted understanding of equanimity. In the next section, equanimity is elaborated in the context of the four immeasurables (*Brahma-viharas*) and as a practice to prepare for universal compassion.

3.6.2. Equanimity as a *Brahmavihara*

In the Mahayana traditions, the order of the cultivation of brahma viharas is different compared to the order suggested by Buddhaghosa described above. In the Mahayana tradition, equanimity may be cultivated as a means for universal compassion and attainment of *Bodhicitta*. The motivation

of *Bodhicitta* is to attain the highest possible enlightenment for the benefit of others. In a text written by Kamalashila, a scholar of the ninth century, the order of cultivation of the Brahma viharas draws an analogy to cultivating crops. Just like a farmer evens the land before planting crops, the first stage is to cultivate equanimity to make the mind a level field. After leveling the soil with equanimity meditation, the mind should be moistened with loving-kindness to make it more fertile. The seeds of compassion are sown in this fertile intellect, and they will grow quickly, from which *Bodhicitta* may emerge. (Dalai Lama, 2001).

Thus, as described above, the cultivation of equanimity plays a key role in the facilitation of the attainment of *Bodhicitta*.

3.6.3. Key Analytical Contemplations for the Cultivation of *Upekkha*

In the classic Buddhist texts, analytical contemplations are introduced in the early stages of meditation training, for the development of equanimity. The practitioner has to reflect and introspect on the basic premises elaborated in the texts. Some of these analytical contemplations are described in the text *Stages of Meditation* by Kamalishala, an Indian master who wrote extensively on meditation training practices. A classical analytical contemplation by Kamalishala for the cultivation of equanimity is to meditate on three particular individuals: a friend, a stranger, and an ‘enemy’ as shown below in Figure 17.

Figure 17

Contemplative Practice on Three Categories of Individuals



Thinking about a loved one may give rise to feelings of happiness and attachment. These feelings are allowed to arise and one reflects on what makes the friend so dear. On reflection, one may become aware of the transience of relationships that perhaps a few years ago this person was a stranger and a few years later may not even be a friend. One may also reflect on the premise that as ordinary beings, our closeness to friends and family may stem from attachment which may have our interests at its core and one may realize that the reasons for our attachment may be based on

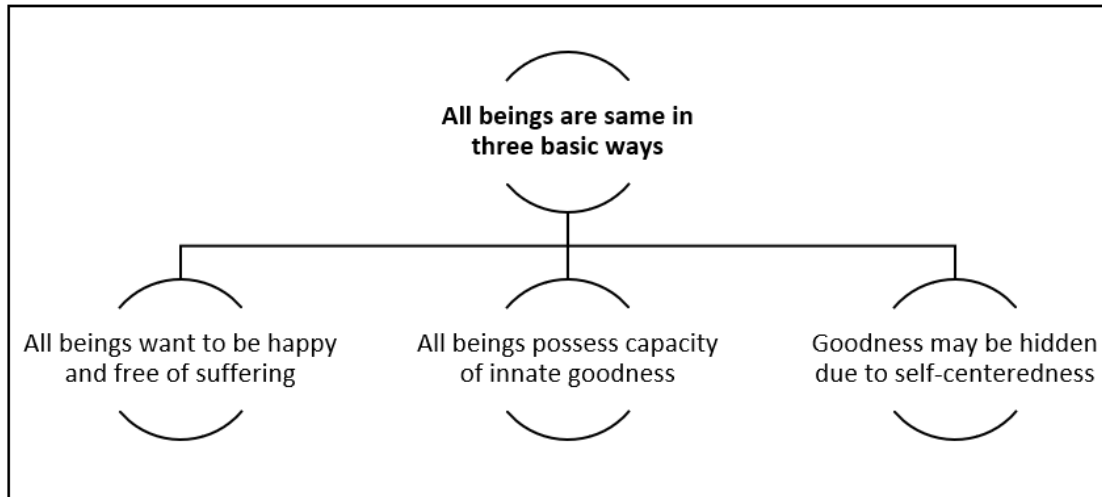
narrow, self-serving attitudes. These contemplations are not meant to decrease affection or love for the person rather they are designed to become aware of the true reasons underlying the attachment towards the person. One can also reflect upon the consequences of our strong attachment to our loved ones which may blind us to his or her negative aspects. Unconsciously, one may project on that person's quality of total desirability and absolute trust. When one encounters something that contradicts their expectations, they are taken aback and experience emotions ranging from love to disappointment and rage. (Dalai, Lama, 2001).

Next, one thinks about the stranger who has neither caused us harm nor happiness and contemplates in the same manner, regarding the impermanence of relationships and the arbitrary causes and conditions which play a role in relationships. Lastly, on thinking of a person who is considered an enemy, his/her hostile behaviors may come to mind. Recognizing that individuals evolve, we recognize that our hatred causes us to rigidly associate people with their negative characteristics. With this insight, one consciously tries to practice not equating the person with his or her actions. One could also reflect on the premise that our opponents can teach us about tolerance and patience. Furthermore, one considers the possibility that our adversaries, like ourselves, have a Buddha-nature and aspire for happiness. Different causes and situations have come together to lead people to act the way they do, and if we had lived in the same circumstances, we might have done similarly. (Wallace, 2010). Another premise that can be meditated on is the consequence of hostility and hatred towards others. Hatred or enmity impacts our hunger, sleep, and psychological well-being, while our adversaries may be ignorant of our predicament. (Lama & Vreeland, 2008).

A classic analytical practice by Kamalishala for developing equanimity as shown in Figure 18 is to reflect on the premise that all beings are the same as ourselves in three basic ways. All beings want to be well and free of suffering, they all possess the capacity of innate goodness, and that their goodness may have been hidden due to self-centeredness (Wallace, 2010).

Figure 18

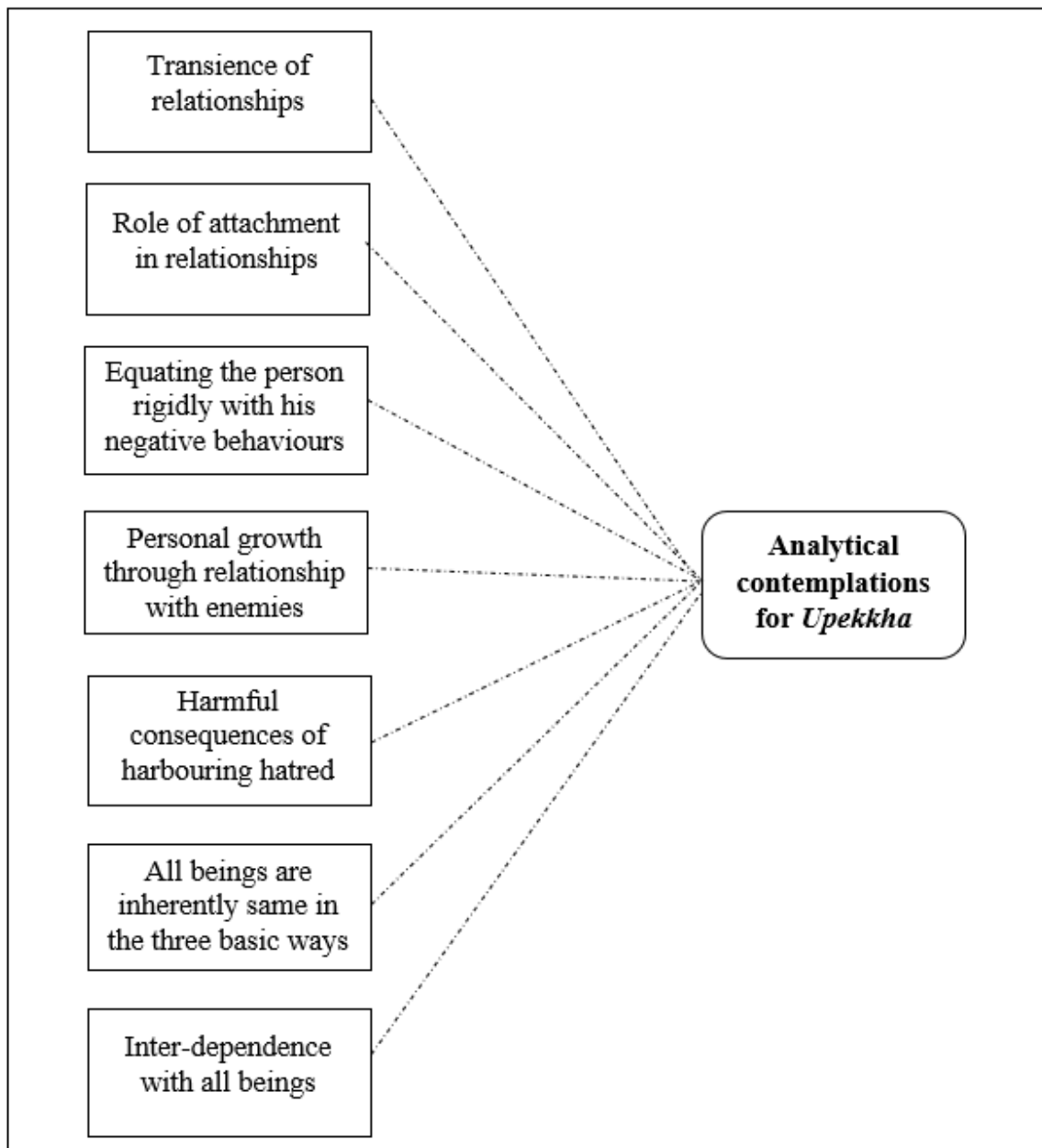
Contemplations on Underlying Similarities in Human Nature



In the classical Buddhist text, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* by Tsong Kha Pa, an analytical contemplation recommended is to reflect on the premise of interdependence, that as human beings, our survival and well-being very much depends upon that of others. Our parents are responsible for our birth, and our care and affection for several years. Similarly, our survival, sustenance, and nourishment are the consequence of numerous efforts from our fellow humans. Soon, one realizes that whether directly or indirectly, countless others are involved in our survival and well-being. When this line of thinking is extended to previous past lives, it is evident that all beings may have benefitted us directly or indirectly at some point. As a result, it is impossible to cling to one while being antagonistic to another, and one must thus rise above feelings of bias and discrimination. (Tsong Kha Pa, 2004). The later part of this analytical meditation requires the belief in reincarnation and may be difficult for individuals who do not subscribe to the theory of re-birth. The major themes of the above analytical contemplations for *Upekkha* have been summarized in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19

Key Analytical Contemplations for Upekkha



Thus, these contemplations and analytical practices enable the practitioner to view things from a broader perspective, enable one to realize the futility of clinging and avoiding, reduce biases and prejudices, and facilitates the cultivation of equanimity towards all beings. The Dalai Lama highlights the importance of the sustained practice of these analytical meditations and suggests that with prolonged and dedicated meditation practice one may be able to equalize feelings towards the stranger, friend, and foe (Dalai Lama, 2001).

3.6.4 Insight and Concentration Practices in the Cultivation of *Upekkha*

In Theravada Buddhism, Vipassana meditation leads the practitioner through progressive stages of insight into the conditioned nature of all experiences. Vipassana meditation utilizes practices such as *Sati* (mindfulness), *Anapanasati* (focusing on the breath), and reflection on impermanence, to gain insight into the true nature of reality (Nyanaponika, 1998). One of the prominent schools in the Theravada tradition, Goenka's Vipassana course is a standardized course that has spread over fifty countries and has been adopted by prison authorities of several countries including India for the emotional health of the prisoners (Zeng et al., 2013). Goenka's Vipassana practice focuses on the cultivation of two major abilities: awareness and equanimity.

In the cultivation of awareness, practitioners seek and observe bodily sensations throughout the body. These sensations are to be observed with equanimity, i.e., feeling neither craving towards pleasure sensations nor avoiding painful sensations. For example, if the novice meditator feels pain from sitting in the meditative posture, he would learn how to observe that pain without repulsion or aversion. With practice, these peaceful attitudes of equanimity could be generalized and applied towards situations in daily life (Goenka & Hart, 2000).

Equanimity may also be cultivated through concentration in '*Samatha*' practices. *Samatha* practices may also be referred to as non-conceptual, or open awareness practices. The path of *Samatha* proceeds through four increasingly intense stages known as *Jhanas* in Pali, in which focused concentration is used as a means to gradually let go of conceptual thinking and train the mind to greater stillness and equanimity (Murphy, 2017) which has been described above in the section on equanimity as a *jhana*.

3.6.5 Equanimity and Universal Compassion

Equanimity is the central theme and motivation for the attainment of *Bodhicitta*, a spiritual practice based on universal compassion. The motivation of *Bodhicitta* expresses itself as, attaining the highest possible enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. There are two methods for bringing about this attitude, the Seven-fold Cause-and-Effect Method and the other method known as Exchanging Self for Others which are described below.

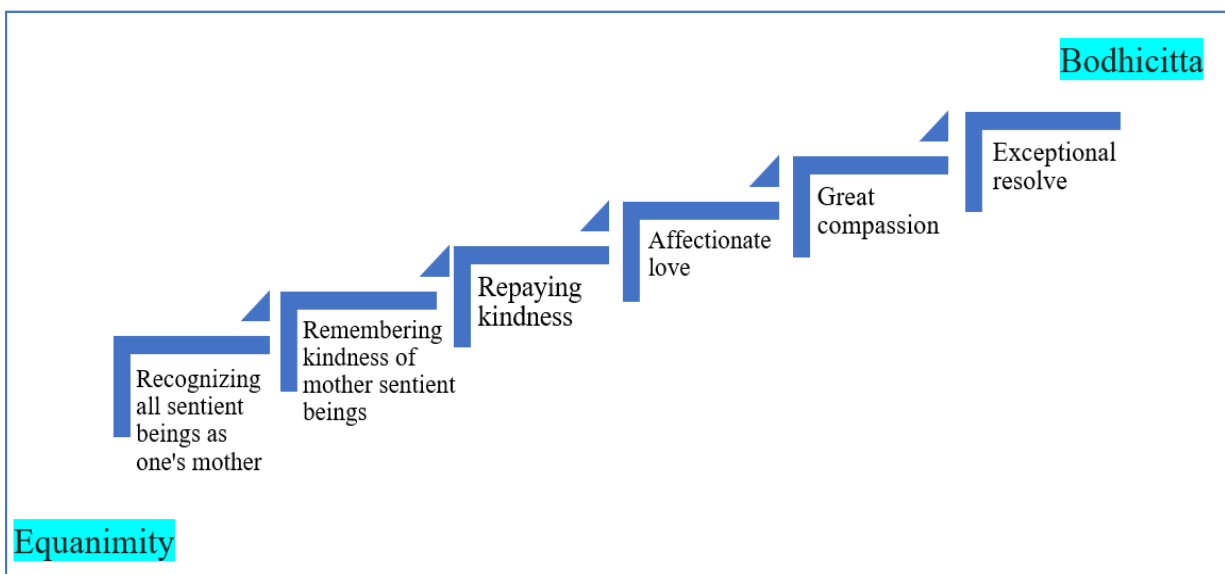
Equanimity in the Sevenfold Cause-And-Effect Method

The seven-part cause and effect method has six steps that act as causes for the seventh, the development of *bodhicitta*. It begins with a preliminary step, not included in the count of seven

steps which is the development of equanimity in which we overcome being biased and partial, being attracted to some, and repulsed by others. Equanimity is facilitated by the understanding that due to countless births everybody at some time has been our friend, enemy, or a stranger. One also contemplates the concept of a beginningless mind- in which one recognizes beings as having an infinitely long mental continuum. For example, if we think of a mosquito with the concept of a beginningless mind, one may reflect that the mosquito is a fly in this lifetime, but may have had previous lifetimes as other beings. This facilitates us to be open and equal to a mosquito as to a human being (Berzin, n.d.). Once one is able, to see all beings with equanimity, the six steps are undertaken in the following order as shown in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20

Role of Equanimity in the Cultivation of Bodhicitta



The seven steps illustrated above are elaborated. If one is reborn countless times, it is evident that one has had many mothers. Thus, the first step in the cultivation of *bodhicitta* is the recognition that all beings may have been our mother at some point or the other. One then reflects on the love and kindness shown to us by these mother-sentient beings. This reflection is not limited to only human beings and is extended to all sentient beings. In the third step, one envisions the present condition of all these beings and begins to develop the desire to help them reduce their suffering. Here one may also reflect that if all sentient beings have been kind to us, one cannot devote oneself

to one's happiness and must try to free all sentient beings from suffering. Out of the third step, emerges the fourth step which pertains to the feeling of love and cherishing all sentient beings. This leads us to compassion, which is the fifth step of *bodhicitta* cultivation. Compassion is the intense wish to reduce others' suffering. In the sixth step, one assumes personal responsibility and resolves to help all sentient beings. Through the culmination of these stages, one may achieve the state of *bodhicitta*. Thus, as seen through the above steps, equanimity is the foundation stone for cultivating *bodhicitta* (Lama & Vreeland, 2008).

Equalizing and Exchanging Self for Others

The other method for bringing about *bodhicitta*, the aspiration to attain the highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, is the method of Exchanging self for others. The practice of exchanging self for others is also known as *Tonglen*. As a preliminary to *Tonglen*, one first has to meditate on equanimity, as the attitude of impartiality toward all beings. Cultivating equanimity will reduce biases and prejudices, and enable one to cherish all beings. After the cultivation of equanimity, the *Tonglen* practice is initiated as the exchanging of self with others, of taking and giving. During this meditation, one visualizes taking on themselves and absorbing all the sufferings of sentient beings with in-breath, and with the out-breath, one visualizes happiness to all sentient beings. Thus, as seen in the above practices, equanimity reduces our biases and prejudices and enables our altruism to reach out to all sentient beings (Rinpoche, n.d.).

In summary, in Buddhism, equanimity or *Upekkha* is described in a multi-faceted way. *Upekkha* refers to the state of mind that is not swayed by biases and preferences and leans towards neither pleasure nor pain. Equanimity in Buddhism also entails having an equal attitude towards all beings, without any bias, discrimination, and prejudices. Equanimity is also noted as one of the four *brahma-viharas* or divine abodes of mind. Various analytical contemplations and methods such as Vipassana, In the Mahayana traditions, the cultivation of equanimity also plays a significant role in the facilitation of *Bodhicitta* i.e., universal compassion.

Similarities & differences between Equanimity as conceptualized in the Gita and Buddhism

In both the conceptualizations from the text of the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist philosophy, equanimity is understood as a higher ideal virtue comprising of even-mindedness, which counters clinging and aversion. In Bhagavad Gita, equanimity is understood in context of even-mindedness

towards objects, experiences (happiness-sorrow) as well as towards all living beings. In Buddhism, equanimity is elaborated in more detail and ten types of equanimity have been described.

Both the Eastern traditions emphasize the inter-personal dimension of equanimity by focusing on qualities such as reduced bias and an equal attitude towards all. The Buddhist tradition also emphasizes equanimity as a *Brahma-vihara* promoting the aspect of being even-minded towards all beings irrespective of race, gender and nationality. The verses of the Gita also emphasize that with insight into the underlying unitary consciousness, an individual will treat alike a friend, enemy and a stranger. Similar analytical methods have been proposed in the Buddhist tradition where one reflects on the automatic classification of people as friends, enemies and strangers and comes to the realization that these classifications are arbitrary and based on self-serving attitudes. Thus, in both the Eastern traditions, the inter-personal dimension of equanimity has been emphasized as treating all living beings equally. One of the main differences between the two traditions noted is that in Buddhism, a lot of emphasis has been placed on compassion and its linkages with equanimity especially in the Mahayana traditions.

Another similarity observed in both the traditions is the focus on the insight into transience/impermanence and its relation with equanimity. The verses from the Bhagavad Gita illustrate that the awareness that sensations of happiness/distress are transitory and lead to endurance or *Titiksha*. Similarly, in the Buddhist tradition the technique of *Vipassana* also focuses on the concept of impermanence known as *Anicca* where meditators reflect on impermanence. Thus, in both the Bhagavad Gita and in Buddhism, the role of insight into transience is highlighted.

A key cultivation practice emphasized in both the traditions is the reduction of attachments. Shri Krishna suggests that one should focus on the work and not on the outcomes related to the work. Similarly in Buddhism, it is suggested that attachments to both material objects as well as individuals should be reduced. Various health and spiritual implications of cultivating *Samatva* have been enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita such as peace, reduced suffering, self-realization and liberation from bondage. In the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, the cultivation of equanimity goes beyond the individual benefits and is linked to the facilitation of *Bodhicitta* i.e., universal compassion.

In summary, it is noted that the conceptualizations of equanimity from the Bhagavad Gita and in Buddhism are analogous. The next chapter describes the findings from the interviews with the thirty experts.