

## MANAGEMENT LESSONS FOR THE GEN Z: GOSPEL OF SHRI KRISHNA THROUGH “BHAGAVAD GITA, THE SONG OF LORD

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### ABSTRACT

The millenniums gone by are the testimonies to philosophical rumination, which have manoeuvred the ethical practices of business and management. The content presented is thus, indelible on the papers and minds of people which are held true to the values and ethics apropos to skills for the efficacious management of organisations. The cornerstone of managerial practices that we know, have read and cite, descent deep into the most known religious text of the Indian subcontinent, ‘The Bhagavad Gita’. The roots of all the managerial practices and human behaviours have long been recited in the form of proses and poems in the ‘Song of Lord’. The verses in the holy text, taken as a whole, summarise and frame guidance as to how one should ideally deal with and react to their situations and surroundings, albeit not in a corporate context but in general. This study intends to shine light upon those learnings that modern managers and executive can swot.

**Keywords:** Bhagavad Gita, managerial practices, managers, learnings

### 1. INTRODUCTION

India has given countless contributions to the world that we live in today, and at its summit stands the Bhagavad Gita, or the Holy Gita, a time-tested and ancient epic piece of literature in the first languages, Sanskrit, whose title, when translated, means "The Song of the Divine One" or "The Song of the Lord." It contains seven hundred verses of conversation between Arjuna, the Pandava Prince, and Lord Krishna, in which Lord Krishna opens Arjuna's eyes with his words of wisdom and truth about the principle of living, or "Dharma," and makes Arjuna reconcile with his mental dilemma on the Kurukshetra battlefield. The story circles around Arjuna, who becomes sorrowful when he realises, he must go to war with his relatives and loved ones on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. To aid Arjuna in his moral dilemma, Lord Krishna expounded and preached the Bhagavad Gita, which became a powerful impetus for transformation. This event materialised about five thousand two hundred years ago, and it still has its own impact and importance in this era. The epic has innumerable management tactics indispensable to obtaining mental equilibrium and winning over any crisis. The Bhagavad Gita is often associated with the enhancement of a person's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving a desired objective.

In layman's terms, management is considered as a body of knowledge that empowers entities to handle a wide range of events. Events that involves people, processes, and the surrounding environment to ensure that work is completed efficiently and effectively. To frame it differently, management is defined as a process meant for orienting people and influence them to dedicate themselves to work towards the fulfilment of the common objective. In the pursuit of excellence, an ideal organisation should continually strive to maximise societal welfare while addressing the shared goal. Manager plays an integral role in the fulfilment of the goals of the organization. The manager must ensure that his or her staff work with both effectiveness and efficiency. In every circumstance, a manager needs to maintain equilibrium between all the available resources and their optimum utilization. According to management expert Peter Drucker, the job of management is to make individuals proficient at joint performances, rendering their weaknesses irrelevant. Lack of management leads to chaos, disarray, misuse, obstruction, and destruction.

The current western management ideas of vision, leadership, obtaining goals, excellence in the workplace, motivation, planning, and decision-making are all talked through in the Bhagavad Gita. Whereas western management addresses issues at the surface, or crust level, the Bhagavad Gita addresses issues at the grass roots level of human behaviour and thinking. Once the rudimentary thinking of employees or humans is improved, it will then automatically enhance and uplift the quality of their actions. The Bhagavad Gita is riddled with such lessons on management that any and every management student can have access to them. It provides framework and guidance in the form of verses and chapters, which managers can go through and apply to practical situations requiring action. The prime concern that arises in most managers' subconscious is to enhance their effectiveness in their job. The solution to this underlying question is also answered in the Bhagavad Gita, which repeatedly preaches that "you must try to manage yourself."

Even though it was written many millennia ago, the Bhagavad Gita opens the eyes of people to managerial techniques, herding them away from conflicts, degradation of productivity, tensions, lack of motivation, etc.

Few of the principles that emphasizes on these managerial techniques, have been discussed in the following section.

## 2. EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS

To highlight the significance of the terms “Efficiency” and “Effectiveness”; certain teachings influenced by a few of the principles in the Bhagavad Gita is mentioned below:

“**Effectiveness** is accomplishing the right things.”

“**Efficiency** is doing things right.”

Through a closer study of the Gita, we can deduce that the central issue revolves around doing work (Karma Yoga), with maximum efficiency possible. The established principles of effective management are applicable to every field; the divergence is visible more in the application than in the principle (BG. 3).

Notion of Time

The first lesson given to Arjuna by Shri Krishna was to train his mind towards the notion of time, which is very vital in any field of work. A thorough knowledge of this notion allows managers to feel little to no pressure to fulfil short-term performance objectives and, ideally, to show some devotion to engage in activities and make decisions that attempt to strike a balance between the short and long term (BG 2.11–13)

## 3. PERFORMANCE METRICS AND ASSESSMENT

The biggest setback for modern management is the attitude towards performance metrics and their assessment. One of the greatest teachings of the Bhagavad Gita is growing a good understanding of the risks of existing in this fabricated world of duality and enabling the managers to go above and beyond the plane of duality, i.e., good vs. bad or favourable vs. unfavourable.

Shri Krishna had dedicated much time to this crucial aspect of administering the world of duality. Shri Krishna compels Arjuna to learn to tolerate the fluctuation or the ups and downs that distinguishes the world of duality (तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत) (BG 2.14). Shri Krishna states that building a sense of calmness and composure during difficult times helps bring about a composed and an all-rounding personality (समत्वं योग उच्यते), that is quite an essential characteristic for a leader/manager. If the manager or leader can build a sense of equability as preached in the Gita, the level of leadership will exponentially improve, as will the excellence of management (BG 2.48). The script provide a gist of all the necessary attitudes relating to the world of duality that a manager or leader must inculcate to be progressive and successful in his or her place of work (BG 14.24 & 25).

## 4. WORK AND EFFICIENCY

The meaning and knowledge of work and efficiency are maybe the most substantial concerns that the Bhagavad Gita presents to leaders and managers in today's modern organisations. The elaboration of work, according to the Bhagavad Gita, seems to an unlearned and laid-back reader of the Gita as a perplexing and sometimes objectionable notion. Shri Krishna eloquently preaches the four characteristics of the definition of work:

- The executor has the right to work (कर्मण्येव अधिकारः)
- The executor never has control on outcomes/result of action (मा फलेषु कदाचन)
- The executor never has control on the root cause of the fruit or result of action (मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः)
- There never is a choice to revel in inaction (मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि) (BG 2.47)

Managers may find the idea of doing work without any desire or having sweeping control over outcomes repugnant. All the above characteristics merely mean that we stop looking for outcomes, the result of action, or its fruits during those moments of working time. To simplify this, one can conclude that those characteristics enable individuals to lose themselves in work and enjoy doing so.

There are various concepts that are engulfed under the broad heading of work and efficiency. The following are a few of the concepts or subheadings that fall under the heading:

- Work Commitment:** The dedication to work means "performing the task or work for the sake of it, achieving excellence for its own sake." If a person always calculates the date of his or her promotion or the commission rate before putting in their efforts, they aren't disconnected from the results of their actions. They tend to only work for the extrinsic rewards that may or may not occur. Working solely for the anticipated benefits reduces current task or work performance due to mental agitation or anxiety about the future. Thus, the primary means of effective performance management is simply the work itself. Reaching that state of mind, known as nishkama karma, is the best attitude for work because it keeps ego at bay and prevents distraction from future gains or losses. The mind of an individual can be its own friend or foe, the cause of both liberation and bondage (BG 2.47).
- Work Culture:** An effective work culture requires robustness, health and a never-ending effort in the pursuit of given or taken tasks. Shri Krishna explains the various types of workplace cultures. There are primarily two types of work cultures, which are as follows:

- Daivi Sampat, or Divine Work Culture- It involves sacrifice, calmness, purity, self-control, straight-forwardness, absence of greed, and the riddance of envy (BG 16.5).
- Asuri Sampat, or Demonic Work Culture- It includes personal desires, delusions and egoism and work is not oriented towards the service of the needy (BG 16.5).

Work ethics are required to condition the ideal work environment. It also says "yogah karmasu kausalam" in the suggestion. To break it down, kausalam means skill or technique of work, and yogah as per the Gita, is defined as a never changing equilibrium of mind (BG 2.50).

- (iii) Work Results: The theory of detachment from superficial achievement at work is explained in the Bhagavad Gita by saying:

- If sincere efforts result in success, the executor alone should not be appropriated with the entire credit.
- If sincere efforts result in failure, then the executor should not bear the entire blame either.

The first mentioned attitude reduces conceit and arrogance, while the second does not allow excessive demotivation, despondency, and self-pity. Thus, both mentioned attitudes safeguard the executor against mental weakness and vulnerability, the causes of modern-era managers' illnesses like, ulcers, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Understanding the Gita's ideas can lead people to a broader spectrum of lokasamgraha (general welfare) (BG 3. 20-21), but there is another dimension to work ethic: Assuming the karmayoga (service) (BG 3) is mixed with bhaktiyoga (devotion) (BG 12), then the task itself becomes worship, a sevayoga (service for its own sake) (BG 3.14).

- (iv) Selfless Work: Shri Krishna counselled Arjuna to pick up his weapon and take part in the battle for the betterment of the universe. Shri Krishna reminded Arjuna of the true purpose of war: to bring the world closer to the right way of life (Dharma), not for personal gain or to satisfy one's own greed or desires. Therefore, in a firm, every person should work by setting aside his or her personal interests and working for the organization's interests.
- (v) Work as Identity: According to the Bhagavad Gita, a person's identity cannot be established by his or her caste, colour, or his or her background. However, the identity can be defined by his or her actions and the way he or she interacts with other social members. Keeping this in mind and applying this to a managerial context, an individual's identity is his or her capabilities, the work they do, and their behaviour with their subordinates, superiors, and other peers.

## 5. MOTIVATION AND SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

It has been hypothesised for many decades that satisfying the rudimentary needs of workers, i.e., sufficient food, appropriate clothing, stable shelter, etc., is the formula for motivation. Employees and managers, on the other hand, have a shared experience of dissatisfaction that is very similar but distinct. This is because of the variation in the levels and composition of the dissatisfaction. It seems true that once the primary needs are more than satisfied, the managers should have few problems contributing to the organisation and society in an optimised manner. But in reality, it doesn't seem to happen in that way.

The idea or theory of self-transcendence and the above-mentioned situation are both propounded in the Gita. This theory involves renunciation of egoism, emphasising work, cooperation, dignity, trust, harmony, and putting others before oneself, potentially setting aside personal basic needs for the higher goal. Ego ruins work, and ego is the centre point around which most motivation theories rotate. Generally, people are more in need of theories pertaining to inspiration than motivation (BG 2.47)

## 6. LEADERSHIP

Among the many critical management skills that exist, there is another one: "leadership". Leadership is the potential to motivate a group of individuals to pool efforts towards a common objective. It is very crucial for a leader to be visionary and ride the wave of progress forward. In the holy scripture, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna, "My strength lies with those who are devoid of personal desires and attachments. O Arjuna, I am the bona fide desire of those, who are not antipathic to righteousness."

It is critical that a leader practise self-excellence, which can be attained primarily by performing one's duties correctly. The Bhagavad Gita preaches about how an individual can attain self-realization and how karma plays an important and inevitable role in shaping our lives (BG 7.11).

## 7. DECISION MAKING & STABLE MIND

A decision is an option. "The need for studying philosophy is to understand one's own mind, not the minds of others," said William Ralph Inge. In the entirety of all the eighteen chapters and seven hundred verses, the Bhagavad Gita consolidates itself into a single teaching, making a single decision. It effectively delivers it through Prince Arjuna and

the parable of war. It does so by capacitating the young prince Arjuna to undertake a spiritual odyssey of self-discovery so that he can grasp the art of making intricate decisions in the face of conflicting and dogmatic values.

In the middle of the war, Lord Krishna preaches to Prince Arjuna that human life is a never-ending battle within the mind and soul; a human must stay focused and stable to be able to analyse the situation and make a sound and reasonable decision to win over the situation.

Additionally, the lessons of decision-making and a stable mind are supported by the lesson of intention. Lord Krishna remarks that intention is the basic root or essence to reach towards the desired goal. Any work that is started with true good intentions always ensures that the desired goals are accomplished. Equivalently, a manager's intention regarding a goal should be transparent and within his reach, which makes him stand out from others, and the medium to reach this is by keeping his mind stable and calm and then proceeding to take effective decisions to win over any and every challenge.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The desolation of Prince Arjuna in the initial chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is very human in nature, and Shri Krishna, by the absolute power of his motivating words, pushes Arjuna's mind from a state of dormancy to that of righteous action. French philosophers name this state "anomie," or, as in the English lexicon, "alienation," as a state of blind faith or self-confidence in the ultimate victory of dharma (ethical action). When Prince Arjuna won over his desolation and got up ready to fight, Shri Krishna gently reminded the prince of the intention of his new-found spirit of extraordinary action, which was never meant for his own benefit, nor for quenching his thirst for desire, but for the good of humanity, with belief in the final victory of ethics over unethical power and of truth over lies. Addressing the temporary failure that visits in crests and troughs, Shri Krishna preaches, "No executor of good ever ends in angst." Each and every action has a result or repercussion. Good steps produce good outcomes, and evil brings about nothing but evil itself.

The Bhagavad Gita conveys the quintessential philosophy of 'Karma'- human actions. Every individual in this universe has their own capability to an immeasurable extent. It is the duty of every person to acknowledge that potential and to strive for excellence in their respective field of work. To reach it one should not be distracted from the right way of living and to not engage oneself into unethical practices. Every person should pursue their goal without concern for the results or the fruits of those actions undertaken. Any individual's identity is from his or her own action, keeping this in mind individuals should begin their relentless search for excellence.

Taking all the illustrations from the Bhagavad Gita as core, managers can easily grasp some simple yet invaluable lessons. Building a right sense of neutrality is a fundamental pre-requisite for discharging one's duty effectively. On the outside this concept might seem like an easy task but it requires deeper contemplation of this concept to understand its intricacies and a firm conviction towards its usefulness. Only out of such dogma one can bring out new behavioural style consistent with the idea. Embracing the comprehensive principle of karma yoga will change the existing corporate pattern into an alternative paradigm for enhancing the quality of management in corporate settings. Creating an alternate paradigm for corporate environment and infusing the teachings into the managerial practice can be the greatest homage we can offer to the sacred text, the Bhagavad Gita.

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