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MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES IN BHAGAVAD GITA: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

There are several useful principles, practises and philosophy in Gita for effective management. There are specific sources for management that address issues pertaining to self, self-mastery and self-assessment. There are also specific suggestions on the leadership traits. Bhagavad Gita as ancient Indian text offers a unique value proposition. We can have spiritual progress and material progress too in a very balanced way. All the aspects of management have been covered in Gita. There are greater management principles and practises which can be applied in a variety of management situations all the time. The teachings of Gita become long lasting impact on ever changing concept of management.

KEYWORDS

Bhagavad Gits, management.

INTRODUCTION

In this modern world, the art of Management has become a part and parcel of everyday life, be it at home, in the office or factory and in Government. In all organizations, where a group of human beings assemble for a common purpose irrespective of caste, creed, and religion, management principles come into play through the management of resources, finance and planning, priorities, policies and practice. Management is a systematic way of carrying out activities in any field of human effort. Management need to focus more on leadership skills, e.g., establishing vision and goals, communicating the vision and goals, and guiding others to accomplish them. It also asserts that leadership must be more facilitative, participative and empowering in how visions and goals are established and carried out. Some people assert that this really is not a change in the management functions and rather it's re-emphasizing certain aspects of management.

Its task is to make people capable of joint performance and to make their weaknesses irrelevant, says The Father of Scientific Management Peter Drucker. It creates harmony in working together - equilibrium in thoughts and actions, goals and achievements, plans and performance, products and markets. It resolves situations of scarcity, be they in the physical, technical or human fields, through maximum utilization with the minimum available processes to achieve the goal. Lack of management causes disorder, confusion, wastage, delay, destruction and even depression. Managing men, money and materials in the best possible way, according to circumstances and environment, is the most important and essential factor for a successful management.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Study and understand management principles applied in Gita.
2. To analyse the various management techniques and tools used such as crisis management, motivational tools and stress management in holy text of Gita.
3. To know these principles have any application in modern era of management.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Gita is the great epic storey in *Mahabharata*. With nearly one hundred thousand verses divided into eighteen books, it is one of the longest epic poems in the world and three times longer than the Bible. It is in fact a whole library of stories that exerted a tremendous influence on the people and literature of India. The struggle is between two groups of cousins, the Pandavas or sons of Pandu, and the Kauravas. The central story of the *Mahabharata* is a conflict over succession to the throne of Hastinapura, a kingdom just north of modern Delhi that was the ancestral realm of a tribe most commonly known as the Bharatas. (India was at that time divided amongst many small, and often warring, kingdoms.)

However, Pandu renounces the throne, and Dhritarashtra assumes power after all. The sons of Pandu—Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva—grow up together with their cousins, the Kauravas. Due to enmity and jealousy, the Pandavas are forced to leave the kingdom when their father dies. During their exile, they jointly marry Draupadi and befriend their cousin Krishna, who from then on accompanies them. They return and share sovereignty with the Kauravas, but have to withdraw to the forest for thirteen years when Yudhishtira loses all his possessions in a game of dice with Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas. When they return from the forest to demand their share of the kingdom back, Duryodhana refuses. This means war. Krishna acts as counselor to the Pandavas. The Gita is found right here with the two armies facing each other and ready for battle. The battle rages for eighteen days and ends with the defeat of the Kauravas. All the Kauravas died and only the five Pandava brothers and Krishna survive.

It is within this enormous epic well less than one percent of the *Mahabharata* that we find the Bhagavad Gita, or the Song of the Lord, most commonly referred to simply as the Gita. It is found in the sixth book of the epic, just before the great battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The greatest hero of the Pandavas, Arjuna, has pulled up his chariot in the middle of the battlefield between the two opposing armies. He is accompanied by Krishna, who acts as his charioteer. In a fit of despondency, Arjuna throws down his bow and refuses to fight, deploring the immorality of the coming war.

The situation is extremely grave. A great kingdom is about to self-destruct in internecine warfare, making a mockery of dharma, the eternal moral laws and customs that govern the universe. Arjuna's objections are well founded. He is the victim of a moral paradox. On the one hand, he is facing persons who, according to dharma, deserve his respect and veneration. It is, seemingly, a dilemma without solution. It is this state of moral confusion that the Gita sets out to mend.

When Arjuna refuses to fight, Krishna has no patience with him. The Krishna changes his attitude and start teaching the mysteries of dharmic action in this world. He introduces Arjuna to the structure of the universe, the concepts of prakriti, primordial nature, and the three gunas, the properties that are active in prakriti. Then he takes Arjuna on a tour of philosophical ideas and ways of salvation. He discusses the nature of theory and action, the importance of ritual, the ultimate principle, Brahman, all the while gradually disclosing his own nature as the highest god.

This part of the Gita culminates in an overwhelming vision. Krishna allows Arjuna to see his supernal form, the Vishvarupa, which strikes terror into Arjuna's heart. The rest of the Gita deepens and supplements the ideas presented before the epiphany—the importance of self-control and faith, of equanimity and unselfishness, but above all, of bhakti, or devotion. Krishna explains to Arjuna how he can obtain immortality by transcending the properties which qualify not only primordial matter, but also human character and behaviour. Krishna also emphasizes the importance of doing one's duty, declaring that it is better to do one's own duty without distinction than to do another's duty well.

In the end, Arjuna is convinced. He picks up his bow and is ready to fight. The first is that the Gita is a conversation within a conversation. Dhritarashtra begins it by asking a question and that is the last we hear out of him. He is answered by Sanjaya, who relates what is happening on the battlefield. It is actually more dramatic and wondrous than the previous sentence indicates. Dhritarashtra is blind. Vyasa, his father, offers to restore his sight so he can follow the battle. Dhritarashtra declines this boon, feeling that seeing the carnage of his kinsmen would be more than he could bear. So instead, Vyasa bestows clairvoyance and clairaudience upon Sanjaya, Dhritarashtra's minister and charioteer. As they sit in their palace, Sanjaya relates what he sees and hears on the distant battlefield.

Sanjaya pops up now and again throughout the book as he relates to Dhritarashtra the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. This second conversation is a bit one-sided, as Krishna does almost all of the talking. Thus, Sanjaya describes the situation, Arjuna asks the questions, and Krishna gives the answers.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

There is an important distinction between effectiveness and efficiency in management. Effectiveness is doing the right things. Efficiency is doing things right. The general principles of effective management can be applied in every field, the differences being more in application than in principle. The Manager's functions can be summed up as:

- Forming a vision
- Planning the strategy to realize the vision.
- Cultivating the art of leadership.
- Establishing institutional excellence.
- Building an innovative organization.
- Developing human resources.
- Building teams and teamwork.
- Delegation, motivation, and communication.
- Reviewing performance and taking corrective steps when called for.

Thus, management is a process of aligning people and getting them committed to work for a common goal to the maximum social benefit - in search of excellence. Major functions of a manager are planning, organizing, leading and coordinating activities -- they put different emphasis and suggest different natures of activities in the following four major functions. The critical question in all managers' minds is how to be effective in their job. The answer to this fundamental question is found in the Bhagavad-Gita, which repeatedly proclaims that "you must try to manage yourself." The reason is that unless a manager reaches a level of excellence and effectiveness, he or she will be merely a face in the crowd.

GITA IS AN ART OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The first chapter ends with the title of "Arjuna's vishad yoga". The closest English word to vishad is despair. Depression and crisis come close too. Can vishad be yoga? The more I think of it, the more I feel that perhaps this is the best way to manage a crisis. . There is a crisis inside of a crisis. War is a crisis itself. The Pandavas and the Kauravas are at the beginning of a war. The formalities have been completed. The war has been declared. But, Arjuna goes numb. He does not want to fight. He has put down his bow and is prepared to die. The view that Gita is presenting here is that every crisis has a hidden opportunity for growth. A crisis has occurred. If you have come across a crisis, you can relate to it as well. So, a crisis creates an opportunities. What happens in any crisis is that the comfort zone is lost. Crisis is not hard to find. It happens all around us. Sometimes it is a car accident and sometimes it is death in the family. Sometimes one is fired from a job and sometimes business goes bankrupt. We live and die through multitude of crisis situations. Vishad can be an opportunity for growth. And this can only happen if you can keep your awareness and alertness fully ready. Normally, when a crisis happens, we lose our mind and create another crisis and so on. Why me? What did I do wrong in my past life? God is angry with me. If we can get past these approaches, then anything is possible. Even sky is not the limit. If you can keep you cool and deal with the crisis as a situation (and not as a problem), vishad can lead to yoga and it can become the path towards the center. Crisis is a situation, crisis is easy to find and crisis can bring revolution in one's life.

GITA IS A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Arjun was successful individual. After Bhagavad-Gita he becomes more successful. There are many aspects of Gita that contributed to his success. Let us understand the Karma Yoga in brief here. There are many definitions of yoga. Krishna's definition is so practical. Yoga should make us work efficiently. How do we bring efficiency in our work? There are several modern concepts of how to become efficient. It usually revolves around decreasing waste and increasing productivity. Lean thinking is one of the concepts of reducing waste. Krishna's karma yoga deals with these issues right here in Bhagavad-Gita. Let us try to explore it. Let us recapitulate on two important aspects of Karma Yoga:

1. Results are not in our hand
2. Accepting of results

Krishna talks about the fact that the results are not in our hand. People often conclude that we should not worry about results. I differ from this conclusion for several reasons. So, what is Krishna talking about? He is simply saying that results are not totally in your hand. Result depends upon other factors as well as the effort that you make. It is a fact of life. There is no advice here. Krishna is changing the focus of our work. Most of us are result oriented people. We spend most of our energy worrying about the results. Krishna wants to bring that focus on the preparation and the work itself. The result depends on our work and other factors. Krishna knows about the other factors as well. Divine forces or call it luck factor is one of them. No effort of nishkam karma is wasted and there are no obstacles (pratyavaya) in the path of nishkam karma. Nishkama karma protects one from the greatest fear. The divine supports people who flow with the current. Efficiency is increased because the focus is on the process and on the produce. All the energy is directed to the work. The divine factors are in line and hence the result has to be the best possible possibility.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress at work, Stress at home, Stress in relations, Stress in family life, we all suffer from some or the other form of stress in life. Stress has become the most common word in our fast day to day life. In our daily life everyone suffers from stress at some point or the other. Stress can be due to workplace pressures, tensions in relationships etc. etc. Stress normally disturbs our physical and mental health. Due to stress a person fails to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats to the organism.

Common stress symptoms include irritability, muscular tension, inability to concentrate and a variety of physical reactions, such as headaches and accelerated heart beat. Otherwise stress can also cause backache, insomnia, fatigue, hypertension, eating disorder etc. So it is very clear that stress can create havoc with your life. So it is imperative that we need to be cool & calm in life. Stress needs to be avoided in all cases in life. Now how can a person remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances so that he/she never experiences any stress?

If we want to come out of stress in life then first of all we need to change our lifestyle. First & foremost thing is that we need to be peaceful at mind in all circumstances. For that we should be satisfied with what we have at present. Let's try to be happy & try to enjoy what we are having at present. Do not hanker your mind always after those things which are not very easy to attain in life & are beyond one's reach. It also says how to make harmonious relations with the people all around you. Be friendly with your relations & people around you at workplace. Once you are able to do that then you shall find that you are better off & much peaceful. Other than this, just enjoy your work. If you shall enjoy your work than considering it a burden, then also most of your stress shall leave you as a person's mind engrossed in work has little to think about other things in life. Once you are peaceful at mind then stress shall leave you. Finally as per teachings of "Bhagwat Gita", we need to be happy with our present state of life & should not hanker after the material desires.

MOTIVATION

When you are motivated in life, you are able to do everything in life with ease & enthusiasm? When you are motivated in life, success follows you in life. But when our mind gets depressed, dejected, de-motivated, life seems impossible & we are not able to lead life enthusiastically & as a result we do not succeed in life. We may be physically fit with blood gushing in our nerves, but if we are not well with our mind then we are certainly not going to perform to our full

potential. Mental health is where the key to success lies. If we are mentally supercharged then we can achieve any milestone, in spite of having any physical inadequacy. One can never succeed & be victorious in life if he feels himself, defeated at mind.

In the ancient Kurukshetra war, "Arjuna" the great disciple of "Lord Sri Krishna" also came into such a de-motivated & dejected state of mind. In that war "Arjuna" refused to do his duty of fighting a righteous battle as he got infatuated & started thinking of his enemies as his own near & dear ones. His mind became weak & highly de-motivated. He told his master "Lord Sri Krishna" that he is going away from the war & do not want to fight on the battle field. Arjuna's mental health became weak & he got deeply depressed

Now to overcome his disciple Arjuna's depression & to motivate him to fight a righteous war, "Lord Sri Krishna" gave the great teachings of "Bhagwat Gita" to his disciple "Arjuna". After listening to all these great teachings, Arjuna's mental health became well & he became motivated & energetic to fight the war. Bhagwat Gita explains that one should do one's duty equi-poised or to have the equanimity of mind, without caring & renouncing all attachment to success or failure. If one does one's duty efficiently & with single minded devotion, without any fear of success or failure in his/her endeavour, then certainly that person shall succeed in his/her work, as he/she is doing that work without any fear of success or failure. His/her mind shall be at peace & ease while doing such work without any fear of success or failure. Any person, whose mind is at peace, certainly works effectively.

By the teachings of Lord Krishna, weakness of mind of Arjuna was gone & he became motivated. Below is a verse of Bhagwat Gita in which Arjuna acknowledges that his weakness of mind has gone & that he is now motivated to do his duty of fighting a just & righteous war. The defeated & de-motivated mind of Arjuna became good & motivated by the teachings of Bhagwat Gita. Similarly we can also come out of the state of depression, de-motivation & dejection by reading the teachings of Bhagwat Gita. These teachings show us how to do our duty properly & how to lead a good life. So let's all follow the great teachings of Bhagwat Gita as told by Lord Sri Krishna Himself to Arjuna. These teachings are as much relevant in fast day to day life of ours today as these were in ancient times.

So let yourself always be motivated in life. Let enthusiasm, vigor be there in your life & let you stay motivated in the face of challenges of life. Such an attitude shall always keep away the negativity in your life. Do not have regrets in life & move on in all the situations, as with such an attitude you shall quickly go ahead in your career. Always feel good about yourself & never let have negative thoughts in your life. Positive thoughts in life shall increase your self-esteem & that shall keep you motivated. Also enjoy a harmonious life at home & in society as it always keeps one's mind motivated in life. A motivated life shall let you accomplish much more & have greater success in life.

MANAGEMENT LESSONS - OLD TRUTHS IN A NEW CONTEXT

The Bhagavad-Gita, written thousands of years ago, enlightens us on all managerial techniques leading us towards a harmonious and blissful state of affairs in place of the conflict, tensions, poor productivity, and absence of motivation and so on, common in most of Indian enterprises today – and probably in enterprises in many other countries. The modern (Western) management concepts of vision, leadership, motivation, excellence in work, achieving goals, giving work meaning, decision making and planning, are all discussed in the Bhagavad-Gita. There is one major difference. While Western management thought too often deals with problems at material, external and peripheral levels, the Bhagavad-Gita tackles the issues from the grass roots level of human thinking. Once the basic thinking of man is improved, it will automatically enhance the quality of his actions and their results.

UTILIZATION OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The first lesson of management science is to choose wisely and utilize scarce resources optimally. During the curtain raiser before the Mahabharata War, Duryodhana chose Sri Krishna's large army for his help while Arjuna selected Sri Krishna's wisdom for his support. This episode gives us a clue as to the nature of the effective manager - the former chose numbers, the later, wisdom. An effective work culture is about vigorous and arduous efforts in pursuit of given or chosen tasks. Sri Krishna elaborates on two types of work culture – divine work culture and demonic work culture. Divine work culture - involves fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice, straightforwardness, self-denial, calmness, absence of fault-finding, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy and pride. Demonic work culture - involves egoism, delusion, personal desires, improper performance, work not oriented towards service. Mere work ethic is not enough. The hardened criminal exhibits an excellent work ethic. What is needed is a work ethic conditioned by ethics in work. The calm mind in the face of failure will lead to deeper introspection and see clearly where the process went wrong so that corrective steps could be taken to avoid shortcomings in future. The principle of reducing our attachment to personal gains from the work done is the Gita's prescription for attaining equanimity.

WORK RESULTS

The Gita further explains the theory of "detachment" from the extrinsic rewards of work in saying: If the result of sincere effort is a success, the entire credit should not be appropriated by the doer alone. If the result of sincere effort is a failure, then the entire blame does not accrue to the doer. The former attitude mollifies arrogance and conceit while the latter prevents excessive despondency, de-motivation and self-pity. Thus both these dispositions safeguard the doer against psychological vulnerability, the cause of the modern managers' companions of diabetes, high blood pressure and ulcers. Assimilation of the ideas of the Gita leads us to the wider spectrum of general welfare but there is also another dimension to the work ethic - if the service is blended with devotion, then the work itself becomes worship, a service for its own sake. Along with devotion yoga as a means of liberation, the Gita espouses the doctrine of pure action untainted by hankering after the fruits resulting from that action.

DEFEATISM & VICTORY IN LIFE

If one feels like a defeated person in life then the battle of life is lost for that person. So we should not let our mind delve into the state of depression, de-motivation & dejection. We should never let our mind feel defeated as then there is no positive meaning of life. You can never succeed & be victorious in life if you feel yourself defeated at mind.

In the ancient Kurukshetra war, "Arjuna" the great disciple of "Lord Sri Krishna" also came into such a de-motivated & dejected state of mind. In that war "Arjuna" refused to do his duty of fighting a righteous battle as he got infatuated & started thinking of his enemies as his own near & dear ones. His mind became weak & highly de-motivated. He told his master "Lord Sri Krishna" that he is going away from the war & do not want to fight on the battle field. Arjuna's mental health became weak & he got deeply depressed. To overcome his disciple Arjuna's depression & to motivate him to fight a righteous war, "Lord Sri Krishna" gave the great teachings of "Bhagwat Gita" to his disciple "Arjuna". After listening to all these great teachings, Arjuna's mental health became well & he became motivated & energetic to fight the war.

So it is seen above, how the defeated & de-motivated mind of Arjuna became good & motivated by the teachings of Bhagwat Gita. Similarly we can also come out of the state of depression, de-motivation & dejection by reading the teachings of Bhagwat Gita. These teachings show us how to do our duty properly & how to lead a good life. So let's all follow the great teachings of Bhagwat Gita as told by Lord Sri Krishna Himself to Arjuna. These teachings are as much relevant in fast day to day life of ours today as these were in ancient times.

CONCLUSION

There are several useful principles, practises and philosophy in Gita for effective management. There are specific sources for management that address issues pertaining to self, self-mastery and self-assessment. There are also specific suggestions on the leadership traits. *Bhagavad Gita* as ancient Indian text offers a unique value proposition. We can have spiritual progress and material progress too in a very balanced way. All the aspects of management have been covered in Gita. There are greater management principles and practises which can be applied in a variety of management situations all the time. The teachings of Gita become long lasting impact on ever changing concept of management.

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