



Bhagavad Gita and Management

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Abstract

Bhagavad Gita contains several slokas of much significance to the art and science of management and administration. The main theme of "Management and Bhagavad Gita" is man's bounden duties and their efficient accomplishment to help attain the ultimate goal. The philosophy of management and the Gita propound that all human actions are directed towards a goal and that man will not relent unless and until he attains the goal. Management is getting things done by others. It is only through direction, coordination, motivation and leadership one can lead others to attainment of the goal. This is exactly what SriKrishna did in the case of Arjuna in metamorphosing him into a spirited karma yogi. Action is a natural process while idleness is unnatural. To be active is an enchanting experience. Man may be inherently idle. But he can be stimulated to reach his highest potentials. Modern management is more concerned about productive potentials and spiritual efficiency - spiritual efficiency is the underlying factor in prosperity. According to Gita, yoga is efficiency in action. Spirituality is the energy behind every success. The quality of work, in fact, is the reflection of spiritual efficiency. It is this spiritual efficiency reflected in the quality of work that brings prosperity. Bhagavad Gita beautifully blends the man of action and man of wisdom. Their convergence brings success, development and prosperity. In the modern cyber age, we integrate Human Resource Management (HRM) and Information Technology (IT) for facilitating managerial effectiveness. In modern days; we have to transform our society's impotent idleness into energized entrepreneurship. Bhagavad Gita is capable in inspiring the idle to be o spirited karma yogis, in revolutionizing the worshippers of idleness into warriors of action.

Key Words : Management –Bhagavat Gita – effective management – human resource managemet

I. Introduction

The history of management is as old as the history of mankind. Man has been managing his multifarious activities from time immemorial with tact and knack. Most slokas in Bhagavad Gita contain great ideas of modern management.

They include planning, direction, communication, coordination, motivation, leadership etc. Right from the first *sloka*, *dharmaksetre kuruksethre*, to the last one ending with the term *matir mama* is of significance to management and administration. Duties and



responsibilities are important in management. Bhagavad Gita, all along speaks about one's own duty (mama *dharma*) and bounden duty (swadharma). All actions should be goal-oriented and those actions should be reinforced with dharma (righteousness). There should be ethics and values in business and profession. Gita contains 700 *slokas*. Of the total 18 chapters, chapters 3, 6, 12 and 18 are of particular importance in regard to management,

Management is essentially man - management. The important task of the manager is to manage the mind of the people around him and the minds are often turbulent. In modern parlance, management (syllabi zed MAN-AGE-ME-NT) is a process of motivating and directing. Man is the first syllable of management. The aim of management is to attain the goal in an efficient manner (AGE) by transforming each person into a motivated entrepreneur (ME) to undertake his own bounden duties, i.e. the natural task (NT).

MANAGEMENT

MAN: The natural man

AGE : Accomplishment of Goal Efficiently

ME : Motivated Entrepreneur

NT : Natural Task

II. Indian Traditional Management

India is an ancient country with a great tradition and a rich treasury of knowledge. It may sound odd that there is lack of management philosophy in such a country. We have illustrious ideas of management scattered in the various epics of yore. We Indians, with western bias and Meccaulian mindset fail to trace out the treasures of knowledge lying aplenty in Mahabharat, Ramayana, Arthashastra, Nitisastra,

Sukraneethi, Viduravakya, Yogavasishta etc. In 700 verses across eighteen chapters, Bhagavad Gita contains beautiful ideas of management principles. All the 700 verses are interpreted to be of immense interest to our modern management gurus.

Management is a man-making gospel according to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. To his disciple Swami Vivekananda, it is a people building philosophy. Modern management can be considered as the karma yoga of kaliyuga. Management is an art, science or a craft of converting an idle man to a motivated entrepreneur, Carrying out his natural task and accomplishing the goal in the most efficient manner. In Gita perspective, management can be defined as a process of making an alarming person (inactive idle man) a spirited karma yogi for attaining his ultimate goal (moksha) through a dharmic way of doing things. Dharma, karma, yajna and sreya are its pre-requisites. The teachings of Bhagavad Gita will be of immense help to modern managers in attaining their goal in an efficient manner. Gita is thus a guide to good management.

III. Bhagavad Gita and Management: The Linkage

III (A) Getting Things Done by Others

Management is the art of getting things done by others. It directs and motivates the persons towards the set goals. It persuades others to cooperate and coordinate their efforts in achieving the pre-set goals. The style adopted by the modern management is to inspire the idle minds so as to be pro active. Gita does exactly the same. It stimulated the deluded Arjuna and transformed him into a spirited karma yogi. The relentless actions of the subordinates help reach the goals easily. The *kadopanishaidic* principle



- “awake, arise, stop not, till the goal is reached” becomes a pertinent management principle.

III (B) Arjuna Vishada Yoga Vs Peter Principle

Core competence and competitive advantage are two terms which are currently discussed across the globe. According to Peter Principle, in an organization, there are certain people who cannot perform because of their inherent incapability. Such people when promoted to higher posts “tend to become incompetent to carry out their job”. It will create a situation where “an employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence”. Arjuna never had any inherent weakness. But in a difficult situation, he proved the product of the environment and a slave to the situation, thereby showing symptoms of incompetence

III (C) Efficiency in Action

Several management experts have attempted to study the attitudinal changes of workers in order to activate and motivate them to become efficient entrepreneurs. Motivation is the process of impelling the idle and inactive into dynamic action. Lord Krishna applied this motivational technique to transform the deluded Arjuna into a spirited karma yogi. In this context SriKrishna advises Arjuna to get rid of *klaibhyam*. *Klaibhyam* in Sanskrit means unmanliness, or chicken heartedness. SriKrishna inspires Arjuna and exhorts him to arise and awake, true to the spirit of a warrior. Waging war is the natural task of a *ksatriya*. It is his bounden duty to fight to the finish. He has to undertake this assigned task with due sense of pride and privilege, with a sense of service and sacrifice (*yajna bhavana*). He should overpower and annihilate the enemy for the protection of the fellow beings, for the welfare

and well-being of the society (*loka samgraha mevapi*). He has to do his bounden duties with dexterity, with utmost efficiency (*kausalam*). *Yoga Karmasu Kausalam* says the Gita meaning *efficiency in action is yoga*.

III (D) Work; as Natural as a Game

Gita says that for human beings work is a natural phenomenon. Nobody can remain idle. Lord Krishna says that even if one is assigned no specific duty in these three worlds, he does his duties himself continuously. Krishna suggests that if one remains idle, those who follow him also tend to remain idle. In modern management, every work is as natural as a game. Work is an enchanting experience. The entertainment part of the work will prompt every person to work hard. The sportive spirit in the game keeps off boredom. It is true that management perceives man as inherently idle. But every effort is taken to transform his basic passiveness (immaturity) to activity (maturity) says Chris Argiris in his Maturity-Immaturity theory of Motivation. With regard to relentless work, worshipful work, devotion to duty, natural task etc. there is not much difference between Bhagavad Gita and modern management.

III (E) Productivity and Prosperity

Modern management is more concerned with productivity and prosperity. These are achieved through planning, direction, motivation coordination etc. These actions are generally called management functions. According to modern management principles, goal can be achieved through coordination of efforts. Bhagavad Gita also emphasizes this aspect emphasising that prosperity (*sreyas*) can be attained through cooperation (*parasparam*



bhavayantha). If one does this natural duty with devotion and dedication, Gita says, one can attain not only growth and development, but also success (*vijayam*), prosperity (*sree*) and progress. Spirituality is the energy behind every success.

III (F) Well-being of the Society

Often we do our duty for self-development and self-satisfaction. Gita says, if we do not perform our duties properly even the protection of our body is not possible. Besides self-development, one has to aim at developing the society too. Gita argues that one has to do his duties for the welfare and well being of the society (*lokasamgrahamevapi*). In this context, the words of Robert Owen (UK 1771-1858), the Father of Personnel Management is noteworthy. He said, "Management is a philosophy for human welfare development" to quote FW Taylor (USA 1856-1951) "the principal object of management should be to ensure maximum prosperity to the individual.

III (G) Total Quality Management

There are several synonymous ideas in Bhagavad Gita which are tantamount to the TQM. A spiritually charged person can never remain idle. He will pursue his goal and not stop till the goal is reached. He is conscious about the quality of his work. This mind set leads him to perfection and excellence. Ethics or righteousness is very vital in any activity. It is the ethics in work that maintains the quality of the work. According to modern management work + ethic = efficiency. Gita says, the dexterity in action is yoga (*Yogasu karmasu kausalam*). The action that is reinforced with ethics is called efficient action. This is really a value addition to the natural task.

III (H) Man of Wisdom and Man of Action

Modern management beautifully blends the knowledge, skill and experience for attaining the goal. Action and wisdom are two wings on which one can fly sky high in their performance. In management, brainpower and bran power are blended beautifully. In Bhagavad Gita, Vyasa visualized this convergence in the most scientific manner. In the last sloka, *Yathra yogeswara krishno yathra partho dhanurdhara*, for success growth and prosperity, the man of action (*dhanurdharas*) and the man of wisdom (*yogeswaras*) are to be in harmony. In the cyber age, we integrate HRM and IT which are very important in management

III (I) Manifestation of Perfection

Man and his mind are two important factors for prosperity. The mood and motive propel man into action. Action leads to achievement. What we perceive as progress in this world is the manifestation of human actions. It is the expression of one's behaviour. Action is one way of expression. Education according to Swami Vivekananda is the manifestation of perfection within man. It should not be the manifestation of perversion. An integrated approach to human life, a holistic living, is what takes us to the path of perfection. We Indians, right from the period of *Upanishad*, are the worshippers of perfection which leads us to spirituality and prosperity.

An economic policy aims at the progress and prosperity of the people. It can never be anti-people, but has to be always pro-people and people friendly. It should be aimed at the welfare and well being of the society. Gita as a philosophy of prosperity perceives growth, prosperity and firm policy to the people. It aims at the welfare of one and all. The interests of



the have and the have-not, the rich and the poor, are all taken into consideration. The course of action followed is cooperation, coordination and collective responsibility.

III (J) Lift Thyself by Thyself

Bhagavad Gita preaches the philosophy of self-management. Gita's philosophy is to keep everybody independent, self-contented, self-stimulated and self-motivated. Development through self-development is the policy of Gita. Gita says that we have to raise ourselves, by ourselves. Do not depend on others. We ourselves are our friends and we ourselves are our enemies too (*Udharet atman atmanam na atmanam avasadayet*). We ourselves create our own hell and heaven for us. Never blame others and never pass the buck. Do your duty, take up your responsibility. Do not shirk duties. Do your duties in a selfless manner with a sense of service.

III (K) Gita and the Cyber-age Challenges

The modern concept of cybernetic is not alien or averse to India. India is the land where everyone prays "*akhandamandalakaram vyaptam yena characharam*" which means the supreme power which is widespread the entire world over. This traditional Indian concept is akin to the modern World Wide Web (www). In modern times we find a visible shift in paradigms. Majority of them are modifications of earlier concepts or a natural transformation of ideas. Very often there occurs a positive change on an idea well conceived in our ancient scriptures. For example, the new phrase of 'global village' and 'globe as a small village' was well-

conceived millenniums back by our forefathers as *vasudhaiva kudumbakam*, which means world is one family. *Bharthruhari* in his famous book *Nitisathaka* also mentioned this concept beautifully as *yatra viswam bhavat eka needam*, which means world has become a bird's nest. The new concept of knowledge society was also not unknown to our ancestors. The ideas conceived by the Great Guru Vyasa still hold good in modern management and other disciplines.

The new age technologies, no doubt, have given a new impetus to modern life. They have given the required order and speed to life. They have helped human efforts a lot. But never did it replace the human head, heart or hand. For all our achievements, human actions are highly essential. But we have to transform the casual aimless actions into conscious ones. In the modern times, one has to convert efforts into endeavour, efficiency, effectiveness and finally into excellence. As Gita puts it efficiency in action (*karmasu kausala*) is yoga (the ultimate perfection).

Mind is the mechanism, which makes one transform the efforts into excellence. It changes according to the mood and motive. Computer cannot change the mood and motive of an idle mind. It can, at best, carry out the task assigned in a systematic manner at a high speed. Bhagavad Gita and similar other ancient philosophy can activate an idle person into a spirited karma yogi. That is why such philosophies retain their privileged position even now. And that is the relevance of Gita in modern computer age.



III (L) Idle Mind -Devil's Workshop

An idle mind is a devil's workshop. Impotent idleness is on the increase Laziness and lethargy has gripped all walks of life. Idleness is an important problem faced by modern people. Indians always believed in *nishkaama karma* (work without wages. Service without salary) now modern Indian has changed the paradigm into *nisharmakamis* (wages without work, salary without service)

IV. Conclusion

We have to transform our society's impotent idleness to energized entrepreneurship. We have to take the people from passivity to activity. Bhagavad Gita is capable for guiding the lazy people to spirited karmayogis, transforming the worshippers of idleness into warriors of action. Gita imparts strength and stability in the minds of our people for taking up the new challenges of the global economy. We need a balanced and stable mind unaffected by gain or loss, pain or pleasure, praise or contempt, brickbats or bouquets. Such strong willed person can only succeed. Spirituality is the secret of success and that is the strength of Bhagavad Gita. Gita can effectively solve several problems of the present cyber age.

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