

# Bhagavad Gita And Management

## Abstract

One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is Holy *Gita* which is considered to be one of the first revelations from God. The eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gita* are found in the Bhisma-parva (23-40), of Mahabharata which was compiled by *Veda Vyasa*. Let me bow with folded hands to Indian Maharishi Veda Vyasa, who contributed to the world the "supreme knowledge" through his writings on various sacred texts. *Gita* is one of the most popular and accessible of all Indian scriptures, which is to be studied by anyone interested in Indian philosophy. The *Gita* teaches how one's aim in life can be achieved; howsoever it may be difficult, by doing his duty with devotion, and meditation, integrating many different threads of Indian philosophy. It gives correct solution to all the problems in human life. One has to do his duty as mother looks after a child. Among all the sacred texts of India, the *Gita* greatly influenced the east and the west. Many philosophers, transcendentalists were deeply influenced by its insights, and thousands of individuals struggling with many problems have found comfort and wisdom in its pages. The greatest significance of the *Gita* lies in the fact that it proposes a solution to a central typical problem of human life that presents itself at a certain critical stage of development.

We may say that Arjuna to whom the teaching is addressed is a representative man, and the problem that he faced arose at a certain height of ethical concern in the midst of an actual and symbolic battlefield (Kurukshetra, which is also Dharmakshetra).

The *Gita* gives answers for any problem in any relationship. The best philosophy, spirituality, psychology, religion and yoga are contained in the *Gita*. It begins with Sri Krishna teaching the essence of human being that he is not the body but the immortal soul. The ancient science of life is called the *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* from the great country India that invented the number zero. All dimensions of human life have been explained in this. *Bhagavad-Gita* has, for more than five millennia, served as a guide to liberation through a life of knowledge, devotion, and action without aiming the fruits of attachment to results. The *Gita* teaches the first masterly attempt at harmony and synthesis. Its concern is to help us get out of the problems that we ourselves have created in our own minds. The influence of this most renowned of all the Indian scriptures has spread far beyond its religion of origin to inspire figures as diverse as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Aldus Huxley, C. G. Jung, Max Muller and Charles Wilkins who first translated to English in 1784. Their translations stand out from all the others first of all for its careful faithfulness to the

original language, but also for the extensive tools for understanding. Sri Sanakacharya the great philosopher of India said that, in the 15th chapter, the meaning of not only the entire Gita, but also all that is known in the entirety of the Vedas, is presented briefly and completely. The *Gita* teaches the philosophy of human psychology, how to operate in the world. During times of commotion we may feel unsure, fearful, tense and confused. It comes into our life and gives us spiritual perspective to our attitudes, behaviour and personality. . Almost all the freedom fighters of India strongly believed that they got inspirations and motivation from *Gita*.

The spiritual philosophy and management lessons in this holy book were brought in to light of the world by saints, philosophers and other eminent personalities and they call the *Bhagavad-Gita* the essence of Vedic Literature and a complete guide to practical life. Through the centuries, the sublime and ennobling counsel of the *Gita* has endeared it to truth-seekers of East & West alike. It provides “all that is needed to raise the personality of man to the highest possible level” and self improvement which means self guided improvement in physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotion. Its gospel of devotion to duty, without attachment, has shown the way of life for all men, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, who have sought for light in life. Energy exists in all human beings to fulfil the purpose of the aim of the life. We expect energy to get task done. The Lord Krishna reveals the deep, universal truths of life that speak to the needs and aspirations of everyone which is relevant even today in *Gita*. One has a special mission, a special

realisation, and each one individually can face all the obstacles necessary to make one’s realisation perfect. Always one will see that within him the shadow & the light are equal: you have ability; you have also the negation of this ability. But if one discover a very black hole, a thick shadow, be sure there is somewhere in him a great light. It is up to him to know how to understand the one to realise the other.

Their followers in their respective establishment are continuing their mission by keeping this lantern burning always knowing the wishes of the modern generations. They stress the importance of spiritual and ethical values for corporate and personal success. Maharishi interprets the Indian philosophy, religion and culture for modern day managers so that they may attain excellence in whatever work they are engaged. In the *Gita* Krishna says: “Change your attitude toward work. When you change your attitude (not geared toward rewards) and continue to do your work, you are able to unfold your inner potential and that is freedom and that is happiness all of us are seeking. Otherwise we come to a state where we are just for the gross rewards. Swami Vivekananda said that system of education should aim at character building, achieving strength of mind, expansion of intellect and then only one can stand on one’s own feet. Those people can bring a lasting and transformative effect and will be assets for their family, society and nation.

Arjuna got mentally depressed in the battle field when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight. (Mental health has become a major international public health concern now). On the eve of battle Arjuna is filled

with deep misgivings; he feels to kill his relatives and friends would be a great sin. Lord Krishna says O Arjuna from where has this delusion come? How could this delusion come upon a great person such as you, obstructing the path to heaven? O Arjuna give up this faint-heartedness. This kind of mental weakness is unbecoming to a strong person such as you, shake it off. Arise and fight. (*Gita* 2-2&3). Arjuna said that now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of miserly weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me for certain what is best for me. (*Gita* 2-7). Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me. Sri Krishna says that you speak like a wise person but grieving over something, the wise do not grieve for. (*Gita*.2-11). Furthermore the death of the body does not harm the soul, as the immortal quote of the *Gita* runs. To motivate him the Bhagavad-Gita is preached in the battle field Kurukshetra by Lord Krishna to Arjuna as counselling to do his duty while multitudes of men stood by waiting. Arjuna face the problem of conflict between emotions and intellect. *Gita* teaches Honesty, Sincerity, and Truthfulness etc. *Gita* also shows how *challenge as an opportunity to find the way to success, it only depends on you and you are your own alchemist.*

The *Gita* was delivered by Sri Krishna to boost Arjuna's declining morale, motivation, confidence and to increase his effectiveness. The *Gita* contains the unwritten laws of the universe. So if you study the same in a logical manner, you will achieve salvation. But on the other hand if you are a devotee of Lord Krishna and read it with devotion, then also you will achieve salvation. So, the

*Gita* will lead you to God both the intellectual way and the devotional way.

Today there are innumerable professionals and industrialists who are great achievers, have great social prestige yet do not enjoy life. On the other hand, there are many who are contented and happy but are not achievers. What is needed today is a combination of these two qualities. One should be a great achiever and at the same time should live a peaceful life and it can be assured that a study of *Gita* will serve both these purposes.

Indian Vedic contribution is a reservoir of Vibrant Information and Harmonious Creativity. May the womb of nature embrace all with tranquil blessings from this day forward? Let this attract one's attention affecting them positively. It is a sanctuary of the self a creative venue which serves as an enduring expression of lightness, where a peaceful atmosphere with sunlight flows and serene atmosphere prevail.

In the storm of life we struggle through myriads of stimuli of pressure, stress, and multi problems that seek for a solution and answer. We are so suppressed by the routine of this every life style that most of us seem helpless. However, if we look closely to ancient techniques we shall discover the magnificent way to understand and realize the ones around us and mostly ourselves. If only we could stop for a moment and allow this to happen. May all beings be happy (*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*) is the essence of Indian philosophy?

The ancient Indian philosophy of keeping mind and body for the well being has

entered the managerial, medical and judicial domain of the world. Today it has found its place as an alternative to the theory of modern management and also as a means to bring back the right path of peace and prosperity for the human beings.

## 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 is a continuing process, and managers are always involved in some way with the principles of: planning, organizing, influencing, controlling and decision making. These principles are designed to help managers accomplish organizational objectives, and good managers will use them. These principles are not isolated but are interwoven throughout the manager's thoughts and actions.

Managers must combine and coordinate these principles and must maximize their value to achieve their goals. Managers strive to be effective and efficient and these principles help them. These management principles are universal and applicable to all types of businesses and organizations. 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.

One of the biggest problems that we are facing in our daily life, professional work and personal life is that we don't seem to enjoy what we are doing. Today the children say "I am bored". Young professionals want to adopt the western model of "weekend getaway". We need weekend getaways if work is perceived as drudgery and an avoidable aspect of our life. Such a perspective can never get the best from work place that modern business management is worried about. What is this boredom? Why does it happen? Because we don't enjoy what we are doing, we get bored. Stress management is a big issue today. Today's life is so, that everyone feels to be very busy in this hectic day to day life. We all are very busy at our work place & in our home life also. In this busy life, we face lot of tensions and our mind is full of stress all the time. We forget about the true happiness in life and how it can be attained.

*Sukhaduhkhe same kritwaa laabhaalaabhau jayaajayau;*

*Tato yuddhaaya yujyaswa naivam paapamavaapsyasi. (Gita.2.38)*

Having made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat the same, engage thou

in battle for the sake of battle; thus thou shall not incur sin.

Generally people think that earning lot's of money and enjoying it, is the aim of life and

they think that can give them happiness in life. In our life we either run after money or we try to make our near and dear ones happy in life. Money and material things may give us joy at present but when these material things are not in our life, due to one reason or the other, much pain comes in our life. Same is the case with human relations. Till the time these relations are with you, they may give you joy for the time being. But in the absence of these relations our mind feels pain & sorrow. We all know that we have come to this world alone & shall leave this world alone only. Whatever things we acquire or whatever relations we make on this world stage is only in between your birth and death. Some day, these things or relations shall leave you within this lifetime or ultimately you have to leave all these in the end.

Any infatuation to material things or relations is going to give you pain only, whenever, separation shall occur from these one day. Unless one seeks a perfect and permanent thing in life, he will not be able to find perfect love in life. Most of the knowledge and help we get from the modern day thinking is to suppress or divert our attention from the issue of stress. They implicitly operate with an assumption that stress will be inevitably generated and the solution lies in doing something about it once we are stressed. "Let us kill it or run away from it by some means after it

happens" is the basis for stress management. We do not seem to address why one should get stressed in the first place.

*Gita* also offers perspectives on how to manage certain things in life, understand complex things that we go through in simple terms (just as the example of birth and death). It also offers direct ideas and sets us in a state of contemplation. The *Gita* can be compared to a wish fulfilling tree. Whatever we seek to learn, we can get it from the *Gita*. Each person who reads the *Gita*, can understand it from a different level. It can give lessons to a beginner as well as a pundit. Based on the state of feelings, each person can understand the *Gita* depending on the stage that they have reached in the spiritual path. There is plenty of water in an ocean, but what you can bring away from it depends on the size of the vessel that you take. Similarly the messages will be vast but what we get from it depends on our capacity to absorb. The basic message of the *Gita* is the same and its purpose is to transform humanity to divinity. We should therefore not take such a book lightly. We should approach it with devotion and commitment and not only try to learn the teachings, but more importantly strive to practice it. Only then we can attain fulfilment in our lives. By repeated reading and studying only we can achieve this.

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Some people assert that this really isn't a change in the management functions rather it's re-emphasizing certain aspects of management. Management is creative problem solving method. This creative problem solving is accomplished through four functions of management: planning, organizing, leading and controlling. The intended result is the use of an organization's resources in a way that accomplishes its mission and objectives. Socio technical systems approach; technical systems such as production and office operation have great effect on social system such as personal. This concept places importance on labour and lower-level office work and ignores other managerial knowledge. In this concept managing is treated as mathematical processes. It is viewed as a purely logical process and is expressed in mathematical symbols and relationships. Managing is not a pure science and hence cannot be completely modelled. Just as human body is formed of different interdependent systems so is also an organization. A change in any one of these systems may affect all or some other systems to varying degrees. This 'ripple effect' influences the effectiveness of the organization. To understand the interactions and the consequences between the various systems of the organization the managers should possess the ability to get a perspective view.

Treating an organization as formed of different systems is known as systems approach. Systems theory was first applied in the fields of science and engineering. It also has found wide acceptance in the practice of management. Successful

planning is a process. It is the first management principle that must be developed and all the others are interrelated to it. It is the foundation for success.

Samuel Certo, in the Principles of Modern Management, suggests there are six steps in the planning process: 1) Stating organizational objectives – the objectives must be clear for proper planning; 2) Listing alternative ways of reaching objectives – a manager should list several available alternatives; 3) Develop premises upon which each alternative is based – these premises are assumptions and these assumptions will help you work through the alternatives; 4) Choosing the best alternative for

reaching objectives – evaluate the alternatives based on your assumptions and choose; 5) Develop plans to pursue the chosen alternative – a manager should develop strategic and tactical plans; and 6) Putting the plans into action – organization can not benefit until the plans are put into action; both short plans and long range plans.

Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their weaknesses irrelevant, says the Management Guru Peter Ducker whose career as a writer, consultant and teacher spanned more than six decades. His groundbreaking work turned modern management theory into a serious discipline, and he influenced or created nearly every facet of its application, including corporate social responsibility, decentralization, privatization, and empowerment, and has coined such terms as the "knowledge worker." 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. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.

This approach emphasized that a manager and a subordinate would get together and set goals with the understanding that achieving these goals would be a major factor in evaluating the subordinate's job performance. This approach was supposed to begin at the top of the organization and all the way through it. Therefore, it was the achievement of these objectives that would determine the success or failure of an organization. Obviously, the better these objectives and goals were stated and then subsequently accomplished the more likely the organization would succeed. 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. *Gita* gives answer to all these points. The discoveries of modern science only demonstrate the truth intuitively arrived at by meditation by the ancient saints of India and confirm their doctrines.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* was delivered by Sri Krishna to boost Arjuna's declining morale, motivation, confidence and to increase his (Arjuna) effectiveness. Sri Krishna gave not

only spiritual enlightenment but also the art of self management, conflict, stress, anger management, transformational leadership, motivation, goal setting and many others aspects of management which can be used as a guide to increase HRM effectiveness. Unlike the western approach to HRM, which focuses in exploring the external world of matter and energy, the *Bhagavad-Gita* recommends a HRM approach, which focuses on exploring the inner world of the self.

HRM can understand from *Gita* the organizational behaviour in terms of the reciprocal causation among the employee (unique personality characteristics). Because of these combined reciprocal influences, employees are at the same time both products and producers of their personality, their behaviours, and their respective environments. They can suggest that the implications that self-efficacy may have for employee performance in organizations can no longer be ignored by practicing managers. They contend that while traditional motivational and behavioural management approaches are still relevant, expanding the behavioural management approach with CSR and self-efficacy will lead to the more comprehensive understanding and effective management of today's human resources.

HR managers need good 'people' skills and require the confidence and communication skills to deal in a calm and tactful manner with a variety of situations, balancing the needs of the individual employee against the business interests of the organisation. You may be required to operate in stressful situations when handling issues such as

discipline, redundancy or the personal problems of individual employees, so you would need a measure of resilience and an understanding of the importance of confidentiality. Accuracy, attention to detail, co-operation and teamwork are as important as a fair and objective attitude. Good spoken and written communication skills are essential to avoid errors and misunderstandings when dealing with employees' personal details.

### **Management guidelines from *Bhagavad-Gita***

One should do one's duty equipoise or with the equanimity of mind renouncing the fruits of action. O Arjuna, you have a certain authority over an action you perform but you do not have an absolute authority over the fruit it yields. Neither accepts inaction as the way of life, nor let the fruit be the motive behind performing an action (*Gita* 2.47). If one does one's duty efficiently and 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. 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. The *Gita* conceives reality as that which never changes. The ego, being subject to change, is unreal; so also are all its objects. Hence Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to transcend the dualities of experience like heat and cold, pain and pleasure, and identify himself with

the permanent and unchanging being. The four goals of human life — doing one's duty, earning wealth, material and sensual enjoyment, and attaining salvation — were designed in the Vedic tradition for gradual and systematic growth of the individual and the progress of society

After, hearing *Bhagavad-Gita*, Arjuna got motivated, energized and acted according to Sri Krishna's instruction. This is transformation management (leadership), as quoted by great management gurus who explained what happened after *the Bhagavad-Gita*. He (Arjuna) stood steady on the ground with bow and arrow in hand. He lifted his arms ready to fight the war. Sri Krishna demonstrated transformational HR leadership qualities in developing and guiding Arjuna to victory in the war. Transformational leaders (HR managers) exhibit charisma, encourage followers to question their own way of doing things, and treat followers differently but equitably based on follower need. Modern HR managers and consultants can benefit from the philosophy of *Bhagavad-Gita*, which can serve as a guide in HRM. Mere imitation of western HRM approaches may not be appropriate in the Indian (Asian) context due to differences in the cultural environment. Many new western HRM approaches will continue to emerge, however the *Bhagavad-Gita* has remained and will remain to be relevant and continue to contribute to HRM for many centuries to come.