

Management, Change, Strategy and Positive Leadership  
Series Editors: Satinder Dhiman · Joan Marques

Satinder Dhiman  
A. D. Amar *Editors*

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# Managing by the Bhagavad Gītā

Timeless Lessons  
for Today's Managers



Springer

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## **Series Editors:**

### **Satinder Dhiman**

School of Business  
Woodbury University  
Burbank, CA, USA

### **Joan Marques**

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Burbank, CA, USA

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Editors

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*Dedication by Satinder Dhiman*

श्री कृष्णार्पणमस्तु

**Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu**

त्वदीयं वस्तु गोविन्दः

तुभ्यमेव समर्पये

*tvadīyaṁ vastu govinda*

*tubhyameva samarpaye:*

*O Lord! I offer unto Thee*

*What is really Thine only!*

*I dedicate this book to my esteemed mother*

*Shanti Devi*

*the embodiment of peace and selfless service*

*whose love and blessings have been my*

*strength.*

*Dedication by A. D. Amar*

*I dedicate this book to my respected mother, Kaushlya Devi Shakir, for starting me on the Bhagavad Gita when I could barely read; to my revered father, the late Prem Dutt Shakir, Esq., who fascinated me by instilling in me the teachings of the ancient Indian writings led by the Bhagavad Gita. I also dedicate this to my beloved wife, Sneh Lata Amar; our caring sons, Harpriye Amar Juneja and Januj Amar Juneja; and my best gifts from my parents, my seven siblings, Mrs. Amrit Bala Mendiratta, Dr. Mrs. Mohan Bala Chitkara, Mrs. Urmil Devi Chawla, Professor Dr. Gobind Krishan Malik, Mrs. Veena Madaan, Mr. Gopal Krishan Juneja, Esq., and Mr. Bhupesh Kumar Juneja for putting up with me, always giving me the highest priority, and being company, coplayers, partners and supporters.*

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## Preface

The Bhagavad Gītā, a philosophical poem par excellence, has been extolled as “the scripture of scriptures” within the corpus of Indian spiritual texts. Its unusual battle-field setting, highly practical orientation, and deep philosophical import have endeared it to people from all walks of life looking for guidance in both the sacred and secular realms. While there are many books that aspire to present spiritual truths in practical terms, perhaps, there is no other book which presents such an integral vision of attaining the ultimate purpose of life (*mokṣa* or liberation) while fully engaged in the activities of life.

The Bhagavad Gītā is as pertinent in the boardrooms of the twenty-first century as it was on the battlefields of ancient times. Within the compass of eighteen dynamic chapters, it unfolds the whole spectacle of human drama full of challenges met, fights won, and freedom attained. It teaches us how to emerge from a state of utter apathy, gloom, sorrow, and dejection to a state of perfect engagement, understanding, clarity, wisdom, renewed strength, and triumph. The Bhagavad Gītā (a part of the great Indian epic—the *Mahābhārata*) can be approached as a powerful tool for management and as a catalyst for organizational transformation. It teaches us how to harmonize the needs of the individual with the needs of society, and by extension, how to harmonize the needs of employees and the organization. It employs an inside-out leadership development approach based on self-knowledge and self-mastery, the two highly important areas for practicing true self-leadership. It is a nonsectarian spiritual text with a universal message.

The Gītā contains timeless management and leadership lessons for the contemporary organizations. Modern leadership concepts such as vision, motivation and empowerment, self-awareness, self-mastery, excellence in work, importance of ethical means in achieving righteous ends, attaining meaning and fulfillment at work, service before self, and well-being of all beings are all lucidly discussed in the Bhagavad Gītā. Likewise, many contemporary leadership constructs such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, and values-based leadership were already discussed, albeit notionally, in the Bhagavad Gītā thousands of years ago. The message of the Gītā fosters holistic development of human personality within all of its dimensions (physical-psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual) by providing guidance about the three essential spiritual practices: “training the mind,” “transforming the passions,” and “guarding the heart.”



The Bhagavad Gītā teaches that only the knowers of Self are truly wise and ever free from grief. It removes sorrow by removing the self-ignorance that is causing it. According to the Gītā, all our existential problems ultimately stem from self-ignorance—not knowing who we truly are. The *Gītā* teaches that one who acts with knowledge and devotion, without desire and unattached, is liberated already. Therefore, by all our seeking, let us seek Self-Knowledge.

The Gītā says that nothing can give you real happiness except your Self (*ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*: BG, 2.55).

The Gītā teaches renunciation *in* action, not renunciation *of* action. Renounce desire and attachment, not action, states the most important verse on Karma Yoga in the *Gītā* (2.47). It teaches us to let go of the sense of me and mine and work selflessly for the common good. In the Gītā’s view, serving others is serving the Divine. The sage leader outwardly does all activities like others, inwardly unattached. This is the essence of Karma Yoga of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Wise leaders do everything without selfish motive, remaining equanimous in success and failure, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow—offering their work as a loving service to the Supreme. They work for the purification of their mind (*ātmasūddhaye*: 5.11) and act with a view to set an example to the masses, so the unwary do not go astray (3.26). They strive for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite*: 5.25, 12.4) and for bringing the communities of people together (*lokasaṃgraham*: 3.20, 3.25). This is the entire teachings of the *Gītā* on life and leadership.

Given that all the pronouns used in the Gītā are masculine, the translation of its verses has retained the masculine pronouns wherever a neutral term was not possible without sounding linguistically awkward. It purely reflects a convention and not authors’ gender bias. The teachings of the Gītā are equally applicable to men as well as women.

Few books can be called both “whole” and “holy.” The Gītā is one such book. Whether one is able to benefit from the great books of humanity depends entirely upon the intensity and purity of one’s search. Used wisely, they serve as milestones. They also serve as benchmarks and guard against self-reference and mind’s great power to delude itself. Acting as mirrors, they are only as good as their reader.

This book presents the contribution of management scholars and practitioners who have embodied the message of the Gītā in their personal and professional life. A part of the initiative to bring out this book began when Professor Amar, one of the editors, along with a number of the authors of this book, organized and presented a symposium on how to apply the messages of the Bhagavad Gītā to the practice of management at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, held in Anaheim, California, titled “Looking into the *Bhagavad Gītā* for Managing Organizations to Become Meaningful.” The interest of the Academy in this ancient Hindu scripture for redefining management in the twenty-first century encouraged us to broaden the message by bringing out this book.

For the editors, this book represents continuation and solidification of their life-long association with the Bhagavad Gītā.

Professor Dhiman, one of the editors of this book, has completed a translation of the Gītā into English titled, *Sahaja Gītā*. He has also conducted several Management and Leadership Development Programs around the world featuring the Gītā as a foundational text and has co-organized, moderated, and presented at international conferences dedicated to the Bhagavad Gītā besides publishing journal articles regarding its application to management and leadership.

The appreciation for the message of the Bhagavad Gītā of one of the editors of this book (Professor Amar) increased tremendously when the faculties in his university, Seton Hall University in New Jersey, USA, a Catholic comprehensive research university with ten colleges and schools, made the Bhagavad Gītā a mandatory reading for all its undergraduate students. They saw universal value in the Gītā that goes beyond secularism and national boundaries.

In its final form, the book, *Managing by the Bhagavad Gītā*, has authors who come from the different parts of the world, with different faiths, and different professions, each of them picking one or some aspects of the Bhagavad Gītā and turning it into a practical lesson for the manager. Our endeavor has been for this book to come out so that every manager, at any level in the organizational hierarchy, in any industry, in any country would find something useful that she or he can take to her or his work and apply it to the job.

We have brought out this book with the understanding to bring the learning of the Bhagavad Gītā for the benefit of the managers of organizations, as we believe that the Gītā is so rich that any manager, in any situation, can find messages for use in almost any aspect of the management function whether it is planning, organizing, leading, or controlling. One just has to have the sight to see the answers and interpret them to apply in real world situation. On a few management topics such as leadership, while a lot has already been written and is well covered, there is still a lot to study and narrate. A number of chapters in this book do it, some in good depth. However, Bhagavad Gītā also has enough on other management functions, and we cover them in this book as well.

We take Bhagavad Gītā as a know-all book. It indeed does cover everything, sacred and secular. We can see reflection of answer to any problem on any subject in the Bhagavad Gītā. All we need is to be able to understand what we see. It was with this goal in mind that we invited many well-known management and the Bhagavad Gītā scholars to write for the sake of our readers what messages they can get from the Bhagavad Gītā.

We got a lot in response to our call. Several authors and scholars gave us their interpretations of messages guiding management and leadership functions from the Bhagavad Gītā. We are sure that managers and leaders will be able to use them in understanding work, workers, organizational behavior, qualitative analyses, social and community responsibility, economic environment, and investment management. Nevertheless, we also learned that conveyances and meanings of the Bhagavad Gītā are so deep that it is impossible to separate theology, philosophy, and spiritualism from the study of the Gītā, no matter how strong the intent. That is why we got a lot on these subjects and through them we sensed management and leadership lessons.

While practical application has driven the effort for this book, we have made sure that the authenticity of the Gītā and its message remain. We really feel fortunate to bring together so many scholars and practitioners of the Bhagavad Gītā and business management in helping us achieve this ambitious goal. We express our sincere gratitude to all of them.

We also thank Springer Publishers, New York City, and its editorial staff for their assistance in improving the presentation of this work.

Due to the varied specialties of contributors to this work, their opinions or interpretations may not be always in agreement. In addition, to make the discussion rich, we did not work to create forced unanimity in all statements. Contributors are responsible for their content.

If the readers find something worthwhile in these pages, the credit goes to our teachers in life and spirit; nevertheless, we remain responsible for all the errors and omissions of fact and interpretations.

Burbank, CA, USA  
South Orange, NJ, USA

Satinder Dhiman  
A. D. Amar

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## About the Editors



**Satinder Dhiman** Recognized as a lead thinker for his pioneer contributions to the field of spirituality in the workplace, workplace well-being, sustainability, and fulfillment in personal and professional arena, Professor Dhiman is a sought-after keynote speaker at regional, national, and international conferences. In 2013, Professor Dhiman was invited to be the opening speaker at the prestigious TEDx Conference at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita, California. He has given more than 15 invited keynote and commencement addresses over the last 5 years, nationally and internationally. He has published more than 60 papers and book chapters and made more than 100 presentations at various international conferences, universities, and venues.

With an instructional and research focus on leadership and organizational behavior—and with specific concentration on sustainability, workplace spirituality, and well-being—Professor Dhiman holds a PhD in Social Sciences from Tilburg University, Netherlands, an EdD in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, an MBA from West Coast University, Los Angeles, and a master’s degree in Commerce from Panjab University, Chandigarh, India, having earned the Gold Medal. *He has also completed advanced Executive Leadership Programs at Harvard, Stanford, and Wharton.*

Currently, Professor Dhiman serves as the Associate Dean, Chair, and Director of the MBA Program; and Professor of Management at Woodbury University, Burbank, California. He has also served as the Chair for a special MBA Program for the Mercedes-Benz executives, China. He was invited as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, Guadalajara campus, Mexico, and has served as

E-Commerce curriculum lead advisor, Universidad Francisco Gavidia, El Salvador, and coordinator for LA Fieldtrip for MBA students from the Berlin University for Professional Studies (DUW). Professor Dhiman serves as the President of [International Chamber of Service Industry \(ICSI\)](#).

Professor Dhiman has translated over seven spiritual treatises (including the *Bhagavad Gītā*; and *Ādi Śankarācārya's Vivekacūdāmaṇi—with Br. Pranipata Chaitanya*); authored, co-authored, and co-edited over 20 management, leadership, and accounting related books and research monographs, including most recently authoring [Holistic Leadership](#) (Palgrave 2017), [Gandhi and Leadership](#) (Palgrave 2015), and [Seven Habits of Highly Fulfilled People](#) (2012) and co-editing and co-authoring, with Joan Marques, [Spirituality and Sustainability](#) (Springer 2016), [Leadership Today](#) (Springer 2016), and [Engaged Leadership](#) (Springer, 2018).

He is the *editor-in-chief* of two multi-author Major Reference Works: [Springer Handbook of Engaged Sustainability](#) and [Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment](#) and *editor-in-chief* of [Palgrave Studies in Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment](#), and editor of [Springer Series in Management, Change, Strategy and Positive Leadership](#). Some of his forthcoming titles include [Bhagavad Gītā: A Catalyst for Organizational Transformation](#); [Leading without Power: A New Model of Highly Fulfilled Leaders](#) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018/2019); [Conscious Consumption: Healthy, Humane, and Sustainable Living](#) (Routledge, 2019); [Wise Leadership for Turbulent Times](#) (with Mark Kriger—Routledge, 2019); *editor-in-chief*, [Routledge Series on Resilient Organizations and the Sustainable Development Goals](#), and [Routledge Companion to Mindfulness, Flow and Creativity 2020](#); and [Handbook of Workplace Well-being: Reimagining Workplace Flourishing](#) (*editor-in-chief*; Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

Recipient of several national and international professional honors, Professor Dhiman is also the winner of the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) prestigious International Teacher of the Year Award, 2004; Steve Allen Excellence in Education Award, 2006; Woodbury University's Ambassador of the Year Award, 2015 and 2017; Most

Inspirational and Most Charismatic, MBA Teacher Award 2012, 2013/2014/2015; and Most Valuable MBA Professor of the Year Award, 2018, given by MBAA. He has published research with his colleagues in *Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, *Organization Development Journal*, *Journal of Management Development*, *Journal of Social Change*, *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, and *Performance Improvement*.

He has also served as Accreditation Mentor and Evaluator, and Site Visit Peer Review Team Leader for the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) for more than 20 universities in America, Canada, Europe, and Asia.

Professor Dhiman is the Founder-Director of [Forever Fulfilled](#), a Los Angeles-based well-being consultancy, which focuses on workplace well-being, sustainability, and self-leadership.



**A. D. Amar**, B.Sc. Prod. E., M.S. I. M. E., MBA, MPhil, Ph.D. An expert in knowledge organization and management theory, Dr. A. D. Amar (Amar Dev Amar) received 2013 Carolyn Dexter Finalist Award of the Academy of Management and 2010 NJBIA Bright Idea Award in Management of the NJPRO Foundation of New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA) for his paper on leadership and authority, published in the *Harvard Business Review*. His papers on leadership and meditation were selected as Best Papers of the AOM Annual Meetings of 2013 and 2014. He received the 2017 Professor of the Year Award from IARC. His paper on motivating knowledge workers has been the fifth Most Read Article of 2015 and the eighth Most Read Article of 2016 of the *European Journal of Innovation Management* and has full text downloads of 17,295 since 2013 (<https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/14601060410534366>). Full text of the article (Amar, A. D. (2004). Motivating knowledge workers to innovate: a model integrating motivation dynamics and antecedents. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 7(2), pp. 89–101) can be downloaded at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/action/showMostReadArticles?journalCode=ejim>.



Currently, Dr. Amar serves as a Professor of Management in the Stillman School of Business, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079, USA.

Dr. Amar has served on the faculties of universities in the USA, India, Poland, Russia, and the United Kingdom. He has served as an external examiner on several doctoral committees, including the Indian Institute of Science and the University of South Australia, and has more than 20 years of research in knowledge work, more than 120 publications, and more than 100 presentations on a variety of management topics. He has delivered a number of invited, plenary and special lectures worldwide. Among his publications is a graduate-level book on knowledge work and organizations, titled *Managing Knowledge Workers: Unleashing Innovation and Productivity* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, Greenwood Press, 2002).

Dr. Amar has headed and directed several academic and administrative offices, initiatives, and assignments. He had been the editor of the *Mid-Atlantic Journal of Business* for 12 years, 1990–2002. He serves on several journal and management boards. He has trained managers in business and public sectors. He has worked in engineering and management for Orisun Machine Tools, Teledyne Pacific Industrial Controls, and Vornado Corp. He has designed large-scale computer and automation systems for engineering, management, forecasting, supply chain, and manufacturing planning and control. Some of his consulting clients include Arkwin Industries, Hydrocraft Corporation, City of New York, State of New Jersey, General Motors, Social Security Administration, US Postal Service, Vornado—Store Decor, and VW/Audi.

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He is author of the book *Spirituality and Indian Psychology: Lessons from the Bhagavad-Gita* (Springer, 2011) and co-editor of the book *Asian Contributions to Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Sage, 1996). He has published more than 60 papers and book chapters and made more than 160 presentations at international conferences and universities. His research has appeared in various handbooks and edited volumes as well as journals such as the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *International Journal of Psychology*, *Cross-Cultural Research*, *Applied Psychology: International Review*, *Psychology and Developing Societies*, *Indian Psychological Review*, *Delhi Business Review*, *Journal of Environmental Engineering and Policy*, and *Journal of Management*.

**Dr. Charles Chow** is a Roman Catholic, yet a forever student of the Bhagavad Gita. He is the first Singaporean to be trained by the German Navy and commanded a Singapore Navy ship before starting the Police Coast Guard in Singapore. He then joined the Singapore Trade Development Board to link businesses between India and Singapore. Since 2000, he is a consultant focusing on corporate strategies and social innovations. In 2014 he published *Management Efficacy, Wisdom from the Indian Bhagavad Gita and the Chinese Art of War* with McGraw-Hill Singapore. His business focus includes recycling of food waste and hospitality training to encourage the blossoming of the “*inner firmness of purpose*” of all involved.

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**Kiran Korhalkar**, B. E. (Civil), LL.B. Advocate [Chandrashekhar] My surname has origin in the name of a village Korhale, near Shirdi, in the then subdistrict Kopargaon in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. I am a third generation lawyer. I am a practicing civil lawyer of the Bombay High Court, Bench at Aurangabad where I have settled and put in 30 years of practice. I rigidly observe professional ethics. I have great fascination for English language, poetry, and philosophy, both oriental and occidental. My book of poems “The Valley of Flowers” was published in 2003. My poem, “Near to Nature” is incorporated in a book “Tender Moments” published by the International Library of Poetry in 2001. It received “Editor’s Best Choice Award.” Consequently, I was enrolled as the “Distinguished Member of the International Society of Poets.” I have translated the Bhagavad Gita into English verse. It was released in 2012.

**Professor C. K. Manjunath** currently teaching at Justice KS Hegde Institute of Management, Nitte, India, received his MS in Information Science from Indian Institute of Science, MA in English literature from KSOU, Mysore, India, and PhD from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston. Dr. Manjunath has nineteen years of academic experience at schools and collegiate levels. He has published in the *Mentor*, Indian Academy of Sciences journals, *Nature*, *Science Exploration*, and *AI and Neural Networks* and was a series editor for Pearson Publications. He has presented papers on brain modeling, slow learners, models of learning, and ethics of teaching and learning at international conferences in the West and East. He has held senior academic and administrative positions in the education sector. His academic interests span pedagogy, mental retardation and learning, cognitive sciences, AI, English literature, leadership skills, making Maths easy for school children, and student evaluation processes.

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IFCI Chair Professor, Indian Council of Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi, and Professor in Strategy and HR at IIM Calcutta. He has held visiting academic appointments at K.U. Leuven, Belgium, University of Edinburgh, Cornell University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Bielefeld, Germany, Helsinki School of Economics, Aalto University, Turku School of Economics, Royal University of Bhutan, and Fresenius University, Cologne. His publications include twenty-eight books and over one hundred and fifty papers in scientific journals and anthologies. He has been a Senior Fulbright Fellow and a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Scholar. He is the recipient of the Prestige Award as “Professor of the Year 2014” and Academy of Management Awards in 2016 and 2017. He has been a member of the Board of Directors with Corporates in India and Europe and is consulted by businesses, governments, international organizations, and the policy research community. He served a term as the Director and CEO, Institute of Applied Manpower Research, with the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. He is a member of the Governing Board of the Global Foundation for Integrating Spirituality and Organisational Leadership (ISOL).

**Dr. Chandan Medatwal** PhD (Commerce and Management), is Management Faculty in GL Bajaj Institute of Management and Research, Greater Noida, UP. For the last ten years, Dr. Medatwal has been associated through academics with government and renowned private organizations. Her research is focused upon emerging issues in management, empowerment, organization behavior, human resources development, knowledge management, ethics, and social issues. She has presented about six dozens review and research papers in reputed international and national conferences and contributed research papers to journals of international and national repute. She has brilliant academic contributions such as cases, book chapters, reviews etc. to her credit and organized symposiums and MDPs and academic events. She has been awarded by the Government of Rajasthan for her contribution to literature and culture and was awarded “young woman researcher and scholar award” by the National Federation of Entrepreneurship Development. She has been listed in Golden Book of World Records for her achievements in yoga.

**Paul Palmarozza** is the founder and CEO of If I can...CIC, a not-for-profit community interest company, who offers online apps that provide practical guidance on how natural human values can enhance the way we think, relate to others, and act in life [www.ificanapp.com](http://www.ificanapp.com). The latest development is Ethical Entrepreneur, which shows how the application of values in the performance of nine core management functions helps build a sustainable, responsible business [www.ethicalentrepreneur.org](http://www.ethicalentrepreneur.org).

In his 54-year business career, he has managed a number of entrepreneurial ventures including founding an e-learning company in 1987 which became listed on the AIM Stock Exchange in 2001. He has co-authored a book *From Principles to Profit* and is currently a Guest Lecturer at Regents University Business School's Entrepreneurship Program.

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Her research interests are executive burnout, well-being, emotional intelligence, spirituality, gender equity, responsible management, leadership, and competencies.

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# Pronunciation/Transliteration Key of Sanskrit Terms<sup>1</sup>

Sanskrit is written in a script called *Devanāgarī*. It is written from left to right. Sanskrit is perhaps the oldest and the most systematic language in the world.<sup>2</sup> Its vast structure, refined construction, and rhythmic compactness are hard to duplicate in any translation. For those unfamiliar with *Devanāgarī* script, and who will nevertheless like to enjoy the efflorescent splendor of the original—*albeit in Romanized version*, we provide below the transliteration key using the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) scheme to denote words written in *Devanāgarī* script. IAST is the most widely used key:<sup>3</sup>

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## Vowels

अ a—as u in but  
ā—as a in father  
इ i—as i in pin  
ī—as i in police  
उ u—as u in full  
ū—as u in boot  
ऋ ṛ—as ri in rim  
ए e—as e in evade

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<sup>1</sup>This Pronunciation/Transliteration Key of Sanskrit Terms has been compiled by Satinder Dhiman.

<sup>2</sup>The great American historian Will Durant (1885–1981) has noted in his book, *The Case for India*: “India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages: she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy.” Will Durant, *The Case for India* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931), 4. In the footnote to this quote, Will Durant writes that “the first volume of the author’s *Story of Civilization* will substantiate this claim.” Highlighting the role of the language in culture, Rajiv Malhotra avers in his recent book, *The Battle for Sanskrit* (HarperCollins, India, 2016), that there is no *sanskriti* (culture) without Sanskrit.

<sup>3</sup>In the word document, inserting these diacritical marks (such as  $\bar{\sim}$ ) is quite easy. It can be done by choosing the “Insert” dropdown menu and using the “symbol” option to insert various diacritics. By saving the “symbol” option on your top menu bar, you can access these marks quite easily and efficiently.

ai—as *ai* in aisle  
 ओ o—as o in over  
 au—as *ou* in out

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## Consonants

k—as k in king  
 kh—as kh in blockhead  
 g—as g in goal  
 gh—as gh in log-house  
 n—as n in noun  
 c—as ch in chair  
 ch—as chh in thatch-hut  
 j—as j in jug  
 jh—as dgeh in hedgehog  
 ṅ—as in nut  
 ṭ—as t in tongue  
 ṭh—as in anthill  
 ḍ—as in dark  
 ḍh—as dh in God-hood  
 ṇ—as n in Monday  
 t—as t in tub  
 th—as th in thumb  
 d—as th in then  
 dh—as theh in breathe  
 n—as n in nut  
 p—as p in pan  
 ph—as ph in phone  
 b—as b in bed  
 bh—as bh in abhor  
 m—as in mother  
 y—as in yes  
 r—as in race  
 l—as in light  
 v—as v in avert  
 ś—as sh in sure (short palatal sibilant)  
 ṣ—as sh in bush (cerebral sibilant)  
 s—as s in sun  
 h—as in hall  
 ḷ—as in curl



# The Text, Context, and Message of the Bhagavad Gītā

1

Satinder Dhiman

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## Introduction

The Bhagavad Gītā contains timeless management lessons for contemporary organizations. It is a non-sectarian spiritual text with a universal message. It teaches truth regarding our essential nature which can be verified by everyone right here and now, in this very lifetime. Presenting its setting and the occasion, this introductory chapter explores the meaning and the key message of the Gītā to facilitate proper understanding of the text and its application. After recounting the universality of its message and its perennial appeal, it suggests primary application of some key concepts of the Gītā to management and leadership domain. It also explores the key themes and the essence of the Gītā's eighteen chapters.

Several modern leadership and management topics such as vision; motivation and empowerment; self-awareness, self-mastery, emotional maturity; anger management and stress management; meditation and psychological wellbeing; excellence in work; workplace spirituality; importance of ethical means in achieving righteous ends; attaining meaning and fulfillment at work; and serving a cause higher than oneself for the greater good are lucidly discussed in the Bhagavad Gītā. Likewise, we find that many contemporary leadership constructs such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, and values-based leadership, were already discussed in the Bhagavad Gītā thousands of years ago.

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## The Perennial Appeal of the Bhagavad Gītā

The Bhagavad Gītā, the classic Hindu scripture par excellence, holds a special place in the world's sacred literature. Throughout the past centuries, it has wielded an enduring influence on the spirit of humankind and provided steady guidance for spiritual seekers of all types and climes. It embodies the highest philosophy of God-Realization (Rānāde, 1982). It's non-sectarian, non-dogmatic, and universal message speaks endearingly to people from all walks of life who are in search of abiding answers to the fundamental questions of life—philosophers, saints, scientists, artists, businesspeople, and laypersons.

It has been said that, “No other Sanskrit text approaches the Bhagavad Gītā in the influence it has exerted in the West” (See: van Buitenen, 1981, book back cover matter). It is well known that the transcendental philosophers such as Emerson and Thoreau were deeply influenced by its insights. A. L. Basham and other Sanskrit scholars agree that the significance of the Bhagavad Gītā in India is comparable to that of the New Testament in Western civilization (Bolle, 1979, p. 224). Noting its widespread appeal and popularity, Robert N. Minor, a modern exegetical commentator, states that the Bhagavad Gītā has become ‘*the most translated text after the Bible*’ (Minor, 1986, p. 5). Count Hermann Keyserling, a German philosopher, hailed it as ‘*perhaps the most beautiful work of the literature of the world*’ (cited in Durant, 1930, p. 6).

Over the centuries, many have expressed their sincere appreciation for its perennial charm. After reading the Gītā, Albert Einstein is reported to have said, “When I read the Bhagavad Gītā and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous”. J. Robert Oppenheimer, American physicist, read the Bhagavad Gītā in the original, and regarded it as one of the most influential books to shape his philosophy of life. Upon witnessing the world's first nuclear test in 1945, he later said it reminded him of verse 32 from Chap. 11 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*: “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds” (cited in Giovannitti & Freed, 1965, p. 197).

In his masterly *Foreword* to the Winston Sargeant's translation of the Bhagavad Gītā, Huston Smith, the famous religious studies scholar, calls the Gītā “literally a pager-turner” and a “multivalent book” for “there is something in it that will reward every serious reader” (Smith, 2009, p. 9). According to the famous author of *The Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley, “The Gītā is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, it's enduring value, not only for Indians but for all mankind. The Bhagavad Gītā is perhaps the most systematic scriptural statement of the Perennial Philosophy” (cited in Prabhananda & Isherwood, 1975, p. 22). Henry David Thoreau has stated “in comparison to the Bhagavad Gītā our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial.”

It is well known that Gandhi modeled his life upon the teachings of the Gītā (Betai, 2002). Gandhi “constantly referred to it as his ‘spiritual dictionary,’ ‘the mother who never let him down,’ or his ‘*kāmdhenū*,’ ‘the cow that grants all wishes’” (see: Dhiman, 2015; Gandhi, 1983, pp. 59, 60, 232, 233, 296–297; Jordens, cited in

Minor, 1986, p. 88). Gandhi writes, “When disappointment stares me in the face, and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gītā. I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies—and my life has been full of external tragedies—and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā” (cited in Radhakrishnan, 1958, p. 10).

According to the great Indian commentator, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, “From a clear knowledge of the Bhagavad Gītā all the goals of human existence become fulfilled....Bhagavad Gītā is the manifest quintessence of all the teachings of the *Vedic* scriptures” (*yataḥ tadartha-vijñānē samasta-puruṣārtha-siddhiḥ ataḥ...tat idam gītā-śāstram samasta-vēdārtha-sārasaṅgraha-bhūtam*. See: Sastry, 1897/1995, pp. 4–6). For most Indian people, the Gītā is a scripture blessed with God’s Grace (*ek prasādik grantha*). The Lord Himself has declared it His very own Heart: “*Gītā meḥ hr̥dyam Pārtha!*”

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## Text and Context of the Gītā

The Bhagavad Gītā is one of the world’s great scriptures. Meaning literally “Lord’s Song,” the Gītā unfolds as a dialog between Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the divine incarnation in human form, and his warrior-disciple, Arjuna, on the eve of a historic battle of cosmic proportions. Within the Indian religious-philosophical tradition, the Gītā forms a part of “the triple foundation” texts or *prasthāna-traya*, the other two texts being the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-Sūtrās. Although technically, it belongs to a class of literature called “*smṛti*,” “remembered” or “traditional texts,” it has the status in Hindu culture of “*śruti*,” “scripture” or “revelation” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 3). Śrī Śaṅkarācārya (ca. 788–820), the great Indian philosopher, lifted it up from the vast ocean of *Mahābhārata*, fixed its verse-content at seven hundred and wrote the oldest extant commentary on it. (Tapasyānanda, 2010, p. vii; Radhakrishnan, 1958, p. 15). There is a sort of consensus among scholars today that the text of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, as fixed by Śaṅkarācārya long ago at 700 verses, is a unitary text (Deutsch, 1968; Edgerton, 1944; Hill, 1928/1953; Krishna Warriar, 1983, p. ix; Minor, 1982, 1986; Swarupananda, 1909/1976; Zaehner, 1973).

The Gītā is not only one of the most translated book, it is also one of the most commented upon books of the world. Since the subject matter of the Gītā is highly subtle and profound, one often needs the help of various commentaries to understand its deeper import. Myriad commentaries by classical and contemporary authorities exist, and the sheer volume of those commentaries can be bewildering to a seeker. It is beyond the scope and intent of this chapter to evaluate various commentaries. However, it may not be amiss to list a few noteworthy English translations of the Gītā’s most famous commentator, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Although translations by Swami Gambhirananda and Dr. A. G. Krishna Warriar present Śaṅkarā’s *bhāṣya* (commentary) in a contemporary English idiom, yet Alladi Mahadeva Sastry’s translation—even though, strictly speaking, it is not a complete translation of Śaṅkarā’s commentary—seems closer to the intent and purpose of the original. If you do not

mind some interpretive theosophical leanings, then this translation can convey the gist of Śaṅkarācārya's commentary in a simple, pure, and unvarnished way. Sastry usually gets to the essence of the original in the most direct way.

Unless otherwise stated, the translation of the verses of the *Gītā* quoted in this chapter are author's adaptations. All verses from the *Gītā* are listed in this format: 2.11—which refers to Chap. 2, verse 11. In order to retain some flavor of the original, the chapter presents some Sanskrit terms and phrases in transliteration, using diacritics according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) convention. A small bar drawn over a word (e.g., 'ā') indicates elongated sound: as 'ā' in the word 'park.'

Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is embedded within the great Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata* (literally, Great War of India), which has been hailed as the *Fifth Veda* (O'More, *op. cit.* in van Buitenen, 1981, p. ix). The *Mahābhārata* contains 107,000 octameter couplets (and 1.8 million words)—seven times the length of Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* combined (Durant, 1954, p. 561). The setting of the *Gītā* is the austere battlefield of Kurukṣetra where the armies have been drawn between the Kauravas and Paṇḍavās. After the expiry of twelve years of exile, and subsequent one year's incognito living period (*ajñātavāsa*), the Paṇḍavās, according to the terms as agreed before, demanded half of their kingdom from Duryodhana. However, Duryodhana flatly refused to give back the land even as much as the size of the tip of a needle (let alone half the kingdom) without waging a war! As a result, the Paṇḍavās made the decision to engage in the battle according to the command of their esteemed mother, Kuntī. Thus the war between the Kauravas and the Paṇḍavās became inevitable and, consequently, both sides began preparation for it. According to the fixed time, the war began in Kurukṣetra (Rāmsukhdāsī, 2007).

The teachings of the *Gītā* take place right before the war begins.

The date and authorship of the *Gītā* is a hotly debated topic among Western and Indian scholars (Bolle, 1979; Deutsch, 1968; Edgerton, 1944; Gambhirananda, 1984; Hill, 1928/1953; Rānāde, 1982; Tapasyānanda, 2010; Zaehner, 1973). We shall not burden this chapter with a recounting of the divergent views; for, from the standpoint of this chapter, it is a futile exercise—'a veritable counting of the leaves in place of eating the mangoes after entering a mango garden.' In matters of the spirit, what matters is the content and the content of the text is real and meaningful! Concluding his insightful study on the *Gītā*, Eliot Deutsch, states that "this is indeed a teaching that has meaning and value for all times and places" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 190). According to the Indian tradition, the Bhagavad *Gītā* was composed about 3000 years before the present era (a little over 5000 years ago) and its authorship is attributed to the great sage, Veda Vyāsa (literally, the "arranger" of the Vedās).

The message of the *Gītā* fosters holistic development of human personality on all its dimensions (physical-psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual) by providing guidance about the three essential spiritual practices: "training the mind," "transforming the passions," and "guarding the heart." This conforms to the three-fold disciplines enunciated in various Indian wisdom texts—Path of Knowledge (*Jñānayoga*), the Path of Action (*Karmayoga*), and the Path of Devotion (*Bhaktiyoga*). Although some Western scholars believe that the *Gītā* is a loose

collection of thoughts of different schools, Madhusudana Saraswati, a preeminent commentator, divides the Gītā into three integral sections of six chapters, each section dealing successively with *Karmayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, and *Jñānayoga*, the first leading to the second and the second to the third (Gambhirananda, 1984, p. xxi).

Likewise, the Gītā expounds a three-fold path to self-realization: (1) the path of selfless action (*karma yoga*); (2) the path of devotion (*bhakti yoga*); and (3) the path of knowledge (*jñāna yoga*). Some commentators believe that the 18 chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā cover three broad categories of themes: (1) the first six chapters, called *karma-shatkam*, deal with the concept of selfless actions as a path to liberation; (2) the next six chapters, called *bhakti-shatkam*, deal with the topic of devotion of the personal God as a path to liberation; and (3) the final six chapters, called *jñāna-shatkam*, deal with the path of self-knowledge as a means to spiritual liberation.

The three sections of the Gītā also conform to the three parts of the great Vedāntic statement (*mahāvākya*) ‘Thou Art That’ (*Tat Tvam Asi*). The first section discusses the “*Tvam*” (the Self); the second section discusses the “*Tat*” (the Ultimate Reality); and the last section discusses the “*Asi*” (which denotes the oneness of the Self and the Ultimate Reality). The great statement ‘Thou Art That’ (*Tat Tvam Asi*) categorically states that the true nature of individual self is the unchanging, limitless Awareness. The Gītā provides the practical methodology to realize this oneness of individual Self (*atmā*) and the Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*), right here and now.

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## Managing by the Gītā: Some Key Lessons

### Old Text, New Context

Although traditionally interpreted as a religious-spiritual text, the Gītā contains timeless lessons for contemporary organizations. Peter Senge, one of the key management thinkers of our time, has quoted the Gītā in two of his celebrated books, namely, *Fifth Discipline* and *Presence*. Steve Jobs’ credo, “Actualize Yourself,” also seems to have its implicit roots in the Gītā.

The Gītā unfolds as an infallible guide for those higher order managers and leaders who *externally* live a life of full engagement in the world, while *internally* always remaining steadfastly anchored in the wisdom of their Higher Self. Its non-sectarian, universal message speaks endearingly to people from all walks of life who are in search of abiding answers to the fundamental questions of life.

The Gītā is universal in its message, comprehensive in its outlook, and concrete in its suggestions. It teaches truth about our essential Self which can be verified by everyone right here and now, in this very lifetime. It is a non-sectarian spiritual text with a universal message, completely free from narrow religious dogma. As Teitsworth (2014, pp. 3–4) has rightly observed:

There is no vengeful God in it, only a benign and loving principle, called Brahman, or the Absolute. It is replete with the finest spiritual advice tendered without compunction or guilt....There are no chosen or cursed souls, only more or less damaged and confused ones.

The game here is to rectify the damage and dispel the confusion with clear thinking and action....In learning from the Gītā, we have to find and express our own inner motivation.

It is important to remember that though in its ultimate bidding, the Gītā is essentially a manual for spiritual freedom (*mokṣa śāstra*)—as Śaṅkarācārya, its greatest commentator and exponent reminds us. However, in its practical aspect, it is also a great manual for living and not an esoteric treatise on spirituality. As A. Parthasarathy (cited in Waite, 2007, p. 519) has noted, “The Bhagavad Gītā is a technique, a skill for dynamic living, not a retirement plan.”

At what point of one’s life one should pursue the goal of *mokṣa* or self-realization? Many believe that spiritual quest is something to be pursued during the last phase of one’s life. Dispelling this popular notion, Gandhi (1983, p. 302) tells us in his autobiography that people had a “superstition” that self-realization could be attained only in the last stages of life. Those who deferred it until then attain not self-realization, but “a second and pitiable childhood living as a burden on this earth.”

In the following sections, we will present some key management and leadership lessons drawn from the teachings of the Gītā.

## From Battlefield to Boardroom

It has been observed that the Bhagavad Gītā is as relevant in the board rooms of the twenty-first century as it was on the battlefield of ancient times (cited in Chatterjee, 2012, front flap matter). Within the compass of 18 dynamic chapters, it unfolds the whole spectacle of human drama full of challenges met, victories won, and freedom attained. It teaches us how to emerge from a state of utter apathy, gloom, sorrow and dejection to a state of perfect engagement, understanding, clarity, wisdom, renewed strength and triumph. The Bhagavad Gītā can be approached as a powerful tool for change management and as catalyst for organizational transformation. It teaches us how to harmonize the needs of the individual with the needs of the society, and by extension, how to harmonize the needs of employees and the organization. It employs an inside out leadership development approach based on self-knowledge and self-mastery, the two highly important areas for practicing true self-leadership. The Gītā is a non-sectarian spiritual text with a universal message.

## The Setting: Doing the Right Thing

The Gītā starts with the classic management dilemma: What is the right thing to do? Although Arjuna had agreed to undertake the challenge of a just war, fully aware of the gravity and the implications of the situation, at the final hour when the battle was just about to begin, he realizes the terror of the situation—that in this war, he has to shot arrows at his close relatives and teachers. His warrior nature is overcome by faint heartedness and his mind becomes confused about his allotted duty (*kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ...dharmasaṃmūḍhacetāḥ: 2.7*). Arjuna beseeches

Śrī Kṛṣṇa to guide him about the best course of action (*yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṃ brūhi tan me: 2.7*) as he does not see any way out of this grief which was drying up his senses (*ucchoṣaṇam indriyāṇām: 2.8*).

Bennis (1994, p. 78), a preeminent leadership scholar has observed, “Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right.” While this may be bit of an oversimplification—*since both leaders and managers need to do things right as well as do the right thing*—doing the right thing remains the perennial leadership challenge. But doing the right thing presupposes knowing what right thing is in the first place. *This is exactly the point where the Gītā begins.* What is the highest right thing to do in any given situation? Surely, answer to this enigmatic question holds the keys to many management conundrums. And the Gītā is an extended Ode to the attainment of the ultimate, the highest good (*niśśreyas*)—the knowledge of our oneness with the Ultimate Reality (*ātma-jñānam which is Brahma-ātma-aikyam*).

## From Apathy to Engagement

The Gītā starts with temporary apathy (*na yotsya: 2.9*) on the part of its warrior hero, Arjuna, and ends with his promise for full engagement (*kariṣye vacanaṃ tava: 18.73*) in the fulfillment of his duty. Thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa demonstrated leadership qualities in evolving and guiding Arjuna to successful engagement in the just war. The whole Gītā is dedicated to enlighten us, through the example of Arjuna, about how to fully engage in our duties efficiently, effectively and ethically while at the same time ensuring our highest goal, i.e., spiritual freedom (*niśśreyas*). Through the practice of selfless work (*niṣkāma karma*) for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite: 5.25*) and by developing steadfast wisdom, the Gītā teaches us how to discover the sacred in life while remaining fully engaged in the secular activities (Dhiman, 2013, p. 14).

Thus, the key lesson the Gītā teaches us is how to transition from the state of inertia to one of righteous action, from the state of alienation to a state of self-confidence in the ultimate victory of ethical action. By leading from within, Śrī Kṛṣṇa inspires the warrior hero Arjuna to engage in his rightful duty by cultivating mental equilibrium and objectivity to deal with any situation or crisis. The Gītā’s ideal is not indifference to the world but deep love and compassion born out of understanding the identity of oneself with all beings.

## Ethics: The Very Foundation of Human Conduct

In the scheme of the Bhagavad Gītā, ethical conduct (*dharma*) furnishes the essential foundation for the quest for spiritual freedom. The scriptures do not cleanse the ethically impure. It is interesting to note that the very first letter of the first word of the first verse (*śloka*) of the Gītā—‘*dharmakṣetre*’ (1.1)—and the very last letter of the last word of the last *śloka* of the Gītā—‘*mama*’ (18.78)—virtually form the word ‘*dharma*.’ Hence, the *dharma* (lit., that which supports or sustains) is the province of the entire Gītā! The opening words of the Gītā (1.1) are: *dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre*.

*Kuruḷḷe* literally means “the field of actions.” And *dharmakḷḷe* means that basic principle that sustains everything. So, the *Gītā* is about the domain of our actions, actions guided by the law or principle that sustains everything within the cosmic sphere.

In the *Gītā*’s terminology, the performance of actions selflessly as a service or as an offering to the Supreme sustains the cosmic system. In turn, such actions purify the mind and make it a fit vessel for the reception of Self-Knowledge which alone is the true means to spiritual freedom. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher Par Excellence in the *Gītā*, does not merely want to make us philosophically learned only but to help us realize the Truth *experientially*—not to merely *instruct* but to make us truly *wise* and *free*.

Thus, underscoring the role of ethics in life, the *Gītā* upholds a vital competency that is sorely needed in modern corporate world plagued by rampant financial frauds and inveterate moral ineptitude. It has been rightly observed that “ethics lies at the very heart of leadership” (Ciulla, 2004, p. xv). As Al Gini (cited in Ciulla, 2004, p. 43) has pointed out, “...without the witness of moral leadership, standards of ethics in business and organizational life neither emerge nor be sustained.” When leaders forget this vital point leadership regenerates into a narcissistic pursuit of self-aggrandizement to the detriment of the society. In the final reckoning, “the only true leadership is values-based leadership” (Toole, 2008, p. 4).

The spirituality of the *Gītā* is firmly rooted in the ethical values. There is no progress on the path of spirituality if there is no harmony and unity between our *vicāra* (thought process) and *ācāra* (conduct). Without ethical purity, the true message of the *Gītā* will elude us. Gandhi (cited in Iyer, 2012, p. 69) who made his life his message believed that one needs to observe five disciplines to arrive at the correct understanding of the interpretation of the *Gītā*:

But you must approach it with the five necessary equipments, *viz.*, *ahimsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *brahmacarya* (celibacy), *aparigraha* (non-possession), and *asteya* (non-stealing). Then and then only will you be able to reach a correct interpretation of it. And then you will read it to discover in it *ahimsā* and not *himsā*, as so many nowadays try to do.

These five disciplines are called *yamas* (abstentions) since they represent “moral restraints” or rules for living virtuously. These rules can be very effective in the workplace to create an atmosphere of amity and harmony. Practicing these abstentions, however, does not equal becoming “ineffectual” or allowing ourselves to be taken advantage of by others. Commenting on these five *yamas*, Prabhavananda and Isherwood (1953/1981, p. 141) have rightly noted, “We must think of ourselves as the servants of the mankind, and be ready to put ourselves at the disposal of those who need us. It does not mean, however, to lend ourselves to the evil purposes of others...The truly helpful man is like public trolley car, available to all who care to use it, but travelling, nevertheless, along a fix route to its destination.” The *Gītā* teaches that “be good, do good” is all that one needs to “be” and “do” to foster happiness in oneself and others.

## Mind: Our Greatest Friend and Foe

The Gītā reminds us that an unruly mind is our greatest foe and a stable mind is our greatest friend. Hence the Gītā places great emphasis on self-restraint and mental discipline. It is a common knowledge that mental strength and determination are the keys to leadership success; for leaders who are mentally weak and wayward cannot achieve a durable organizational vision or mission.

One of the hallmarks of unrestrained mind is a life given to selfish desire, anger, and greed. The Buddha also warns his disciples of these three mental traps. All wisdom traditions of the world are in agreement on this point that self-centered desire is the source of all sorrow and evil. The Gītā calls desire, anger and greed as triple gates of hell. It clarifies that the (unsatisfied) desire is the cause of greed as well as anger. The reason the Gītā lays so much importance on curtailing the desires is because all evil proceeds from self-centered desires. A person who is selfish cannot serve others. Such a person becomes a bane to the society. Therefore, a leader must first conquer self-centered desire if he or she is to serve others.

These three traps are present in every dysfunctional organization manifested to the highest degree in its leaders. The Gītā warns about the unrestraint senses and mind, thusly: As a strong wind sweeps away a boat on the water, even one of the roaming senses on which the mind focuses can carry away a man's intelligence (2.67). Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents a precise taxonomy of the dangers of attachment leading to complete ruin: attachment breeds desire, and from desire (unfulfilled) ensues anger; anger clouds judgment and when judgment is beclouded, reasoning power is lost; and with the loss of reasoning one falls from one's status as human being (2.62–63).

A leader should, therefore, manage his anger well and should not let anger gain control over him. Mastering the emotion of anger is a not an easy task as many sages of past and present have reminded us. As Aristotle (quoted in Leonard, Miles, & Van der Kar, 1944, p. 203) has deftly noted, “Anybody can become angry, that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way, that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

Many methods are recommended to control the anger, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Most people recommend the delay tactic—to not to respond at all in the heat of anger. That is effective only if one remembers to not forget this counsel of perfection at the onset of anger. Gītā says that to control anger, we need to pay attention to its root cause. Anger arises when someone stands in the way of our object of desire—from desire (unfulfilled) ensues anger. And attachment to things, ideas, and opinions lie at the root of desire. Basically, to control anger, we should first guard and calm our mind. If our mind remains in a state of calm then no negative emotions can arouse in it. To attain peace of mind, the easiest way is to let our mind dwell within our own inner nature rather than all the time hankering outside after the worldly objects.

We should also consider cultivating a daily practice of some form of meditation, since during meditation, mind becomes naturally calm and tranquil. One needs to be



patient with oneself as well as with others. Practicing loving-kindness and forgiveness toward all also help us develop understanding and tolerance. One of the most effective techniques to manage anger is to keep in mind the acronym ‘F.I.R.’ denoting frequency, intensity, and recovery (Paramārthānanda, 2008). To manage anger effectively, we have to patiently work on reducing the frequency of the anger, its intensity, as well as the recovery period.

## Equanimity (*Samatā*): The Touchstone of Perfection in Wisdom

The Gītā regards ‘equanimity’ or ‘evenness of mind’ to be the *Yoga* (2:48). And the finest teaching on this topic is provided in the Gītā as follows:

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya |*  
*siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate || 2.48*

Abiding in equanimity, abandoning attachment, perform actions, O Arjuna, viewing with equanimous mind success and failure. Evenness of mind (*samatvaṁ*) is *Yoga*.

When we perform an action, we have certain expectations about its results. The actual results can be equal to our expectations, less than our expectations, more than our expectations, or totally opposite to our expectations. Whatever be the outcome, the Gītā teaches us to accept it gracefully by maintaining a state of evenness of mind (*samatā*) towards the results of our actions. By not fighting with “what is,” we conserve a lot of energy which can then be fruitfully applied in addressing the situation at hand.

*Samatā* (equanimity) is the “fulcrum” around which the entire teachings of the Gītā revolve. Wherever Śrī Kṛṣṇa has mentioned the highest peaks of the paths of action, knowledge, and devotion, He has very carefully interspersed ‘*samatā*’ in their consummation (2.48, 53, 57; 5.6, 18–20; 12.13–19; 14.24, 25; 18.10, 26). So, *samatā* is the crest-jewel of perfection (*siddhi*) in all the paths to God-Realization. All virtues obtain in the mind which has cultivated equanimity. Whatever the spiritual practice, if evenness of mind (*samatā*) is not there, the goal is still far away (Swāmī Rāmsukhdāsī, 2007). When our mind has become pure and our intellect ‘*sama*’—‘balanced and equanimous’—we have attained oneness with the highest principle of existence. Such is the supreme importance of *samatā*!

According to Swāmī Rāmsukhdāsī (2007), evenness of mind or equanimity (*samatā*) is the ‘acid-test’ of realization according to all three disciplines (*Karmayōg*, *Jñānayōg*, *Bhaktiyōg*). In the Bhagavad Gītā, the very first definition of *Yōg* (communion with Divine) is said to be ‘*samatā*’—‘*samatvaṁ yōgaḥ ucyate*’ (BG 2.48). Then in BG 6.23, we read ‘*dukha-sanjog-viyōg yōg sanjittam*’—That state is called *Yōga* which transcends the contact of sorrow. This is the “dexterity/skillfulness” in actions—‘*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*’ (BG 2.50). Swāmī Rāmsukhdāsī (2007) states that the verses 2.48 and 6.23 “define” what the *yoga* is according to the Gītā; and the verse 2.50 states the glory of *yoga*. So, *yoga*

according to the Gītā is *samatā*. (See: Dhiman, trans., *Kripāmayi Bhagavad Gītā*, Dhiman, 2014; *Sahaja Gītā*, Dhiman, 2013).

Too often, great decisions are marred by the manager's and leader's inability to see beyond the surface in a calm and collected manner. Managers and leaders can benefit greatly from this unique state of equanimity and objectivity in dealing with perennial leadership challenges without being disturbed by the pulls and pushes of personal likes and dislikes. *Samatā* is the best antidote to the agitations of the mind.

## Empowering vs. Disempowering Work Culture

In order to understand human behavior better, the Gītā makes a special reference to the psychological make-up of individuals comprising three basic modes of nature—*sattva* (purity/goodness) that brings truth/harmony; *rajas* (movement/passion) that kindles action/activity, and *tamas* (ignorance/inertia) that leads to delusion/confusion. The key to follow this tripartite division of human nature is to understand that no individual has absolute *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic* qualities. Depending upon our inherited tendencies and current mode of living, several permutations and combinations are possible on this broad spectrum of these three psychological types. This knowledge fosters understanding, tolerance and patience. At the same time, it provides guidance to effect change based on fuller information and greater understanding.

In Chap. 16 of the Bhagavad Gītā, we find very practical guidance on building an empowering (*daivī*) work culture—characterized by fearlessness, purity, self-restraint, sacrifice, straightforwardness, non-violence, truthfulness, tranquility, gentleness, modesty, forgiveness, absence of fault-finding, greed, ostentatiousness, envy and pride. Leaders should strive to enshrine these qualities and should try to foster such an environment where these qualities can be nurtured. (16.1–3).

Similarly, the Gītā goes on to describe what may be called disempowering (*āsurī*) work culture—characterized by hypocrisy, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, harshness, and lack of sense of discrimination between real and unreal, duty and non-duty (16.4). Leaders are aware that a strong work ethic marked by empowering qualities goes a long way to achieve workplace excellence. It is to be noted that mere work ethic is not enough to attain in as much as a hard core criminal has also a very good work ethic. What is needed is a work ethic guided by ethics in work.

The deeper message here is that we should not pry on the faults of others; rather, we should improve our own shortcomings. A too critical, carping attitude towards our fellow-beings is a source of much unhappiness. “If you want peace of mind,” said Sri Sarada Devi, “do not find fault with others” (Cited in Swami Satprakashananda, 1977, p. 93). The importance of this observation also lies in the fact that this is the last recorded message of Sri Sarada Devi, the worthy consort of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the greatest Indian sage-saint of the Nineteenth century.

Swami Dayananda (cited in Prasad, 1999, p. 246) says that the purpose knowing about these values is not self-judgment or judgment of others. All kinds of people

make up this world. You want to change others so that you can be free, but it never works that way....People are what they are because they have their own backgrounds, and they cannot be otherwise. Thus, the Gītā teaches a higher level of accountability based on one's own innate duty (*swadharma*). The very *raison d'être* of the teachings of the Gītā was to re-awaken Arjuna to his sense of responsibility which he had temporarily lost due to delusion born of ignorance (*ajñānasam̐mohaḥ*: 18.72). The higher accountability is garnered by renouncing egoism (*amānitvam*: 13.7), cultivating humility, team work, dignity, sharing, co-operation, compassion, harmony, trust, sacrificing lower impulses for higher needs, seeing others in yourself and yourself in others (*sarvātmabhāva*), etc.

## Selflessness Is the Best Thing You Can Do for Yourself!

Misplaced ego is the greatest enemy of workplace amity and harmony. Understanding the workings of the imposter ego and thereby rendering it ineffective is the first step on the path of wisdom. In the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā where Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins to describe the marks or means of True Knowledge (Gītā 13. 7–11), we see 'absence of self-pride' (13.7) listed as the very first mark. In the very next verse (13.8), Śrī Kṛṣṇa again states... 'and absence of egotism also' (*anahamkāra eva ca*). Please note the word 'also' after the word 'egotism.' Out of the 20 marks of True Knowledge listed in verses 13. 7–11, the word 'also' is appended only next to the absence of 'self-pride' (*'anahamkāra'*)! Something to ponder over very deeply!

As long as one is harboring a sense of distinction/superiority, regardless of any reason—justified or unjustified—one is still belaboring in vain, not much unlike the ox that turns the oil press going back and forth. When God is all there is (*Vāsudevaḥ Sarvam*: 7.19), where is the need for entertaining any feelings of distinction or superiority—no matter what the justification may be?

Those who are truly awake become awake to the fact that 'God is all there is'—including the ones who may not be yet awake, in their estimation! This knowledge fosters amity, understanding, and harmony in all settings and removes the conflict inherent in the 'game of one-up-ness' that plagues most human interaction. Likewise, we come to realize that most psychological and emotional stress is caused by our excessive self-centeredness.

Selfless service, the cardinal doctrine of the Gītā, has a great application in the realm of leadership. First and foremost, leadership is a responsibility—a call to serve—and not a position to wield power or influence. The power that is bestowed upon the leader by the followers is of the nature of trust and good faith. In other words, leadership is a fiduciary relationship. Viewed in this manner, the only reason a leader exists is to enable and empower the followers. Great leaders approach their work as a contribution, as a service, without any sense of entitlement whatsoever. "Like 'Guardians' of Plato's *Republic*," writes Al Gini (cited in Ciulla, 2004, p. 36), "leaders must see their office as a social responsibility, a trust, a duty, and not as a symbol of their personal identity, prestige, and lofty status."

Self-centeredness is a condition borne with a deeply ingrained sense of separateness, anchored in self-ignorance. Self-knowledge is freedom from self-ignorance; when self-ignorance transforms into Self-knowledge, our need to maintain our separateness is resolved into the fullness of our being. We no longer feel the gnawing sense of inadequacy, incompleteness, and insecurity. We have arrived at an unassailable stillness, blessed with the fullness of our essential nature. We have made peace with the universe.

## **Journey from Consumer to Contributor**

The Gītā is a practical manual of living. It lays down the guidelines for leading a meaningful life—a life marked by goodness and contribution. Pablo Picasso put it succinctly: “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” What makes our life purposeful and meaningful? What is the essence of being good and doing good? What does it mean to grow in goodness? How can one grow from being a consumer to becoming a contributor? The Gītā holds the keys to all these existential questions.

The Gītā recommends to approach life as a network of mutual interdependencies in which everyone has to contribute their share. And the touchstone is not mere human welfare but well-being of all beings. Only then we can ensure the mutual maintenance of the universe. This understanding holds the key to a sustainable future for all.

The Gītā (18.5) recommends the threefold acts of sacrifice (*yajña*), charity (*dāna*), and austerity (*tapas*) and considers them as the “purifiers of the wise.” In order to grow spiritually, one has to convert one’s whole life into an offering to the Divine. This will inspire trust, faith and hope in those led.

## **Managers and Leaders Should Lead by Example**

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that those in leadership position should act responsibly since whatever standards or example the leader sets people in general will follow. Leaders’ actions do speak louder than their words. In essence, leaders are really brand-ambassadors of an organization. Humanity has yet to discover a more effective way to bring about change and to lead others than by setting the example. All great leaders lead by example. Gandhi inspired emulation not so much by his professed set of values and beliefs as by the exemplary nature of his life and conduct. *He made his life his message.* This virtue of “being the change” became Gandhian hallmark and his most precious legacy by which he is remembered the most. He was the rare soul who *preached what he practiced!*

## The Making of Wise Managers and Leaders

According to the teachings of the Gītā, the wise managers and leaders act:

1. To set an example to the masses, so the unwary do not go astray (3.26);
2. For the unification of the world at large (*lokasaṃgraham*, 3.20, 3.25);
3. For the welfare of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite*, 5.25); and
4. For the purification of the self (*ātmasuddhaye*, 5.11).

All these four goals furnish an integral touchstone for leadership success in any setting. Leaders do their duty for duty's sake (cf. Kant's Duty Ethics), to set an example for others, to bring the communities together, for the well-being of all beings, and above all, for the purification of the mind and the heart. No higher teaching on the sublimity of a leader's work ethic and work ethics can be conceived.

There are at least four places where characteristics of an ideal sage are presented in the Gītā from different perspectives: BG 2.55–72; 12.13–20; 14.21–27; and 18.49–56. In addition, we also find reaffirmation of the same theme in selected verses of two other chapters: BG 13.7–11 and 16.1–3. For example, Chap. 12 (verses 13–20) describe the marks of a devotee (*bhakta*) which have a striking similarity to the qualities of a person who has transcended the sway of three modes of material nature—*guṇatīta* (14.21–27), which in turn bear a great similarity to the characteristics of a person steadfast in wisdom (*sthitaprajña*) as described in Chap. 2 (verses 55–72) as follows (Easwaran, cited in Fischer, 2002, p. xvii, author's adaptation):

That person is dear to me who is free from ill-will, friendly and compassionate; free from the sense of "I" and "mine;" equanimous in joy and sorrow, forgiving, ever-content, firm in faith with his mind ever united with Me; who has subdued his mind, senses, and body; and has surrendered heart and mind to Me....Not agitating the world, nor agitated by it, above the sway of delight, envy, desire, and fear; who regards equally friend and foe, praise and blame, pain and pleasure, free from selfish attachments; quiet, ever-content, in harmony everywhere, firm in faith—such a person is dear to Me.

It is noteworthy that almost all of these qualities of an ideal sage more or less focus on emotional maturity—the ability to manage emotional disturbances and reactions calmly. Cultivating these qualities is important for everyone both in personal and professional arena. For example, being friendly and compassionate and free from malice (12. 13: *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa*), being free from attachment, fear, and anger (2.56, 4.10: *vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ*), and not being a source of annoyance to fellow-beings and not feeling vexed with the fellow-beings (12.15: *yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ*)—all these are signs of emotional stability which is the key to harmony in personal and professional relationship.

This is a tall order of personal qualities for any leader to cultivate and requires years and years of dedication, commitment, and perseverance. These qualities represent the highest level of emotional maturity, self-awareness, and self-discipline, equanimity, and detachment that may appear to be unattainable by any leader

according to modern standards. Exemplary leaders like Gandhi act as “witness” of high moral leadership without whom the limits of higher human possibilities will neither be known nor sustained. In Easwaran’s estimation (cited in Fischer, 2002, p. xvii), who was present at one of the prayer meetings that Gandhi regularly held, Gandhi “fulfilled every condition that the Gītā lays down.”

In the ultimate analysis, management is not about changing outer conditions or others. More often than not, there is not much that we can do to change what is external to us. However, we have full control over our own conduct. “When we are no longer able to change a situation,” writes Frankl (1984, p. 116), “we are challenged to change ourselves.” And when we are able to do that, in due course of time, we are also able to change the situation, unexpectedly. This is the alchemy of all social change.

### **Authentic Leaders See Themselves as Work-in-Progress**

This is what great leaders do—they see themselves as a work-in-progress, and they sculpt themselves to get progressively closer to their ideal form. And their impact on the world, as a result, grows exponentially. In a letter Mandela wrote from jail to his wife Winnie, he wrote, “Never forget that a saint is a sinner who keeps trying” (cited in Wadhwa, 2013).

What guidance does the Gītā provide in developing transformational leaders, leaders who lead from within and put service before self? The Gītā focuses on developing qualities of head and heart, entirely focusing on self-mastery. Before we can aspire to lead others well, we need to manage ourselves effectively. If leadership is an extension of who we are, then cultivation of self-discipline and self-mastery becomes our priority. The Gītā provides an extensive list of such qualities, some of which are stated below:

(1) Humility, (2) Unpretentiousness, (3) Non-violence (not causing any injury to anyone through one’s body, mind, and speech), (4) Forbearance, (5) Simplicity of body, mind, and speech, (6) To realize self-knowledge, approaching, serving, and following a teacher (one who is liberated-in-life), (7) Purity of body and mind, (8) Steadfastness of purpose, (9) Self-restraint, (10) Dispassion towards sense-objects, (11) Absence of egoism (absence of the sense that ‘I am body’), (12) Abandonment of worldly attachment, (13) Even-mindedness in favorable (desirable) and unfavorable (undesirable) circumstances, (14) Perceiving God everywhere and in everything (BG 13.7–11).

It is important to note that all these qualities are geared towards the service aspect of leadership—*preparing a leader in the service of others*. A leader who is arrogant and too self-absorbed cannot really lead an organization to success. The imposter ego of the leader will stand in the way of organizational goals. In his now classic book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins notes that compelling modesty is one of the two key competencies of what he calls level-5 leaders, the other being fierce professional will. In their study of 1423 leading companies, Jim Collins and his colleagues found the most successful leaders blend “extreme personal humility with intense professional will.” (Collins, 2001).

## Journey from Self-Ignorance to Self-Knowledge

The Gītā teaches us that the fundamental human problem is the lack of self-knowledge and the resultant extroverted-ness of our search for happiness and the mistaken way we relate to the world. In all our quests, we approach people, objects, and situations through the prism of our likes and dislikes (*rāga-dvēṣa*) which leads to attachment or aversion. Attachment leads to sorrow and sorrow leads to delusion which in turn compounds our misery.

When the Self-knowledge (*ātam-jñāna*) dawns, we realize that whatever we have been seeking is already within us. It is in fact our own very nature or self. J. Krishnamurti once said, “Truth is a pathless land.” This is the historic statement that Krishnamurti made when he dissolved ‘The Order of the Star in the East’ that was founded in 1911 to proclaim the coming of the World Teacher. Krishnamurti was made Head of this Order. On August 3, 1929, the opening day of the annual Star Camp at Ommen, Holland, Krishnamurti dissolved the Order before 3000 members. This was the title of his speech. [The full speech can be found at: <http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/about-krishnamurti/dissolution-speech.php>].

This pithy, enigmatic quote *does not* really mean that there is no path to truth; rather it signifies that we are already the truth that we are seeking. Since there is no separation from the truth (Reality) to begin with, no path is really needed. Thus, Self-realization is a matter of “recognizing” what “Is,” a matter of attaining the ever-attained (*prāptasya-prāpti*) (See: Dayananda, 2009, p. 39). It is not a problem of “becoming;” it is a problem of “being.” It is a journey from “here” to “here.” Scott Teitsworth (2014, p. 11) puts it succinctly:

In Vedānta—the philosophical system of the Gītā and its close cousins, the Upanishads—everyone and all things are the Absolute in essence, and the seeker’s path such as it is, is to come to know this truth. It is a path that begins and ends right where we are.

The Gītā identifies *kāma*, a state of constant desiring and wanting, as life’s fundamental problem. This constant feeling of lack springs from a mistaken sense of inadequacy about one’s self. This leads to running constantly towards objects to fulfill the sense of incompleteness. The fascination for an object (*vishaya*) thinking that it can give security and happiness is called *shōbhana adhyāsa* in Vedāntā. The proper resolution of this problem is to be found in the understanding oneself, through self-inquiry and contemplation, to be the full and complete self (*ātman*). Such knowledge enables one to act in the world from a deep sense of peace and inward fulfillment.

Self-knowledge transforms our motivation and liberates us from the narrow confines of selfish action to the freedom of serving others. Through this re-discovery of our intrinsic freedom, we are also able to experience the calm bliss of the fullness of our Self and intuit the harmonious oneness of all existence. When the false divisions and distinctions based on our narrow personal likes and dislikes disappear, we are able to extend our benevolence without preference or prejudice in all directions and our very existence benefits the whole universe. Our existence then becomes an

offering to the Supreme, a celebration to the Whole. And our feet get firmly planted on the path that leads to peace, happiness, and liberation. The teachings of the Gītā gently guide us toward this *summum bonum* of all human quests and pursuits.

## The Ultimate Recipe for Self-Management and Leadership

If leadership is an extension of who we are, then leaders first need to manage themselves before they can aspire to lead others. Underscoring the importance of self-leadership, the Bhagavad Gītā further stresses that an individual leader must uplift himself by his own self and he must not let himself be undermined when facing a crisis. Leaders must elevate themselves by their own self-efforts (*uddhared ātmanātmānam*: 6.5) and this requires a deep understanding of the workings of the mind. For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends, but for one who has failed to control their mind, the mind will be the greatest enemy (*ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* 6.5). An untrained mind is very weak and unstable and cannot carry out any task, let alone lead. Arjuna told Śrī Kṛṣṇa that his mind was unsteady, restless, very powerful, and as difficult to control as the wind. Śrī Kṛṣṇa agreed that the mind is not easy to control, however, he said that it is possible to control the mind by constant practice and detachment or dispassion (*abhyāsenā...vairāgyeṇa ca*: 6.35).

Leaders need to employ their intellect effectively to direct their mind. In this regard, *Katha Upaniṣad* 1.3.3–4, another Indian wisdom text, likens the human body to a chariot (*ratha kalpanā*) to describe the position of individual Self (*ātmā*) *vis-à-vis* senses (*indriya*), mind (*manas*), and intellect (*buddhi*). Mind is the reins and the five senses are the horses. The objects perceived by the senses represent the chariot's path. The intellect is the driver and the Self as the passenger acts as the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses. Whereas an ordinary leader is constantly driven by the wayward mind and unruly desires for sense objects, a wise leader uses the power of intelligence to discern between what is pleasant (*preyas*) and what is right (*shreyas*).

In many respects, the Bhagavad Gītā is similar to the *Katha Upaniṣad*, the one from which some of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā are believed by many to have been drawn. Then the *Katha Upaniṣad* goes on to describe spiritual practice using a bow-arrow simile. A seeker of the Truth should take the sacred syllable Om (ॐ) told in Upaniṣads as bow, the seeker's Self purified by constant meditation as arrow, Supreme Reality as target; by pulling back the senses from their sense objects, with heedfulness, the seeker should become one with the Supreme Reality (Brahman) as the arrow in the mark (2.2.4). This is the great identity between the individual Self and the universal Self (*Brahma-ātma-aikyam*) spoken of in the Indian wisdom texts called Upaniṣads.

This is the final desideratum and the *summum bonum* of all human aspiration and quest.



## Fulfilled Managers and Leaders: Master Keys to a Fulfilled Life

The key to life's fulfillment according to the Gītā lies in Self-realization through Self-knowledge. The realization that 'I am the Limitless Unchanging Pure Awareness that illumines senses, mind, ego, and the world' is Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is the means as well as the end. Real fulfillment of human life lies in firmly establishing oneself in the Self (*ātmā*), our true nature (Dhiman, 2015, 2017). This Self is unchanging Pure Awareness that illumines/witnesses the states of waking, dream and deep sleep and all mental modes. And all the keys to Self-realization are presented in the very beginning of the Gītā (2.55–2.61) as follows: When one, finding contentment by the Self in the Self alone, completely casts off all selfish desires of the mind; neither agitated by the sorrow nor hankering after the sense pleasures; free from lust, fear, and anger; free from attachment; neither elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad; with senses subdued and mind ever absorbed in the Divine within—*such a person is truly wise*. The net result of cultivating these qualities is the peace, fulfillment and real happiness.

There is no bliss greater than the bliss experienced by the one who beholds the Self through the self and rejoices in the Self (*ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*: 2.55). This bliss is not dependent upon the senses or external objects, and, in this bliss, the intellect remains fully awake and alert. Established in such bliss, one never deviates from it, even amidst the greatest of the sorrows (6.22). To have attained this bliss is the touchstone (litmus test) of all spiritual practices—a sure proof of spiritual plenitude (6.20–26).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa started the teaching in the Gītā declaring that “the wise do not grieve” (2.11: *nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*) and concludes it with an assurance “do not grieve” (18.66, *mā śucaḥ*). So, if you want to overcome the sorrow, attain to the liberating wisdom of the Self. What is this liberating wisdom? Just this: perform your actions as an offering to the Supreme (*Īśvara-arpanabhāvanā*), performing your duties without the expectation of any reward, and, above all, surrendering to the Divine within.

A Western disciple, Elizabeth Usha Harding, once wrote a letter full of despair to Swami Gambhirānanda, the great Advaita Vedāntā scholar and translator. He replied: “I hope you realize that true peace can only come by surrendering to the Divine within us. The world will always go on in its own way. There can never be any permanent solution to problems created by human nature” (See: Harding, 2011). Shortly before his passing, Swami Gambhirānanda (cited in Harding, 2011) told one of his attendants: “I feel I'm nearing the house of death.” Then, quickly, he corrected himself and said, “No, I am not. There is no death for the Knower of Self (God).”

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## Essence of the 18 Chapters of the Gītā

(Partially adapted from Dhiman, trans., *Sahaḥja Gītā*. Print edition, Dhiman, 2013, pp. 175–178)

The Gītā consists of eighteen chapters comprising 700 verses. To facilitate understanding of the message of the Gītā, we present a brief summary of the subject-matter of each chapter. The word ‘*yogah*’ at the end of each chapter simply signals its topic or subject-matter. It reflects a skillful means of *integrating* oneself through a particular method as explained in a given chapter. In essence, each of the eighteen chapters of the Gītā presents a unique discipline or *yoga* of connecting with the Supreme.

### **Essence of the First Chapter (अर्जुनविषादयोगः *arjunaviṣādayogaḥ*) (47 verses)**

The first chapter is titled as the *yoga* of Arjuna’s dejection or anguish, *arjunaviṣādayogaḥ*. Arjuna came to the war, knowing very well that he would have to fight with his own kith and kin. But when he actually saw his relatives, elders, teachers, and friends lined up on the other side, ready to fight, it brought about a confusion in his mind regarding duty and desire, reason and emotion. The intensity of Arjuna’s anguish created a deep dispassion in him which is a necessary condition for understanding the deeper truths of life. Essentially, Arjuna is archetypical of all of us struggling in the battle of life. Overpowered by the delusion born of ignorance, we get confused about our real duty and get caught up in this dilemma, “What should I do and what should I not do.” The force of such a dilemma brings us face to face with a spiritual guide—just as despairing Arjuna who sought guidance from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Being, the Lord in human form. The deeper message in this chapter is that the most challenging moments of our life hold the keys to our existential dilemmas. But we must seek a competent mentor who knows the alchemy of transforming moments of crises into opportunities of profound meaning and learning.

### **Essence of the Second Chapter (साङ्ख्ययोगः *sāṅkhyayogaḥ*) (72 verses)**

The body is perishable and the Self (soul) which knows it is imperishable (2.13, 2.16, 2.18, 2.120). By giving importance to this discriminating reasoning (*viveka*) and diligently fulfilling one’s allotted duty, worries and sorrows come to an end. This chapter is generally considered as the summary of the entire Gītā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches all he has to teach in Chap. 2 and elaborates it in the remaining sixteen chapters. Accordingly, it presents all the *yogas* in a seed form—*Karma Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga*, etc.—which are further developed in the later chapters. This chapter introduces an important touchstone of wisdom—equanimity of mind (*samatvam* 2.48) which is later presented as an acid test of perfection in all the *yogas* in the Gītā (2.48, 53, 57; 5.6, 18–20; 12.13–19; 14.24, 25; 18.10, 26). So, *samatā* is the crest-jewel of perfection (*siddhi*) in all the paths to God-realization. All virtues obtain in a mind

that has cultivated equanimity. Whatever the spiritual practice, if evenness of mind (*samatā*) is not attained, the goal is still far away.

### **Essence of the Third Chapter (कर्मयोगः *karmayogaḥ*) (43 verses)**

Fulfilling one's duty selflessly for the well-being of others leads to liberation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains the essence of the path of action as the performance of one's prescribed duties *without* attachment to results. Desire-prompted actions and attachment to results of actions leads to bondage. Karma *yoga* is the *yoga* of "attitude" toward actions and their results: performance of actions as an offering to the Divine and acceptance of results as a Divine Grace. This attitude signifies *yoga*, union, with the Supreme through actions. This is the skillfulness (*kauśalam*) in actions and *yoga* in *karma*, *karmayogaḥ*.

### **Essence of the Fourth Chapter (ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगः *jñānakarmasāṅnyāsayaogaḥ*) (42 verses)**

There are two ways to be free from the bondage of actions: Performing actions unselfishly as an offering by understanding the true essence of actions or by realizing (or attaining) the knowledge of the essential Reality (*tattva-jñāna*). This chapter also stresses the importance of learning the science of Self-knowledge from the wise ones (*jñāninasta*) who have realized the truth in their direct experience (*tattvadarśinaḥ* 4.32).

### **Essence of the Fifth Chapter (संन्यासयोगः *sāṅnyāsayaogaḥ*) (29 verses)**

A person should not become happy or unhappy due to favorable or unfavorable circumstances. One who becomes happy or unhappy due to circumstances, cannot rise above the mundane world and experience the Bliss Supreme. This chapter explains what is action, what is inaction, who is the doer of action, and what is true renunciation. True renunciation is renunciation *in* action, not *of* actions. Renunciation in action occurs by renouncing the 'doer-ship'—the false sense that 'I am the doer.' This is the true *yoga* in the performance of actions.

### **Essence of the Sixth Chapter (आत्मसंयमयोगः *ātmasāmyamayogaḥ*) (47 verses)**

This chapter presents the path of meditation (*dhyānayoga*) by which mastery of the mind might be gained. Resolving the mind in the Self (आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा *ātmasamsthāṁ manaḥ kṛtvā* 6.25) is the essence of meditation and is the best spiritual practice. The

wise see all things in God and God in all things (6.29–30). This chapter contains some of the most important verses about the path of knowledge (6.29–32) and the path of devotion (6.30, 6.47) and provides the most succinct definition of yoga as ‘dissociation from association with sorrow’ (6.23). Whatever be the spiritual practice, one should attain equanimity (*samatā*) of mind. Without equanimity of mind, a person cannot become completely free from the agitations of the mind (or the sway of the thoughts).

### **Essence of the Seventh Chapter (ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः *jñānavijñānayogaḥ*) (30 verses)**

Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains the nature of Absolute Reality and the illusory nature of *Māyā*, the creative Divine energy responsible for the appearance of the variegated world of name and form. God is all there is (वासुदेवः सर्वमितिः *vāsudevaḥ sarvaṃ iti* 7.19): to accept this and live a God-centered life is the best spiritual practice. The Gītā adds that such a wise person is very hard to come by (स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः *sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ* 7.19).

### **Essence of the Eighth Chapter (अक्षरब्रह्मयोगः *akṣarabrahmayogaḥ*) (28 verses)**

The fate of an embodied soul is determined according to its state of mind at the time of death. Therefore, remembering God at all times, we should perform our allotted duties (सर्वेषुकालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च *sarveṣukāleṣu māmanusmara yudhya ca* 8.7). Only then shall we be able to remember God during our critical last moments. This is the desideratum of all spiritual life.

### **Essence of the Ninth Chapter (राजविद्याराजगुह्ययोगः *rājavidyārājaguhyaयोगः*) (34 verses)**

The chapter presents the path or *yoga* of the most secret royal knowledge. The alchemy of this knowledge is presented as the highest devotion, thusly: Fix your mind on Me (the Lord), with Me as thy support (मन्मना भव...मत्परायणः *manmanā bhava...matparāyaṇaḥ* 9.34) and whatever you do, please do it as an offering to Me (यत्करोषि...तत्तमदर्पणम् *yatkarōṣi...tatamadarpaṇam* 9.27). If you do so, it is assured that the Lord will take care of what you need to get and protect it too (योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् *yogakṣemam vahāmyaham* 9.22). According to Swami Ram Tirath ji, verse 9.22 is the watershed since it represents the *mid-point* of the Gītā. And hence its unique importance. It was once explained to this author that, in this context, *yogakṣemam* (योगक्षेमं) does not refer to the provision and protection of worldly things by the Lord. Rather, it means that to those ever united in thought with the Lord, the Lord ensures that what is needed for the spiritual progress of the seeker will be provided (योग) as well as protected (क्षेमं). That is the true import of verse 9.22.

### **Essence of the Tenth Chapter (विभूतियोगः *vibhūtiyogaḥ*) (42 verses)**

This chapter reveals that God is the primal source of all and everything in the universe. Wherever any uniqueness, special quality, beauty, prominence, brilliance, strength, etc., are observed in the world, considering them to have sprung from the Lord, one should constantly contemplate on the Lord alone.

### **Essence of the Eleventh Chapter (विश्वरूपदर्शनयोगः *viśvarūpadarśanayogaḥ*) (55 verses)**

This chapter presents the vision of the Universal Form of the Lord. It explains how the Supreme Being pervades the entire cosmic creation. By regarding this universe verily as God's cosmic form, everyone can have a vision of God's universal form constantly. The last verse of this chapter is considered to be the quintessential verse summarizing the essential import of the entire Gītā: The one who does all actions for My sake, regards me as his Supreme Goal, who is devoted to Me, free from all attachments and free from malice towards all beings, comes to Me, O Arjuna! This verse also prepares the ground for the culminating chapter on the yoga of loving devotion to the Lord (*bhaktiyogaḥ*).

### **Essence of the Twelfth Chapter (भक्तियोगः *bhaktiyogaḥ*) (20 verses)**

This chapter explains the exalted path of devotion or divine love. It states that a devotee, who fully surrenders himself to God, with his body, senses, mind, and intellect, is extremely dear to God (ज्तीव मे प्रियाः 'tīva me priyāḥ 12.20). The Gītā regards the *yoga* of loving devotion/service to and relationship with the Lord as the highest form of *yoga*.

### **Essence of the Thirteenth Chapter (क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञविभागयोगः *kṣetrakṣetrajñavibhāgayogaḥ*) (34 verses)**

This chapter presents twenty preparatory marks of knowledge. There is only One Supreme Reality (*Paramātama-tattva*) which pervades the entire universe. This Supreme Reality, which is the Light of all lights (ज्योतिषाम ज्योति *jyotiṣāma jyoti* 13.17) is to be known; knowing which one attains to immortality. Such a person has realized that the Divine resides equally in all and everything (13.27) and that the self in me is the Self in all. This chapter is considered to be the most important chapter from the standpoint of the path of knowledge, *jñāna yoga*.

### **Essence of the Fourteenth Chapter (गुणत्रयविभागयोगः *guṇatrayavibhāgayogaḥ*) (27 verses)**

This chapter explains the three modes, *guṇas*, of material nature—*sattva* (purity), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (inertia)—how they bind and how can one transcend them. *Sattva* binds one through attachment to pleasure and knowledge, *rajas* to actions and their fruit, and *tamas* to apathy and sloth (14.6–9). To be free from the bondage of the threefold properties of material nature (*prakṛti*), one has to rise above the triad of the qualities of purity, passion, and inertia. One becomes free from these three modes through knowledge of, and unswerving devotion to, the Supreme.

### **Essence of the Fifteenth Chapter (पुरुषोत्तमयोगः *puruṣottamayogaḥ*) (20 verses)**

The sole source and support of this universe, the infinitely Supreme Person (*puruṣottama*) is the One Lord only. All splendor, glory, and excellences belong to this Supreme Being, the inner essence of all. Knowing the Lord as the Self of all thusly, one should worship the Lord with exclusive and unswerving devotion. Knowing this, a person becomes wise and has accomplished all that has to be accomplished (बुद्धिमान्स्यात्कृतकृत्यश्च *buddhimānsyātkṛtakṛtyaśca* 15.20). The Gītā extolls the teaching revealed in this chapter to be the most profound scripture (गुह्यतमं शास्त्रम् *guhyaṭamaṁ śāstrama* 15.20). Ādī Śaṅkarācārya’s comment (cited in Sastry, 1897/1995, p. 412) regarding this is illuminating: ‘Though the whole of Gita is called Science (Sastra) yet from the context it appears that the fifteenth discourse alone here is spoken as the Science, for the purpose of extolling it. In fact, the whole teaching of the Gita-Sastra has been summed up in this discourse.’

### **Essence of the Sixteenth Chapter (दैवासुरसम्पद्विभागयोगः *daivāsurasampadvibhāgayogaḥ*) (24 verses)**

In this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa identifies the human traits in terms of divine and the demonic natures which can be understood as empowering and disempowering dispositions. He counsels that to attain the supreme destination one must give up the disempowering traits such as desire, anger, greed and cultivate favorable traits such as truthfulness, purity of mind, modesty, authenticity, fortitude, and compassion. To discriminate between right and wrong action, let discernment (*viveka*) and the injunctions of the scripture (*śāstra*) be our guides.

### **Essence of the Seventeenth Chapter (श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः *śraddhātrayavibhāgayogaḥ*) (28 verses)**

The operative word in this chapter is *śraddhā* which is hard to translate. It is commonly translated as faith, but *śraddhā* is more than faith and includes an element of loving-devotion. In one of his discourses on the Gītā, Swāmī Akandānand jī Mahārāj explains that the word ‘*śraddhā*’ (*sad + dhāraṇa*) signifies the capacity to embrace truth (सत्य को धारण करने की क्षमता). Śrī Kṛṣṇa enunciates the three divisions of faith, thoughts, and deeds corresponding to the three modes (*guṇas*). Whatever auspicious task one begins with loving-devotion, one should begin it by remembering God and by uttering His Holy Name. The chapter concludes with the explanation of ‘*Om tat sat,*’ the three-fold expression of *Brahman*, the Absolute Reality.

### **Essence of the Eighteenth Chapter (मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः *mokṣasamnyāsayogaḥ*) (78 verses)**

This culminating chapter is the longest and sums up the entire teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. Themes that are hinted in the previous chapters are brought full circle in this final chapter. Vedas are the essence of all scriptures; Upaniṣads are the essence of all Vedas; the Gita is the essence of Upaniṣads; and the essence of the Gītā lies in taking refuge in God (*Bhagavān ki śarnāgati*). One who takes refuge exclusively in the Lord, the Lord frees that person of all the sins.

Ajruna conveys his understanding of the final message of the Gītā in the following concluding verse (18.73):

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।  
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

*naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādān mayācyuta ।  
sthito'smi gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava ॥*

Changeless One (Śrī Kṛṣṇa), by Thy Grace, my delusion has been dispelled and I have regained my memory (of my true Self). I now stand firmly established (in my *svarūpa*, my true nature), with my doubts all cleared, ready to do Thy bidding.

Every word here is worth its weight in the gold: with Thy Grace; my delusion is gone; I have regained remembrance (आत्म-स्मृति, *ātma-smṛti*); all my doubts have cleared; I am now firmly established in my essential nature; and ready to do the inner, Divine Command (हुकम, *hukam*). [In the spiritual realm, there is nothing to attain, or to relinquish; Just to understand the ever-attained]. What a complete picture of all that is essential in a spiritual quest and its culmination!

## Concluding Remarks: The Ultimate Psychological Security System!

Building its stance on the unshakable Law of Karma, the Gītā provides the ultimate security package: “No doer of good ever ends in misery:” *na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścīd durgatiṃ tāta gacchati* (6.40). “When you do the *right thing*,” says Krishnamurti, “*right things* happen to you.” By teaching that good means lead to good ends and vice versa, the Gītā provides the greatest motivation to act ethically.

In keeping with the tradition of Indian philosophy, the Gītā starts with presenting the highest human goal to be reached first: Access the Inner treasure-house of Self-sufficiency: *ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ* (2.55), everything else will follow on its own accord. At the heart of the Gītā, there lies the conception of a sage of steady wisdom (*sthītaprajñā*) who has gone beyond the pair of opposites such as pleasure and pain, success and failure, virtue and vice. Steady in wisdom, the seer, *sthītaprajñā*, enjoys the constant bliss of the Self, regardless of the changing circumstances. The Gītā (2.55) defines *sthītaprajñā* as follows: “When a person completely casts away all the desires of the mind, *satisfied in the Self alone by the Self*, then that person is said to be one established in steady wisdom.” This wisdom (*prajñā*) has two aspects: fullness (*purāṇattvam*) of being and equanimity (*samatavam*) of the mind. Only when one has experienced the inner fullness can one be free from the servitude of the ever-growing desires. And only when one is able to approach the ups and downs of life with an equanimous mind can one free oneself from the sway of favorable and unfavorable experiences. This wisdom is the only security worth seeking and the sure-fire armor to human sorrow and suffering.

In sum, become an instrument of the Divine in all that you do (*nimittamātram bhava*: 11.33). Let all your actions be an offering to the Divine (*brahmaṇy ādhāya karmāṇi*: 5.10), performed *without* attachment, for the purification of the Self (*saṅgam tyaktvātmasuddhaye*: 5.11), and for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*: 5.25); and be a role model for the bringing of the world communities together and for maintenance of the world order (*lokasaṃgraham*: 3.20). Above all, accept the results of your actions with engaged equanimity, as a Grace of the Lord (*Ishvara-prasādabhāvanā*). Then your actions will never taint you.

The fundamental teaching of the Gītā can be summarized as follows: ‘the unreal has no existence and the real never ceases to be (2. 16); the soul is indestructible (*avināśi*), eternal (*nitya*), unborn (*aja*), undiminished (*avyaya*), all-pervasive (*sarva-gataḥ*), immovable (*achala*), ancient (*sanātana*), unmanifest (*avyakta*), unthinkable (*achintya*), and immutable (*avikṛya*). The soul is immortal and eternal; it is neither born nor does it die; it does not perish along with the body (2.20). Attain the Highest Knowledge, *brahma-vidya*, by which the One Imperishable Being is seen in all the beings, the undivided in the divided, *avibhaktaṃ vibhakteṣu* (18.20). This knowledge of the essential oneness of all existence (*sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṃ*



*bhāvam*), the Gītā regards as the purest (*sāttvik*) knowledge: *taj jñānam viddhi sāttvikam* (18.20). Śrī Kṛṣṇa succinctly points out this fact in the Gītā 13.27:

*samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram |  
vinaśyatsv avinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||*

He alone truly sees who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally as imperishable amidst the perishable.

Strive to know yourself as the unchanging, Limitless Awareness and be free. Once this realization becomes an *existential fact*, not just an *idea in the mind* but as a *living truth in the heart*, the goal has been realized. My Vedānta teacher used to reiterate: “With Self-knowledge, one can weather all existential storms aplomb and can swim in any ocean.” Living with this understanding, by the Divine Grace, one attains the communion of the individual Self with the Supreme Self, the *summum bonum* of human existence.

The Gita’s ideal is not indifference to the world but love and compassion born out of the identity of oneself with all beings (*ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati* 6.32). This is the net result, the ultimate finding, of the teachings of the Gītā: to live equanimously and act selflessly in the full wakefulness of Self-knowledge. Then every step you take will bring you to the path that leads to wisdom, service, and freedom.

*Know yourself, serve all, and surrender to the Divine within.*

This is the timeless message of this manual for life, leadership, and liberation.

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# Training the Mind for the Knowledge and Creative Work

# 2

A. D. Amar

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम्।  
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥VI-35॥

—Gita (VI-35)

“... the mind is restless and hard to master; but by constant practice [of yoga] and detachment [from reward] the mind in truth can be trained.”<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The primary focus of the *Bhagavad Gita* is on the mind, knowledge, yoga,<sup>2</sup> and meditation (*dhayana* or concentration)—the four things that we need to meaningfully manage the contemporary knowledge work. Knowledge and mind are two words that are used so frequently in the *Bhagavad Gita* as if the book was written to set people up for performing knowledge work, and for managing the knowledge workers. Millennia after the *Bhagavad Gita* was written, we find behavioral science researchers coming

<sup>1</sup>In quoting, transliterating, translating and understanding the *Bhagavad Gita*, as any reader will notice when going through this chapter that of all the immensely rich literature on the *Bhagavad Gita* available openly and widely, the author is mostly citing two sources. The first one of these is The Holy Bhagavad Gita (<https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/>) from which the author primarily quotes Swami Mukundananda. The second most quoted source is the Srimad Bhagavad Gita (<https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/>) from the Gita Supersite, developed and maintained by the Indian Institute of Technology—Kanpur, India. From the second source, he is mostly quoting the translations by Swami Sivananda.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, yoga is the act of attaining physical alertness and mental consciousness. While yoga can be used as a convenient means to attain certain physical benefits, the real purpose of yoga is to train the mind. In fact, yoga is to empty the mind of the desire to achieve material goods, and to find happiness only in contact with the Self, i.e., attaining introversion. For detail on this, one may refer to the *Bhagavad Gita* (VI-18 to 23).

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up with newer theories of managing for intrinsic motivation, the basic ingredient of higher productivity for knowledge work, like they are all inspired by what is covered in the *Bhagavad Gita*. It feels as if it came for the purpose a few millennia ahead of its time for our application. The chapter discusses them all as we proceed, and for every claim made in the chapter, the verses have been reproduced straight from the *Bhagavad Gita* and their transliteration and translations with the author's interpretations from his professional angle of managing knowledge workers<sup>3</sup> have been provided.

Acquiring knowledge or new behaviors is essential for learning skills for the contemporary work assignments that require an understanding of the abstract scientific and technical knowledge, especially for the creative or innovation work. These tasks require the abilities of mind more than any other skill, such as mechanical or muscular. While the foundation of these skills is in specialized education and training, a big part of them needed for the execution of these skills depends on tacit knowledge that one acquires oneself, by what we call erudition that comprises intransitive learning techniques. Continuous learning is especially important for the mind work because knowledge ages rapidly. This makes regularly updating knowledge through the learning of the mind essential to do well on these tasks. Through this, organizations acquire and maintain their competitive advantage in a highly competitive globalized marketplace (Rampersad, 2004).

There, however, is no known formal transitive training or traditional formal educational learning technique available for the learning that covers how to train the mind. The same is also true about the mind learning certain behaviors. For the knowledge work, learning of the mind is the best-known way to develop the personnel entrusted the execution of creative, innovative, and discovery work. Nevertheless, the *Bhagavad Gita* bridges this gap. It goes into intransitive learning, self-learning and the learning of the mind. This chapter addresses learning and training and then applies the concepts of the *Bhagavad Gita* to the learning of the mind for knowledge work and other creative tasks. In general, any task that requires inquisition for its execution can make use of the mind control techniques from the *Bhagavad Gita*. This is especially true for developing new or unique knowledge.

Training in management, and for that purpose in every other field, is broadly based on behavior modification techniques developed by psychology. These techniques involve using reward and punishment in some forms that are linked to the consequence of the response given by the individual to a particular stimulus. If the employee's behavior is consistent with an expected response, management administers reward to reinforce this expected behavior for the future but if it is inconsistent with the expected response, a punishment is inflicted with the hope that the future behavior will turn out to be what was expected by the management and actually reflected by the employee. Reward is an outcome that the employee would like to receive and punishment is what he or she would like to avoid. Punishment is an unwanted outcome imposed by the management for not reflecting a desired behavior.

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<sup>3</sup>For some of these applications in a greater detail, an interested reader may refer to my book on managing knowledge workers (Amar, 2002).

While the above behavior modification may work for tasks that are mechanical, requiring a conscious controllable behavior from the employee, it does not work when it comes to the tasks that require thinking and application of knowledge, particularly the tacit knowledge. In fact, management literature does not have any proven techniques that managers can use to modify employee behavior for the tasks requiring employee cognition and mental concentration for their execution. However, managers use their knowledge, training and experience of motivational techniques that they use for the mechanical or algorithmic work and apply to get high performance from employees working on tasks requiring knowledge and mental concentration. When, over period, they have built a very good understanding of the generalized human behavior and how to apply it for routine mechanical and algorithmic work, there is a widespread confusion about how to train and motivate the mind of those who do the knowledge work. This leaves a big void in management literature that the *Bhagavad Gita* covers very adroitly and effectively that is narrated in this chapter of the book.

## Rewards

In organizational studies, we take reward as a pleasant and desired outcome from our work that is well done. The goal of using reward for training workers is to appeal the senses of the doer so that s/he is able to reflect same behavior under same demand conditions in the future. In essence, reward is administered to give employees the training to learn behavior desired by the management. Mostly, rewards for behavior modification following psychological techniques are administered extrinsically. In work setting, it is done by the supervisor or senior manager or administration. These rewards need continuous reinforcement. In practice, if reward is ceased, the behavior is unlearned. Everything in this process is at the cognitive level. No real, lasting behavioral learning occurs.

When it comes to the performance on knowledge tasks, such as those that require cognitive skills—maybe even rudimentary—that fall out of the routine, basically, there is nothing in our main literature to help managers motivate their employees engaged in doing cognitive work. Because of the increase of knowledge work in our economy, the need for such tasks is growing steadily; however, as they become very important for our growth and survival as a nation, our learning about managing these jobs, or lack of it, leaves us at a dead end. Managers attempt to alter and control their employees' behaviors and reactions essential to bring them in line with the organization's objectives by employing standard industrial era behavior modification techniques developed by the psychologists during the earlier parts of the twentieth century (see, for example, D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971). These techniques, in essence, employ stimulus-response-reinforcement (S-R-R) cycle. To control the behavior of their employees, managers increase or decrease positive or negative reinforcement to the employees in accordance with the increase or decrease in the consistency of their response with what the management considers a desired response. A behavior modification study like that is most commonly used.

However, what is the most serious drawback of the rewards administered by organizations is that they cannot motivate the mind. Managers or supervisors cannot control the mind of their workers. Therefore, they cannot train their knowledge workers or any other worker for the mind work. Even the workers themselves cannot control their own minds. The *Bhagavad Gita* reveals this fact and addresses the issue in the following verse (*Gita*, VI-35).

श्रीभगवानुवाचः  
 असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।  
 अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ VI-35 ॥

*Śhrī bhagavān uvācha*  
*asanshayam mahā-bāho mano durnigraham chalam*  
*abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha grihyate.*  
<https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/6/verse/35>.

According to this verse (*Gita*, VI-35), the mind is restless and hard to master, but by constant practice and detachment the mind in truth can be trained (Mukundananda, 2014). This requires constant practice to train the mind by making determinations and then practicing in line with them and succeeding. This way, one may be able to restrain the mind and keep it away from distractions that take one away from the determination. This constant practice free of passion can bring success in controlling the mind. Passion can interfere with objectivity and take away a steadfast approach to achieving strength of the mind. This is the yoga of the mind and this is what brings mind control within the realm of the individual. It may start with small, self-monitored mental determinations for building strength of the mind by acts such as fasting, adding or eliminating certain foods or routines from your practice, sitting or standing in a certain posture, not to speak for a set period, etc. Success on these determinations sets the mind up to take larger mental and intellectual goals. The person who can do this gains control of his mind and would be ready for the ambitious knowledge pursuits.

This is what can be called the training of the mind. It may be extrinsically initiated but is intrinsically motivated and intrinsically attained. However, it has a reward. This reward comes intrinsically from the process. One gives it to oneself, instantly, proportionately, unflawed delivered through the process that helped them achieve their determination. However, it is neither extrinsically set nor administered. This reward could be very durable, may be even endless. This is how one learns new behaviors that are never unlearned. This initiation of learning new controllable behaviors extrapolates into work behaviors and shows up its effect in outcomes that come from formal knowledge work.

In training the knowledge workers who need their mental and intellectual skills to execute their jobs, the management should create rewards for the mind that please their psyche, advance their wisdom, make their minds trained to make clear objective and unbiased decisions in whatever task they are assigned in the organization (Amar, 2002).

## Those Who Use Knowledge and Mind in Their Work

The *Bhagavad Gita* clearly states what constitutes the mind work and who are those who should be considered as mind workers or knowledge workers as most of them, and to some extent all of them, engage in work that involves discovering, understanding, interpreting, analyzing, applying, relating, or communicating the truth. Truth is an essential part of all knowledge work. The *Bhagavad Gita* (XII-3, 4) states what it is, and for understanding it, we reproduce these two verses below.

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यं अव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।  
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥ XII-3 ॥

*Ye tv akṣharam anirdeśhyam avyaktaṁ paryupāsate  
sarvatra-gam achintyañcha kūṭa-sṥham achalandhrvum*

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धया ।  
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रता ॥ XII-4 ॥

*Sanniyamyendriya-grāmaṁ sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ  
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ.*

According to these verses, the absolute truth is imperishable, indefinable, unmanifest, all-pervading, unthinkable, unchanging, eternal, and immovable (Mukundananda, 2014). The *Gita* continues and identifies characteristics of the people who worship the formless aspect of the absolute truth, the people whom, in organizations, we call the knowledge workers. They restrain their senses and remain even-minded everywhere and engage in the welfare of all people.<sup>4</sup>

In describing further those who do the mind work, the *Bhagavad Gita* (XII-5) states that their life has greater tribulations because they are busy working with the unmanifested whose realization path is very difficult. It describes this job as exceedingly difficult (Mukundananda, 2014). The detail is given in the following verse (XII-5).

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ॥  
अव्यक्ताहि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥ XII-5 ॥

*Kleśho 'dhikataras teśhām avyaktāsakta-chetasām  
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate*

Describing further the work of those who use mind and employ knowledge, the *Bhagavad Gita* (XII-12) states that better indeed is knowledge than mere practice of that knowledge, and meditation on the knowledge is better than the knowledge, and renouncing the fruits of meditation is better than meditating because renunciation brings tranquility (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.). In expanding on this concept, we

<sup>4</sup>In Bhagavad Gita, God says that by working to attain the absolute truth one attains God.



can say that being able to practice is ranked lower than having knowledge of how to do something because knowledge typically comes with the depth and breadth of a subject that is of greater benefit than just being able to practice. We can also add here that the science in knowledge is more effectively shared than the art of practice, until this art is perfected for codification to become explicit knowledge that can be diffused. Meditating is seen as being able to think and research on a subject to expand and improve it; because this adds to knowledge, it is considered superior to having knowledge. Giving away the reward of thinking and researching is synonymous to sharing the knowledge developed by meditating and since it brings satisfaction and joy, it is the real reward that is intrinsically administered. It brings equanimity. See the verse below.

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये ।  
मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि ॥ VII-12 ॥

*Śhreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānam viśhiṣhyate  
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgāch chhāntir anantaram*

It is very clear that the *Bhagavad Gita* places a heavy emphasis on the mind work and having knowledge. For efficiency in doing mind work and developing knowledge, it impresses on engaging in the practice of yoga of the mind and performing meditation. It compares performing mind work to yoga and the act of developing knowledge to meditation. A knowledge worker has to be good at both of them.

## Learning of the Mind

While many researchers question the suitability of behavior modification techniques for performance on any kind of work, there is a very well understood belief that reinforcements do not work when it comes to mind work, as such tasks require cognitive sophistication and open-ended thinking (Kohn, 1993). The cognitive evaluation theory tells that extrinsic rewards actually have negative effect on intrinsic motivation and cause the performance to go down (Deci & Ryan, 1985). How to motivate employees for these tasks requires a very different type of motivation. The *Bhagavad Gita* (VI-35) recognized this by stating that the mind is restless and hard to master; but by constant practice and by detachment, it can, in-truth, be mastered (Mitchell, 2000), and the *Bhagavad Gita* puts together a comprehensive management approach to motivate thinkers, innovators, and creators. This approach is embedded in the verse given below (*Gita*, VI-5).

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।  
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मन ॥ VI-5 ॥

*Uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet  
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanah*

The *Bhagavad Gita* places a very high importance on mind for learning and being able to succeed at the pursuits undertaken. It states that one should raise oneself by one's self alone and not degrade oneself, because one's mind can be the friend and also the enemy of the self (Mukundananda, 2014). This can be interpreted as, that there is an immense power in one's mind that, if properly deployed, could become one's benefactor, very much like a friend, but if the mind is engaged in the wrong pursuits, the mind could do the most harm, as would an enemy. The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is congruent with what this verse is stating.

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वश ।  
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेऽभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ II-58 ॥

Yadā sanharate chāyaṁ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśhaḥ  
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.)

The *Bhagavad Gita* advises that to work our mind, we should act like the yogi who to be able to concentrate undisturbed behaves like the tortoise that draws in its limbs into its own shell. This is how the yogi withdraws all his senses from the sense objects, enabling him to fix all his wisdom on what he is working.

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।  
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छासुं धनञ्जय ॥ XII-9 ॥

*Atha chittam samādhātum na śhaknoṣhi mayi sthiram  
abhyāsa-yogena tato mām ichchhāptum dhanañjaya*

Furthermore, the *Bhagavad Gita* advises that if you are unable to fix your mind steadily, then use the yoga of constant practice as if you are reaching out to God (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.). In interpretation, we can say that it is like practicing focusing on an object of great attraction to you. This is the practice that would train the mind to focus on something by will without being distracted.

## Personality for the Mind Work

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, the mind work is indeed yoga, and the personality that would be best suited for such a work is that of a yogi. Therefore, by all the traits and behaviors, the *Gita* is recreating the personality of a yogi for doing the mind work. The *Bhagavad Gita* (XII-13, 14) wants one to develop for excellence on the mind work. One should be non-envious, always content, benevolent to all living entities, compassionate with no sense of proprietorship, free from false ego, equal in distress and happiness, forgiving, perfecting the science of uniting the individual consciousness with the ultimate consciousness, self-controlled, unflinching determination, dedicating mind and spiritual intelligence on ultimate reality. The following verses provide more detail (XII-13, 14) extracted from Chapter XII of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।  
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ XII-13 ॥

*Adveṣhṭā sarva-bhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva cha  
nirmamo nirahankāraḥ sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣhamī*

संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।  
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्वो मद्भक्तःस मे प्रियः ॥ XII-14 ॥

*Santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛiḍha-niśhchayaḥ  
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

The *Bhagavad Gita* describes characteristics of those who attain control on their minds. They are free from malice toward all living beings, all creatures—not just humans. They are friendly, compassionate to all beings, and free from attachment to possessions and egotism. They are equipoised in pleasure and are always forgiving (Mukundananda, 2014). They are always contented and steadily meditating, have self-control and firm conviction. They are united with God in devotion dedicated to intellect (Sri Bhagavad Gita, n.d.). To them, whatever they are doing is dedication to God.

In interpreting Chapter 12, Verses 13 and 14, it is said that gaining and maintaining control over mind is required, and success in that will bring the above-described characteristics in the one who has trained one's mind. They become free of malice, attachment, egotism, pleasure and displeasure. They gain self-control and firm conviction, and are always in deep thinking to gain better understanding.

यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।  
योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥ VI-19 ॥

*Yathā dīpo nivāta-stho neṅgate sopamā smṛitā  
yogino yata-chittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanah*

The *Bhagavad Gita* compares pursuit of knowledge to meditation and the one who engages in this to yogi. Chapter VI, Dhyān Yog, is fully devoted to the yoga of meditation (sadhana or the means) to attaining knowledge. Describing those who gain control over their mind as yogi, the *Bhagavad Gita* continues to relate their characteristics. They are like a lamp in a windless place that does not flicker, so the disciplined mind of a yogi remains steady in meditation on the Self (Mukundananda, 2014).

In interpretation of Chapter VI, Verse 19, the author finds the *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizing gaining a thorough understanding of the self through steadily meditating. It states that a person who trains his mind engages in deep thinking to understand the truth universally around and about him. These people reveal the truth through yoga and meditation for the purpose of common understanding of all people.

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।  
यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥ VI-20 ॥

*Yatroparamate chittam niruddham yoga-sevayā  
yatra chaivātmanātmānam paśhyann ātmani tuṣhyati*

In Chapter 6, Verse 20, reproduced above, the *Bhagavad Gita* states that when one's mind is controlled by the practice of yoga and restrains from the physical activities, then, one moves to the metaphysical and becomes a yogi, and can see deep inside him and rejoice at gaining the knowledge of self (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.). This is what we can take as the first step in training oneself for the discovery of truth.

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद् बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम् ।  
वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥ VI-21 ॥

*Sukham ātyantikam yat tad buddhi-grāhyam atīndriyam  
veti yatra na chaivāyam sthitaśh chalati tattvataḥ*

Continuing with the infinite bliss of gaining the knowledge of the self as described in Chapter VI, Verse 20, the *Bhagavad Gita* adds that with the controlled mind, the yogi's bliss of pure intellect goes on which transcends the senses and this is how he establishes himself from wherein he never moves from the reality (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.).

तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ॥  
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ VI-23 ॥

*Tam vidyād duḥkha-sanyoga-viyogam yogasāñjñitam  
sa niśhchayena yuktavyo yogo'nirviṇṇa-chetasā*

Chapter VI, Verse 23, conveys an implication that ordinary people have a union with misery through their pursuit of material. Yoga is working to attain severance from this union with misery, and the person who attains this severance is yogi. This yoga should be resolutely practiced with a determination free from pessimism (Mukundananda, 2014). An important message for the knowledge workers from this verse is that pursuit of truth should be carried out free of pessimism. This alarming is valid in light of early failures that are quite common when pursuing knowledge. Therefore, the yoga of pursuing truth should be practiced with full determination and free of a desponding mind (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.).

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।  
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ II-48 ॥

*Yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanāñjaya  
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga uchyate*

Chapter II, Verse 48 states that yogi<sup>5</sup> should be steadfast in the performance of his duty, abandoning attachment to success and failure. Such equanimity is called yog<sup>6</sup> (Mukundananda, 2014). The reason, knowledge workers should not be too attached to success or failure is based on the fact that it would cause distraction that could cast a negative effect on the effort that is being put in to bring success. The *Bhagavad Gita* conveys that both, the focus on fear of failure or on the pleasure of success, distract from the action and contribute to causing the performance on the action to be less than the best possible. Lately, many organizations in the USA have walked away from putting down failure of employee efforts, especially in the jobs that require knowledge and mental focus. Ergo, the aim should be to perform one's duty to one's best abilities and the full mind. Many, in fact, are now celebrating failure just as they respect those who succeed (Shellenbarger, 2011).

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।  
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥ II-20 ॥  
यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।  
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥ II-21 ॥

*Karmaṇaiva hi sansiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ  
loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampāśhyaṇ kartum arhasi  
yad yad ācharati śhreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ  
sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate*

The *Bhagavad Gita* (III-21) uses examples of the famous figures from period millennia before the time of *Bhagavad Gita* who by performing their prescribed duties attained perfection. Furthermore, the Gita states that one should also perform one's work to set an example for the good of the world (*Gita*, III-21). Whatever actions the great persons perform, common people follow. Whatever standards they set, the entire world pursues (Mukundananda, 2014).

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## How to Manage the Knowledge Workers

In Chapter II, Verse 47, reproduced below, the *Bhagavad Gita* addresses the question of despondence. It also covers how to remedy it. This becomes the recommended behavior when one engages in the pursuit of knowledge of truth. The *Gita* (II-47) states that, when it comes to knowledge pursuits, one should so behave that one has only the right to performance, and perform the best one can as it is intrinsically controlled; however, one has no right to the outcome or reward as that has an extrinsic control. To avoid despondence on failure and further attempts to give up

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<sup>5</sup>As we have learned from the previous verses from the *Bhagavad Gita*, yogi is an individual who is searching for truth using mind as his biggest tool. In contemporary terminology, in organizations, these are the people who are engaged in research, development, and similar other tasks that need knowledge. We can call these people the knowledge workers.

<sup>6</sup>Yog is the behavior that the *Bhagavad Gita* recommends for the people we understood as yogis. In contemporary language, this is the recommended behavior for knowledge workers.

the pursuit, the *Gīta* states that one should never consider oneself as the cause of the results of one's activities, but not be attached to inaction [either] (Mukundananda, 2014). See the original verse on this concept.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ II-47 ॥

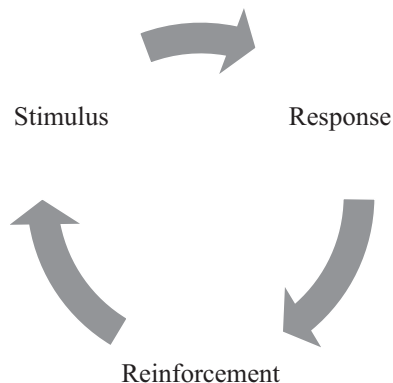
*Karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana  
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo'stvakarmani.*

When we look at the standard behavior modification techniques used in management, we look at the stimulus-response-reward or S-R-R cycle (I identify it as Cycle 0) as given in Fig. 2.1. It is a cycle, out of which no worker can escape. In the work setting, typically, managers do not want workers to get out of it because this is how they control and motivate them. This is how they get from them a behavior that they want rather than what they find to be the correct behavior based on their study of the situation.

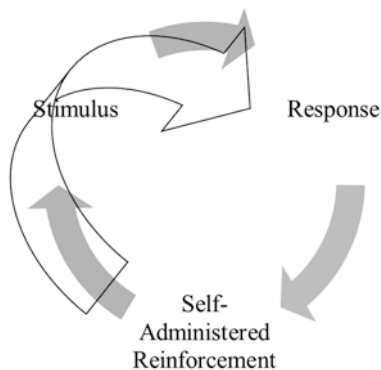
## Eliminating Stimulus from the S-R-R Cycle—Strategy 1

Nevertheless, the case of knowledge work is quite different because the pursuit of knowledge is intrinsically controlled and motivated. Therefore, in organizations, following the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gīta*, we want to use strategies to have knowledge workers get out of the S-R-R cycle so that they are controlled by themselves and enjoy the autonomy to select what and how they want to do their job without any stimulus from their managers. The S-R-R Cycle is reduced to the R-R Cycle (I label it Cycle I) as depicted in Fig. 2.2. An interpretation of this cycle is that when knowledge workers have the autonomy, the quality of performance and productivity will improve.

**Fig. 2.1** The S-R-R Cycle 0 (Standard Behavior Modification) Reflecting the Standard Stimulus, Response, Reward Cycle in Modifying Behavior Devised by the Psychologists



**Fig. 2.2** The Resultant R-R Cycle I (Self-Driven—Self-Determination Theory) Reinforcing Response Using Intrinsic Reward (Without Any Stimulus)



## Eliminating Reinforcement from the S-R-R Cycle—Strategy 2

Take for example, the cognitive evaluation theory, the self-determination theory, the self-concordance theory, etc. and the *Bhagavad Gita*; they all do not recommend reinforcement administration to motivate knowledge worker behavior.<sup>7</sup> The *Bhagavad Gita* (V-22) referring to rewards states that the pleasures that are born of sense contacts are verily the source of pain. They have a beginning and an end. Therefore, a wise man does not indulge in them (Ramsukhdas, 1990). Hence, the rewards that have their founding in these sources of pleasure will not motivate the mind of a knowledge worker, or, for that reason, of any wise man, which is true for most knowledge workers. The cited verse is reproduced below:

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।  
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥ V-22 ॥

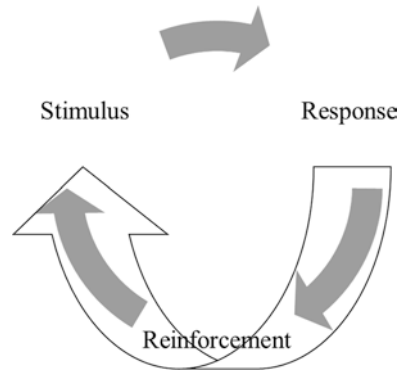
Ye hi sansparśha-jā bhogā duḥkha-yonaya eva te  
ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣhu ramate budhaḥ

The pleasures that arise from contact with the sense objects, though appearing as enjoyable in the short-run to the worldly-minded people, are verily a source of misery. Such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise do not delight in them (Mukundananda, 2014). And, the long-term outcome of such pleasures is not good.

In interpreting the *Bhagavad Gita* on rewards, it means that such pleasures cannot be the source of a motivation that has neither a start nor an end because that is the motivation we need to attain success in creative, mind works that could take long time and effort to get culminated. This defies the S-R-R cycle, as depicted in Fig. 2.1, and can motivate the knowledge workers without any reward. In this case, the work itself is the motivator. Kohn (1993) found out that those who completed a task for reward did not perform as well as those who did it without the desire for a

<sup>7</sup>It is surprising to see so much concordance between the modern psychology on knowledge work and the *Bhagavad Gita* that preceded them by several millennia.

**Fig. 2.3** The Resultant S-R Cycle II (Rewardless) that Defies Operant Conditioning (Desire for Reward)



reward. By converse, we read from the *Bhagavad Gita* that, for behavior modification, the motivators should be the rewards that are the sources of endless pleasures, such as the ones that are non-material, intellectual rewards that come from the job-and-doer system itself, in other words, intrinsic rewards. See its depiction in Fig. 2.3 where there is no reinforcement. There is only stimulus, i.e., tasks are self-selected and motivate to respond without the motivation of reward.

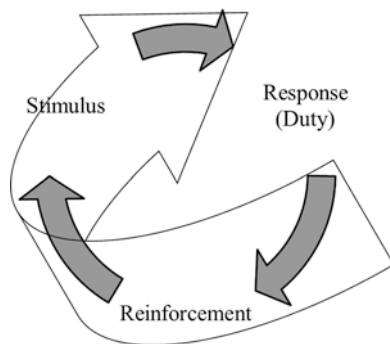
Therefore, the second strategy operationalizing the *Bhagavad Gita* in designing the control and motivation system is to implement the cognitive evaluation theory, assuming extrinsic rewards reduce intrinsic motivation and reduce work performance on creative and innovation work. To let rewards not interfere with the knowledge work requires eliminating second R of the S-R-R Cycle. Thus, there is no reinforcement, i.e., reward or punishment, in the second behavior modification model. The S-R-R Cycle is reduced to S-R Cycle (I call it Cycle II) as represented in Fig. 2.3. This will be true for any work if the work is engaging, and if it is, it will motivate workers. However, this is very true for the knowledge work. Because of either the motivation of work itself or the sense of duty, knowledge workers engage in response without any expectation of reward in return, because that is not in their control (*Gita*, II-47).

### The Nirvana of the Knowledge Work–Kartavya in Action

This is the stage that the *Gita* talks about, which is no stimulus, no reward, just response. This is S-R-R Cycle reduced to just Response Cycle III, depicted in Fig. 2.4, where there is no stimulus and no reinforcement, i.e., reward. The only aspect of the cycle remaining is the “Response” which is emphasized as “*Kartavya*” or duty that is in control of the knowledge worker. Since action is in control of the knowledge workers, so it is rightly required of them. They should be motivated by engaging in action, but not be motivated by the reward from their action as that is not in their control and could become a source of demotivation when associated with a fear of failure or lack of reward or inappropriate reward or unfair outcome. However, the *Bhagavad Gita* says that they should never engage in inaction.



**Fig. 2.4** The Resultant Response Cycle III (According to *The Bhagavad Gita*) No Stimulus, No Reinforcement (Just Response, i.e., *Kartavya* or Sense of Duty)



True knowledge work is real reward for a knowledge worker and keeps continuously rewarding and motivating the knowledge worker. As a result, they just work (response) without anyone telling them (stimulus) or rewarding them (reinforcement). These people are so committed to their knowledge work that the *Bhagavad Gita* calls them yogis and tells in the verse given below (*Gita*, VI-18).

यदा विनियतं चित्तमात्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।  
निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥ VI-18 ॥

*Yadā viniyatam chittam ātmanyevāvatishṭhate  
niḥsprihaḥ sarva-kāmebhyo yukta ityuchyate tadā*

The *Bhagavad Gita* describes the behavior of these people it calls the yogis, that we term the knowledge workers. It states that with thorough discipline, they learn to withdraw the mind from selfish cravings and rivet it on the unsurpassable good of the self. Such persons are said to be in yog, and are free from all yearning of the senses (Mukundananda, 2014).

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।  
यस्मिन्स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥ VI-22 ॥

*Yaṁ labdhvā chāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ  
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vichālyate*

The *Bhagavad Gita* states that having gained that state of yoga, one does not consider any other achievement to be superior to this (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.). Being thus established, one is not shaken even in the midst of the greatest calamity (Mukundananda, 2014) or even by heavy sorrow (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, n.d.).

## No Control Recommended

The *Bhagavad Gita* promotes self-control in place of any externally imposed control, very much like the contemporary belief that controls interfere with creativity when it comes to knowledge work (Amar, 1998). A wise man acts in accordance

with his own nature; Beings will follow their own nature; what can restraint do (*Gita*, III-33; Chinmayananda, 1996: 218).

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।  
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥ III-33॥

*Sadrīṣhaṁ cheṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛiter jñānavān api  
prakṛitiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣhyati*

The *Bhagavad Gita* states that wise people act according to their nature, all beings will follow nature; what can restraint do? (Srimad *Bhagavad Gita*, n.d.). Since the people who do mind work or knowledge workers are wise people, the *Bhagavad Gita* questions the imposition of any control on them. It states that these people are controlled by the self-control that is more powerful than any extrinsic controls.

**Special emphasis on leaders to model behavior.** The *Bhagavad Gita* sets a special responsibility on leaders to have a moral behavior for others to adopt, as their behavior becomes a model of behavior for the masses. They cannot choose to behave like the ordinary citizens as the latter copy their behavior because whatever way of life a high-placed man adopts, other men copy; the standard he sets is followed by the people (*Bhagavad Gita*, III-21; Rajagopalachari, 2008: 56).

**Engaging in meditation and yoga.** Many chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* are devoted to these subjects. Meditation, that is literally “*dhayana*” in Sanskrit, is focusing mind inward for attaining consciousness for connecting physical with the metaphysical, which is considered an essential activity for everyone, for everything. The *Bhagavad Gita* devotes a full chapter, Chapter VI, and much more in several other chapters, to mind control.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।  
असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।  
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ VI-35 ॥

*Śhrī bhagavān uvācha  
asanśhayaṁ mahā-bāho mano durnigrahaṁ chalam  
abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha gṛihyate*

As we stated in the previous chapters of this book, the *Bhagavad Gita* is a recitation by Lord Krishna. Everything in it is attributed to him, stated so or not so stated. He tells Arjuna, the warrior prince, on his question to the Lord that he finds that the mind is too fickle, that what he said was correct; the mind is indeed very difficult to restrain. Nevertheless, by constant practice and detachment, it can be controlled (Mukundananda, 2014). Thus, throughout the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna has talked about yoga and meditation as means to the learning of the mind.

## Conclusion

Managers, from their experience, have a good working understanding of how to manage employees doing mechanical or algorithmic tasks. To manage them, the managers employ standard industrial-era management tools and techniques that were developed primarily beginning from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. All management systems in organizations are designed and implemented according to them. While researchers argue, and many disagree on their suitability for even routine repetitive tasks, they all agree that these tools and techniques do not work for knowledge workers, those who use their knowledge or mind instead of the muscle or skill. They all also agree that there are not many techniques available to manage those workers whose jobs include cognitive sophistication and open-ended thinking. This becomes true even when the task involves these abilities even at a rudimentary level. There is almost nothing available in the management literature to help managers on how to motivate the minds of knowledge workers. The need for some technique for this purpose is greatly felt because the knowledge content in work is increasing in all industries throughout the world. While a lot of research is going on, there is, predictably still a long time needed to have something specific for knowledge workers.

This author recognized the need described above and, since he saw the question of mind and mind work well covered in the *Bhagavad Gita*, he decided to write this chapter in this book on managing by the *Bhagavad Gita*. He described in this chapter the training of the mind for getting higher performance on work that needs cognition and mental focus. It covers knowledge (*gyana*), the mind (*mana*), meditation (*dhyana*), action (*karma*), and ascetic discipline (*yoga*) concepts from the *Bhagavad Gita* for achieving the goal of knowledge work and mind control. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a very good resource of these concepts because it covers them in great depth. We meaningfully study, interpret and apply them to the mind for enhancing performance on knowledge work. The *Bhagavad Gita* starts by accepting the fact that the mind is restless and hard to master, but it can indeed be mastered by constant practice and detachment from material distractions around us. That is why there is no surprise, why external interventions, such as the psychology-devised reinforcements, actually counteract good performance on mind work. From the counsel of *Bhagavad Gita*, the author has come up with a comprehensive approach to manage thinkers, innovators, and creators—whom we know as knowledge workers—and it is given in this chapter.

In the conclusion section, what is found to be the most fascinating from the *Bhagavad Gita* pertaining to the motivators of those who use mind in their work-- better known as knowledge workers-- is repeated. The essence of these shlokas that impressed the author is given below.

First management treasure that the author discovered in the *Bhagavad Gita* is about knowledge. It is very empowering. It states that knowledge is the best purifier in this world and to receive knowledge one has to perfect one's practice of selfless action. It will take time, but eventually, one will find knowledge in oneself (Rajagopalachari, 2008: 46; *Bhagavad Gita* IV-38). It suggests that one can acquire the right type of knowledge from individual pursuits. It stresses selfless action for the acquisition of knowledge.

The second management treasure that the author has discovered in the *Bhagavad Gita* concerns motivation. It states that the pleasures that are born of the sense-contacts or for sense gratification are verily the sources of pain. Because these gratifications are insatiable and not long lasting, they cannot be motivators of the human mind. The sense gratifiers have a beginning and an end. They cannot permanently modify human behavior. Therefore, a wise man does not indulge in them (Ramsukhdas, 1990). Such a pleasure cannot be source of a motivation that has neither a start nor an end (*Bhagavad Gita*, V-22).

Through the converse, the *Bhagavad Gita* suggests that for behavior modification for the mind work, for the motivators to have neither a start nor an end, they should be non-matter.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the motivators of the mind should be intellectual, intrinsic, and intrinsically administered (Amar, 2002).

While many academic researchers may refuse to accept anything that has not been proven by the narrow evidence and limited methodologies known to them, the writings in the *Bhagavad Gita* are time tested on many billions of people who have made enormous use of them and continue to do that. It would, in fact, be short-sighted to let the messages of the *Bhagavad Gita* pass by the humanity without making use of this blessing from those who simply preserved them for our use and benefit for several millennia.

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<sup>8</sup>The *Bhagavad Gita* says “non-matter” because matter is definite and bounded; hence, does not provide indefinite motivation.



# Doing the Right Thing: The Ethical Philosophy of the Bhagavad Gītā

# 3

Satinder Dhiman

## Introduction: Understanding the Fundamental Problem

The fundamental seeking of all human beings is security, peace/happiness, and liberation. All human pursuits can be essentially reduced to these three basic endeavors. More often, we tend to search for these goals among external sources such as objects, people, and situations. However, we soon discover that no lasting peace and security can be found in external things because, in their ultimate bidding, they are unpredictable, unreliable, and subject to constant change. By gently pointing out that our whole problem is a *misdirected search due to self-ignorance*, the Gītā tells us that the only place where permanent and complete happiness and fulfillment can be found is within ourselves—in the fullness of our own being.

The Gītā further explains that it is the self-ignorance that covers our intrinsic fullness of being and only Self-knowledge can lift the veil and lead us to the eternal fountain of abiding security, peace, and happiness that lies within us all. We finally make the pleasant discovery that searching for peace is like searching for one's glasses everywhere when they have been perched on our nose all along. Interestingly, we even tend to forget that we have been searching *for* them while unknowingly looking *through* them!

The Gītā teaches us that the fundamental human problem is the lack of Self-knowledge and the resultant extroverted-ness of our search for happiness and the mistaken way we relate to the world. In all our quests, we approach people, objects, and situations through the prism of our likes and dislikes (*rāga-dvēṣa*) which leads to attachment or aversion. Attachment leads to sorrow and sorrow leads to delusion which in turn compounds our misery. When the Self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) dawns, we realize that whatever we have been seeking is already within us. It is in

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fact our own essential nature or Self. We are also able to experience the calm bliss of the fullness of our being and intuit the harmonious oneness of all existence. When the false divisions and distinctions based on our narrow personal likes and dislikes disappear, we are able to extend our benevolence without preference or prejudice in all directions and our very existence benefits the whole universe. Our whole existence then becomes an offering to the Supreme. And our feet get firmly planted on the path that leads to peace, happiness, and liberation.

These opening observations about our quest for happiness are inspired by Swāmī Paramārthānandajī's discourses on the Bhagavad Gītā. Throughout this chapter, in addition to other preeminent Gītā scholars and practitioners, we will also draw upon Swāmījī's sublime teachings as available in his extensive repertoire of discourses on the Gītā and other texts and sub-texts of Vedāntā (See: [https://archive.org/details/BhagavadGītā\\_SwamiParamarthananda](https://archive.org/details/BhagavadGītā_SwamiParamarthananda)).

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## Doing Good and Feeling Good Are Connected

Recent research on altruism shows that doing good and feeling good are closely related (Ricard, 2015). Matthieu Ricard in his recent book titled *Altruism: The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World* (2015) presents a vision revealing how altruism can answer the key challenges of our times: economic inequality, life satisfaction, and environmental sustainability. With a rare combination of the mind of a scientist and the heart of a sage, he makes a robust case for cultivating altruism—a *caring concern for the well-being of others*—as the best means for simultaneously benefiting ourselves and our global society. The Gītā call it *sarva bhuta hita*, well-being of all beings (BG, 5.25; 12.4).

Unless otherwise stated, the translation of the verses of the Gītā quoted in this chapter are author's adaptations. All verses from the Gītā are listed in this format: 2.11—which refers to Chapter 2, verse 11. In order to retain some flavor of the original, the chapter presents some Sanskrit terms and phrases in transliteration, using diacritics according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) convention. A small bar drawn over a word (e.g., 'ā') indicates elongated sound: as 'a' in the word 'park.'

In the scheme of the Bhagavad Gītā, ethical conduct (*dharma*) furnishes the essential foundation for the quest for spiritual freedom. It is interesting to note that the very first letter of the first word of the first *śloka* of the Gītā—'*dharmakṣetre*' (1.1)—and the very last letter of the last word of the last *śloka* of the Gītā—'*mama*' (18.78)—virtually form the word '*dharma*.' Hence, the *dharma* (innate moral duty or righteousness) is the province of the entire Gītā! In the Gītā's terminology, the performance of actions selflessly as a service to the Supreme purifies the mind and makes it a fit vessel for the reception of Self-Knowledge which alone is the means to spiritual freedom. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher Par Excellence in the Gītā, does not merely want to make us philosophically learned but to help us realize the Truth *experientially*—not to merely *instruct* but to make us truly *wise* and *free*. After presenting the entire teachings of the Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa points out, "Thus has this wisdom, more mysterious than the mystery itself, been imparted to you by Me. Fully pondering over it, *do as you like*." (18.63).

## Ethical and Spiritual Disciplines (Yogas) of the Gītā

*The essential Idea in the reply which Krishna offered to Arjuna was that through the discharge of the duties of one's station without thought of fruit one was on the way to salvation.* (McKenzie, 1922, p. 125)

According to J. A. B. van Buitenen (1981, p. 17), “The word *yoga* and cognates of it occur close to 150 times in the Gītā, and it needs attention.” It is also helpful to bear in mind that in the Gītā, *karman* (action) do not always equate with ‘*Karma Yoga*’ and *jñāna* (knowledge) does not always signify ‘*Jñāna Yoga*.’ Secondly, the word “*Yoga*” is used in several shades of meanings in the Gītā. The root meaning of the word is ‘union.’ However, at two places, Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents the word “*Yoga*” in its truest meaning: BG (2.48 and 6.23). In BG (2.48), Śrī Kṛṣṇa states “*samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*”—“equipoise” or “equanimity” is called *yoga*. The second important sense in which the word ‘*Yoga*’ is used in the Gītā is in verse 6.23: *taṃ vidyād.h duḥkhasaṃyogaviyogaṃ yogasaṃjñitam*—Freedom from contact with sorrow (of this body and material world) should be known as *yoga*. According to the Gītā, *the complete freedom from sorrow is possible only when one is established in the Supreme Self (Paramātman)*.

Some quote the phrase *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (2.50) to explain that dexterity in action is *yoga*. Does that mean that proficiency in pickpocketing will make the pick-pocket a *yogi*? This is not at all the intention of the Gītā, for that will be against the universal moral code (*dharma viruddha*). Recall that the first word of the Gītā is *dharmakṣetre* (1.1), the sphere of moral conduct, and the last word is *mama* (18.78), meaning “mine.” Conjoined, literally, the first and last words of the Gītā signify: “my moral duty,” my *svadharma*, as it is the *dharma* of fire to burn and of water to extinguish the fire.

Sri Krishna Prem (1973, p. xiv) in his book *The Yoga of the Bhagavat Gītā* explains the meaning of the word *yoga* as follows:

By *yoga* is here meant not any special system called by that name, not *jnana-yoga* nor *karma yoga*, nor eightfold *yoga* of Patanjali, but just the Path by which man unites his finite self with the infinite being. It is the inner path of which these separate *yogas* are so many one-sided aspects.

Commenting on the key disciplines, *yogas*, in the Gītā, S.K. Maitra (1947, pp. 28–29) writes: *Yoga* means union with God, and this union can be effected in various ways. It can be effected through *Karma*, it can be effected through *Jñāna*, it can be effected through *Dhyāna*, it can be effected through *Bhakti*. It can also be effected in other ways. In fact, each of the eighteen chapters of the Gītā is called a *Yoga* and shows the way in which the union with God is to be achieved.

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## Three Paths to Liberation According to the Gītā

A sacred Hindu text tells us that there are only three disciplines or paths for the salvation of human beings—the Path of Action (*Karmayoga*), the Path of Knowledge (*Jñānayoga*), and the Path of Devotion (*Bhaktiyoga*). Besides these three, there is

absolutely no other means of liberation—‘*na upāyaḥ anyo asti kutracit.*’ Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (11.20.6) provides the following order of spiritual disciplines:

*Yōgās trayo mayā proktā narnām shreyo-vidhitsaya;  
Jñānam karma ca bhaktis ca na upāyaḥ anyo asti kutracit.*

—Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.20.6

I have enunciated three paths for those who want to attain spiritual welfare—the Path of Knowledge (Jñānayoga), the Path of Selfless Actions (Karmayoga), and the Path of Devotion (Bhaktiyoga). Besides these three, there is absolutely no other path for the spiritual advancement of human beings.

According to Swāmī Rāmsukhdāsī (2007, p. 20), “All these three *Yogas*-paths are independent means to God-realization. All other spiritual disciplines, such as *Dhyānayoga*, etc., are also implicit within these three” (See: Dhiman, 2013, 2014). It is because human beings are endowed with three powers—power to do, power to know, and power to accept (or to believe). For the proper use of these powers, human beings are endowed with a physical body to ‘do,’ an intellect to ‘know,’ and a heart to ‘believe.’ *Karmayoga* is meant for the proper use of the power to ‘do;’ *Jñānayoga* for the proper use of the power to ‘know;’ and *Bhaktiyoga* is meant for the proper use of the power to ‘accept’ or to ‘believe.’ A person with penchant for actions is fit for *Karmayoga*; a person with penchant for discrimination is fit for *Jñānayoga*; and a person with penchant for feelings is fit for *Bhaktiyoga*.

There are verily three entities—the world (*jagat*), the self or the soul (*ātman*), and God (*Paramātman*). *Karmayoga* pertains to the world, *Jñānayoga* pertains to the self, and *Bhaktiyoga* pertains to God. Dedicating what we have received from the world—such as physical body, etc.,—in the service of the world without expecting anything in return, is called *Karmayoga* (Gītā, 3.11; 4.23; 18.45). To sever one’s affinity with the objects that are transitory and fleeting by not identifying with them as ‘I’ or ‘mine,’ is called *Jñānayoga* (Gītā, 3.27). Considering only God as one’s own and dedicating all undertakings and objects to God—and taking refuge in God—this is called *Bhaktiyoga* (Gītā, 7.26–27; 18.66). *Karmayogī* severs relationship with the world through service; *Jñānayogī* severs relation with the world through renunciation (of doership); and *Bhaktiyogī* severs relation with the world by establishing relationship with, and surrendering to, the Supreme Lord (Rāmsukhdāsī, 2007; See: Dhiman, 2013, 2014).

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## Jñānayoga: The Path of Knowledge

In the second chapter of the Gītā (verses 2.11–2.30), the knowledge of our true Self (*sāṅkhya yoga*) is expounded. The word *sāṅkhya* is used in the special sense here. It means knowing a thing completely (*sam* = properly/fully/completely; *khyā* = knowing). Here it signifies knowing our true nature, the Self, completely. The Gītā follows a specialized methodology of teaching under which the highest teaching is given first and elaborated later (Schepetin, 2018). Accordingly, Chapter 2 of the Gītā introduces all its essential teachings in a summary form which are later



elaborated in the next sixteen chapters. This is an important pointer to the understanding of the Gītā.

The teachings of the Gītā start when Arjuna, confused about his proper duty, beseeches the Lord to instruct him in what is decidedly best for him (2.7). At this point, the sublime message of the Gītā begins as follows with the highest teachings of *Sāṅkhya* (2.11–25):

The wise [who know the Self to be free from death and birth] do not grieve over the coming or going of people, objects, and situations. For, the unreal has no existence whatsoever; and the real never ceases to be. The wise one to whom pain and pleasure are the same and who is not tormented by these is fit for the state of immortality or liberation (*mokṣa*).

Thereafter, in verses 2.12–25, the Gītā describes the nature of the perennial Self (*ātmā*) as follows: The Self is *nitya* (ever-existent), *satya* (real), *avināshi* (indestructible), *nirvikāra* (immutable), *sarvagataḥ* (all-pervading), and *aprameya* (indeterminable or unobjectifiable). Therefore, knowing the soul or the self to be thus, there is no cause for grief. The Gītā (2.22) tells us that, ‘As a person discards old and worn out clothes and takes other new ones, even so the soul, casting off worn out bodies, enters other new ones.’ It is interesting to note that BG (12.3–4) describe the characteristics of the Supreme Self, *Paramātmān*, as the unthinkable, omnipresent, indestructible, indefinable, eternal, immovable, unmanifest, and immutable Brahman. The striking similarity between the features of *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā* proves their essential oneness. To help us realize this oneness (of the individual self with the universal Self) is the ultimate goal of the Bhagavad Gītā, and the fruit of the path of knowledge, *jñāna yoga*.

Essentially, the *jñāna yoga* entails not identifying with the body and the objects as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ and realizing ourselves as pure, action-less Self. This understanding, promises the Gītā, leads to abiding peace and happiness. Through the knowledge of the Self, one realizes that what one is seeking is the very nature of the seeker and that happiness is not something to be gained from outside—it is the *very* nature of the Self:

*vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān pumāṃś carati niḥspṛhaḥ /  
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntim adhigacchati // 2.71*

One who has given up all desires, free from longings and the sense of “I” and “mine,” attains peace.

There is one more dimension of *jñāna yoga* that we need to cover to bring it full circle. It entails the understanding of the Self as *akartā* and *abhōgtā* (non-doer and non-enjoyer). The Gītā makes it very clear that all actions are performed by the three-fold properties of the material nature. The following two verses provide perhaps the greatest *raison d’être* that all actions are performed by force of inherent qualities:

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ /  
ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate // 3.27  
tattvavīt tu mahābāho guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ /  
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate // 3.28*

All actions are performed by *guṇas* [qualities] of primordial nature [*Prakṛti*]. One whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks, “I am the doer.” But, one, with true insight into the respective domains of *guṇas* and their action, knowing that *guṇas* as senses merely move among *guṇas* as objects, does not become attached.

These verses state that all actions are performed by the interplay of three qualities (*guṇas*)—purity (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*). Deluded by our ego sense (*ahaṃkāra*), we take ourselves to be the ‘doers.’ But those who understand the respective domains of these *guṇas* and their actions do not get attached to them: The knower of Truth, [being] centered [in the Self] should think, “I do nothing at all”—though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, holding, opening and closing the eyes—*convinced that it is the senses that move among sense objects*. (5.8–9).

The Gītā clarifies that he who sees that all actions are performed in every way by nature (*Prakṛti*), and the Self as the non-doer, alone truly sees:

*prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ |*  
*yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṃ sa paśyati || 13.29*

The definite conclusion in the Gītā is that ‘Liberation is attained only through the knowledge of Reality’ (See: Gambhirananda, 1984, pp. 44–45).

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### Three Guṇas and their Transcendence

The Gītā (18.40) categorically declares that there is no being anywhere in the material world free from the qualities/properties/modes (*guṇas*) born of material nature (*Prakṛti*). Wherever there is name and form (*nāma-rupa*), there is *guṇa*. The individual self (*jīva*) feels itself in bondage on account of two things—due to *Prakṛti* (material nature) and due to the effects of *Prakṛti* in the form of the three modes (*guṇas*) of material nature, i.e., *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. *Prakṛti* or Nature is constituted of three *guṇas*: *Sattva* (purity), *Rajas* (activity), and *Tamas* (inertia). *Sattvaguṇa* refers to qualities such as purity, goodness; *rajoguṇa* denotes such qualities as activity, passion, etc.; and *tamoguṇa* refers to qualities such as inertia, dullness, etc.

*Guṇa* also means a rope—that which binds. All *guṇas* in some measure bind the individual soul or empirical self (*jīva*) to *saṃsāra* (the unending cycle of births and deaths). *Sattvaguṇa* binds through attachment to happiness and pride of knowledge (14.6); *Rajoguṇa* binds the individual soul (*jīva*) to *saṃsāra* through attachment to actions and their fruit (14.7); and *tamoguṇa* binds through heedlessness, sloth, and sleep (14.8). Hence, the Gītā extols the ideal of transcending the triad of *guṇas* (*guṇātita*) (2.45; 14.19, 14.22–26).

## The Transcendent Sage of the Gītā: One Beyond the Three Guṇas of Prakṛti

The transcendent Sage is one who has gone beyond the three modes of nature (*guṇas* of *Prakṛti*)—who by means of truth and goodness (*sattva*) overcomes compulsive activity (*rajas*) and confusion (*tamas*); and then gets beyond attachment to goodness (*sattva*) itself. In response to Arjuna’s question, the Lord first describes the marks of the sage who has transcended the three modes of material nature and then describes how to go beyond the *guṇas*: ‘The transcendent sage behaves with equanimity (*samatā*). Alike in pleasure and in pain, who is ever established in the eternal Self, regarding a clod of earth, a stone, and a piece of gold as of equal worth (without any attraction or aversion—for they are perishable); who is equanimous in the success and failure of actions, the same in blame and praise, honor and dishonor; who is same to friend and foe; and who has abandoned all initiative of new undertakings prompted by selfish desire and attachment—such a person is called a transcendent sage.’ (14.24–26).

The following verse is the quintessential verse that tells us the art and the significance of transcending the *guṇas* while following any of the three spiritual disciplines (*Karmayōga*, *Jñānayōga*, *Bhaktiyōga*):

*nānyaṃ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṃ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati /  
guṇebhyaś ca paraṃ veti madbhāvaṃ so’dhigacchati // 14.19*

When the seer beholds no one as the doer other than the *guṇas* and knows That which is entirely beyond the *guṇas*, he enters into My being.

It is important to note that seldom in the Gītā, the glory of the outcome of a spiritual practice has so explicitly been stated as it is in this phrase—*madbhāvaṃ so’dhigacchati*: enters into My being!

In the Gītā’s estimation, to be able to focus the mind is no big deal. The big deal according to the Gītā is the evenness of mind or the equanimity (*samatā*)—to remain *unperturbed* and *unattached* through steadiness of mind. If a person is able to attain equanimity—regardless of other virtues—that person is a *siddha* (perfected being) or *sthitaprajñā* (established in steady wisdom) according to the Gītā. The Gītā does not regard that person a *siddha* who has cultivated all other qualities but lacks the essential equanimity!

### Equanimity (*Samatā*): The Touchstone of Perfection in Wisdom

The Gītā regards ‘equanimity’ or ‘evenness of mind’ to be the *Yoga* (2:48). And the finest teaching on this topic is provided in the Gītā as follows:

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya /  
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate // 2.48*

Abiding in equanimity, abandoning attachment, perform actions, O Arjuna, viewing with equanimous mind success and failure. Evenness of mind (*samatvam*) is *Yoga*.

*Samatā* (equanimity) is the “fulcrum” around which the entire teachings of the Gītā revolve. Wherever the Lord has mentioned the highest peaks of the paths of action, knowledge, and devotion, He has very carefully interspersed ‘*samatā*’ in their consummation (2.48, 53, 57; 5.6, 18–20; 12.13–19; 14.24, 25; 18.10, 26). So, in Gītā’s estimation, *samatā* is the litmus-test of perfection (*siddhi*) in all the paths to God-Realization. Whatever the spiritual practice, if *samatā* is not there, the goal is still far away.

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### Attaining Equanimity Through the Path of Action (Karma Yoga)

The setting of the Gītā is as follows: Arjuna is a warrior prince who becomes confused about his duty at the outset of the war of epic proportions. He does not know the right thing to do, the perennial dilemma of all managers and leaders. In the heat of emotion, he anxiously decides to quit his duty being a warrior and sits listlessly at the back of the chariot. He does not want to come out of his comfort zone and gives voice to false sense of pity and misplaced compassion. In this state of confusion, he turns toward the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his friend, philosopher and guide and asks for the advice about the highest good (*śreyas*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa listens to him patiently and then counsels him about his duty to fight the righteous war and do the right thing.

There are several leadership lessons inherent in this setting. First, it points that the leaders need to listen.

In practicing the path of action, Arjuna is advised to perform actions as an offering to the Supreme, renouncing attachment to actions and their results, remaining steadfast in equanimity. The Gītā tells us that the equanimity (*samatā*) can be attained both through the Path of Knowledge (*Jñānayoga*) as well as through the Path of (selfless) Action (*Karmayoga*). After having explained the *Yoga* of equanimity according to the Path of Knowledge (involving discriminating reasoning regarding the body and the soul) [2:11–2:30], the Lord now explains equanimity (*samatā*) from the standpoint of the Path of (selfless) Action (*Karmayoga*) [2:39–53], following which one overcomes completely the fetters of *Karma*. This equanimity has four qualities:

1. Performing actions while established in equanimity, a person does not get entangled in the shackles of *Karma*;
2. There is no loss (forfeiture) of efforts directed towards attaining this equanimity;
3. There is no fear of adverse results due to any omission in following this path; and
4. Even a little observance of this practice saves one from the great fear (caused by the unending wheel of birth and death). In other words, even a little practice of this virtue of selfless actions grants liberation.

Then comes one of the most popular verses about *Karma Yoga* (2:47): Your right is only to perform your allotted duty; that is, your right is for action alone. But you

have no right whatsoever to the results thereof; that is, you are not free in this regard. Therefore, let not the fruits of action be your motive, i.e., do not become the cause of the fruit of your actions through attachment (with the instruments of actions such as body etc.); nor become attached to inaction (indifference, laziness, etc.). It means that ‘doing’ is under our control; ‘happening’ is under the purview of *Prārabdha* (our earned destiny). To paraphrase Swami Sharnanandji’s wisdom, *one should be ‘careful’ about what one ‘does’ and be ‘happy’ with whatever ‘happens.’* (See: Dhiman, 2018). According to Indian philosophy, there are three kinds of *Karma*: (1) *Sañchita* or accumulated or stored up in past lives; (2) *Agāmi* or that which is yet to be done; (3) *Prārabdha* or that which is already bearing fruit. This last is that part of the accumulated actions (*Sañchita*) which has brought about the present life and will influence it until its close (Swarupananda, 1909/1976, p. 406).

In fact, the need for *Yoga* (equanimity) is paramount in the performance of actions because the path of action is marred by selfish desire and attachment. In order to act as ‘free-agents,’ we need the discipline of ‘equanimity’—*yoga*—in the form of *Karma Yoga*. While in regards to the Paths of Knowledge and Devotion, the ‘*yoga*’ (communion) is quite natural. The seer, after realizing ‘All is God’ (*Vāsudevaḥ Sarvam*, 7.19), remains naturally established in the experience of Oneness; and the devotee likewise constantly experiences reverential communion with the Lord. Therefore, In the *Gītā*, the word *Yoga* especially signifies *Karma Yoga* (Swāmī Rāmsukhdāsī, 2007, p. 5).

All undertakings, all actions, are tainted with some blemish—this means that all actions are inherently “binding” *in effect* as they lead to good, bad, or mixed results (18.3; 18.12). But when the actions are performed with pure motivation or intention—i.e. as an offering to the Supreme, without attachment to actions or fruits thereof—they become free from the blemish. This is the secret of *Karma Yoga*. And the finest teaching on this is provided in the *Gītā* as follows:

*brahmaṇy ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ |  
lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivāmbhasā || 5.10*

He who acts offering all actions to the Lord, renouncing all attachment, remains untouched by the sin, as the lotus leaf by water.

*Karma Yoga* is the secret of becoming free from the effects of the karma. Purification of mind is limit as far it goes.

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## Dhyānayoga: The Path of Meditation

It is important to note that although the *Gītā* recognizes two primary spiritual disciplines (3.2)—*Jñānayoga* (the Path of Knowledge) and *Karmayoga* (the Path of Action); yet, at various points, the *Gītā* also presents other disciplines such as *Bhaktiyoga* (the Path of Devotion), and *Dhyānayoga* (the path of Meditation) as equally viable paths or aids to enlightenment. Besides, in the *Gītā*, the path of meditation or concentration serves as a necessary concomitant to all other paths, since a certain measure of calm concentration is verily required to practice the path of action, knowledge, and devotion

in a proper manner. The Gītā takes an integral view of the spiritual disciplines and often extols other disciplines while discussing a particular path as pre-eminent.

In Chapter 6, entitled *Atmasamyamayogaḥ*: The Yoga of Self-Discipline, we find the most detailed instructions on the discipline of meditation that culminate in *Bhaktiyoga—śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*: the *yogīn* who worships Me devoutly with his inmost self abiding in Me, is considered by Me to be the best of the *yogīns* (6:47).

As a prelude to the discipline of meditation, we are told in Chapter 6 that responsibility for one's spiritual welfare and downfall rests with oneself and no one else. Therefore, one should uplift oneself by one's own self (efforts)—and not degrade oneself; for one's own self alone is one's friend, and one's own self alone is one's enemy (6.5). At the very outset of Chapter 6, by way of the path as well as the goal, Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents the following marks of a *yogīn* steadfast in equanimity: 'When one does not get attached to sense-objects or to actions, and has renounced all purposes (*saṅkalpas*), then, he is said to have ascended the heights of *Yoga* (*yogārūḍha*).

According to the Gītā, 'Success in this *Yoga* of meditation is neither attained by one who either eats too much or does not eat at all, nor by one who either sleeps too much or does not sleep at all. This *Yoga* (of meditation), which destroys sorrows, is accomplished only by him who is temperate in diet and recreation, who is disciplined (and detached) in the performance of actions, and is temperate in sleep and waking.' As Edgerton (1944, p. 68) has noted, "This is one of the points of contact between the Gītā and Buddhism, for Buddhism too makes much of the doctrine of 'golden mean', opposing the extreme of self-torture as well as the extreme of worldliness."

The Gītā is fully aware that the mind is restless and hard to control. It maintains that the mind can be controlled by constant practice and detachment (or dispassion). The following two verses provide the preliminary instructions on meditation:

*saṅkalpaprabhavān kāmāṃs tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ /  
manasaivendriyagrāmaṃ viniyāmya samantataḥ // 6.24*

*śanaiḥ śanair uparamed buddhyā dhṛtiḥṛitayā /  
ātmasamsthāṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiṃcid api cintayet // 6.25*

Renouncing entirely all desires, and withdrawing, by strength of mind, all senses from their respective objects, the meditator should, with an unhurried intellect set in firmness, gradually become detached (*uparām*) from the world. *He should then focus his mind on the Supreme Self (Paramātmā) and should not think of anything else whatsoever.*

In the chapter mainly devoted to the practice of meditation comes the final assurance about *Bhakti yoga*: My devotee is superior to all possible types of *yogīs*—*Karmayogī*, *Jñānayogī*, *Dhyānayogī*, *Haṭhayogī*, *Layayogī*, *Rājayogī*, etc.

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ madgatenāntarātmanā  
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ 6.47*

Even among all the *yogīs*, he who worships Me devoutly with his inmost self abiding in Me, he is considered by Me to be the best of the *yogīns*.

This concluding verse of Chapter 6 prepares the ground for the next *shatkam* on *Bhaktiyoga* comprising Chapters 7–12.

## Bhakti Yoga: The Path of Devotion

Of the two pre-eminent classical commentators on the Gītā—Śaṅkarācārya and Rāmānujācārya—Śaṅkarācārya considered the path of Knowledge (*Jñāna*) to be the most important discipline to reach Liberation or *Mokṣa*. The liberating knowledge according to Śaṅkarā consists of realizing one's identity with the Ultimate Reality. Śaṅkarā categorically states in his Vedantic classic, *Vivekachudamani*, the Crest Jewel of Wisdom: "Without the realization of one's identity with the Brahman, the Self, there shall be no liberation for the individual, not even in the life times of hundred Brahmas put together. (See: Chaitanya & Dhiman, 2012, p. 54). In the same text, he says that among the means of attaining liberation, *Bhakti*, devotion, reigns supreme. He defines *Bhakti* in a very special manner, as follows: "A constant contemplation of one's own Real Nature is called devotion" (p. 82).

For Rāmānuja, service (*upāsana*) to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasudeva, the Supreme Being, in the form of devotion (*Bhakti*) is the most important discipline. R.C. Zaehner (1973, p. 3), an impartial and objective scholar who served as a Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford during 1950s, finds Rāmānuja's interpretation to be more "nearer in spirit to the Gītā". In Zaehner's estimate, Rāmānuja comes nearest to the mind of the author of the Gītā' (p. 8). "In his commentary as elsewhere, notes Zaehner, "Rāmānuja is concerned with establishing the absolute supremacy of the personal God (Kṛṣṇa) not only over the phenomenal world but also over the impersonal Absolute, Brahman" (p. 8).

Zaehner (1973, p. 2) finds the Gītā to be a far more unitary work than most modern scholars had been prepared to admit; and it was this realization that impelled him to prepare an edition of his own. Zaehner decries that 'most recent translations of the Gītā (particularly the more popular ones) have not been accurate at all, and by both being inaccurate and theologically biased, a very false view of what the Gītā actually says has been passed off on an unsuspecting public' (p. 2).

Describing his own growing familiarity with the text, Zaehner (1973) further notes that 'as he grew more familiar with the text, it became evermore insistently clear to me that here was a text the whole purpose of which seemed to me to demonstrate that love of a personal God, so far from being *only* a convenient preparation for the grand unitary experience of spiritual 'liberation' (the *mokṣa* or *mukti* of the Upaniṣads and the *vimutti* of the Buddhists), was also the crown of this experience itself which, without it, must remain imperfect (p. 3). To support his position, Zaehner quotes a celebrated French interpreter of the Gītā, Lamotte, who writes, 'Contrary to what one might suppose, the return of the soul into Brahman is not yet the final stage (*terme définitif*) or at least the exact expression of perfect deliverance. Kṛṣṇa who has supplanted the Brahman both in theodicy and in cosmology now surpasses it in eschatology too: it is union with Kṛṣṇa, the Bhagavat, which is the ultimate and final stage of deliverance' (p. 3).

As stated above, at the conclusion of Chapter 6, the Gītā especially extols the Path of Devotion (6.47) even while presenting the outcome of the discipline of meditation. Thus, in Chapters 7–10, Arjuna is progressively led to the knowledge of the mysteries and the glories of the Divine Being—Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa—and now Arjuna is ready to behold the Lord’s Universal Form—*viśva-rupā-darśanam*, which forms the subject-matter of Chapter 11. The Lord bestows Arjuna with the divine vision (*divya-dṛṣṭi*) to enable him to witness the universal form. Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents the quintessence of path of devotion in the culminating verse of Chapter 11—‘He who does work for My sake (pleasure) only, he who looks upon Me as the Supreme Goal, who lovingly worships Me, who is free from attachment (to worldly things) and from enmity to all beings, that devotee verily comes to Me’ (11.55).

This concluding verse of Chapter 11 (11:55) represents the essence of *Bhakti* and is declared to be the very heart, the quintessence of the whole teaching of the Gītā, by Hindu commentators. The great commentator, Śāṅkarācārya, calls it ‘the essence of the whole Gītā’ (Hill, 1928/1973, p. 167) (See also, *The Bhagavad Gītā, Translated and Interpreted by Franklin Edgerton*, Harvard University Press, New York, 1944, p. 176). Paraphrasing 11.55, Dr. Radhakrishnan (1958, p. 289) states that ‘we must carry our duties directing the spirit to God and with detachment from all interest in the things of the world and free from enmity towards any living being.’ *The Bhagavad Gītā: with an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, English Translation and Notes* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1958, p. 289).

We conclude this section on *Bhakti Yoga* by summarizing seven culminating verses or *carma ślokas* of Chapter 18: 18.54, 18.55, 18.56, 18.57, 18.62, 18.65, and 18.66.

Having become one with the Ultimate Reality, such an aspirant (*sādhaka*) neither grieves nor desires. Alike to all beings, he attains supreme devotion to Me. By virtue of My devotion supreme, he comes to know Me, what My measure is and who I am in essence. Knowing Me thus in very truth and essence, he enters into Me straightway. A devotee who has taken refuge in Me with exclusive and unswerving devotion, even while performing all ordained actions, by My Grace, attains to the Eternal, Imperishable Abode (*mat-prasādāt avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padam avyayam*). Therefore, mentally dedicating all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, and resorting to the *Yoga* of equanimity—i.e., by severing affinity with the world—fix your mind and thoughts constantly on Me. By being constantly absorbed in Me, you will, by My Grace, overcome all difficulties. O Bhārata (Arjuna)! Seek refuge in Him alone, surrendering your whole being (*sarvabhāvena*). By His Grace you shall attain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode.’ (18.54, 18.55, 18.56, 18.57, 18.62)

The final two verses conclude the teachings as follows:

*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru /  
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyosi me // 18.65*

‘Fix your mind on Me—i.e., accept Me as your very own; worship Me with all your actions; and bow to Me with reverence—i.e., be completely surrendered to Me. By turning completely towards Me in this manner, you will verily attain to Me—This is my sincere pledge to you because you are dear to Me.



*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja |  
ahaṃ tvā sarvaṇṣepbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ || 18.66*

Relinquishing all *dharmas* take refuge in Me alone. I will release you from all sins. Do not grieve.

According to Swāmī Shrī Rāmsukhdāsī, ‘Taking refuge in the Lord (*śarnāgati*) is the quintessence of the entire message of the Gītā. S.K. Maitra (1947, p. 103) concurs: ... “the final instruction is: surrender.” In surrendering to the Lord lies the culmination of the Gītā’s teachings. The devotee who has taken refuge in the Lord accepts firmly the belief that ‘I am God’s and God is mine.’ Then the devotee becomes forever free from the pangs of fear, sorrow, worry, etc.’ (cited in Dhiman, 2013, p. 172).

With this key verse, we have come full circle in the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā: Śrī Kṛṣṇa started the teaching declaring that ‘the wise do not grieve’ (2.11: *nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*) and concludes it with an assurance ‘do not grieve’ (18.66: *mā śucaḥ*). So, if you want to overcome the sorrow, attain to the liberating wisdom. What is this liberating wisdom? Just this: Perform your actions as an offering to the Supreme (*Ishvara-arpanabhāvanā*), performing your duties without the expectation of any reward. Be an instrument of the Divine in all that you do. Let all your actions be for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*, 5.25); be a role model for the bringing of the world communities together and maintenance of the world order (*lokasaṃgraham evāpi sampāśyan kartum arhasi*: 3.20). Above all, accept the results of your actions with graceful equanimity, as a Grace of the Lord (*Ishvara-prasādabhāvanā*). Then your actions will never taint you. Attain the highest pure knowledge by which the One Imperishable Being is seen in all the existences, undivided in the divided (18.20). In this manner, with the Divine Grace, you will attain the communion of the individual self with the Supreme Self.

Thus concludes this manual for transformational living and leadership.

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## Five Practices that Lead to Security, Peace, and Liberation

### The Alchemy of Karma Yoga: Renunciation in Action

As a practical teaching, Karma Yoga furnishes the best set of guidelines to put service before self and to perform actions for the well-being of all beings. Regarding its efficacy, we have the testimony of Mahātmā Gāndhī, who verified its teachings in every sphere of his life with great success. He called the Bhagavad Gītā the “Gospel of Selfless Action” and used to regard the Kurukṣetra war as an allegory of the battle that is fought in human heart (See Dhiman, 2015, 2017). As a matter of fact, the Bhagavad Gītā’s emphasis on selfless service was the prime source of inspiration for his life and leadership. He considered selfless service as the path to self-discovery: ‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.’

Karma Yoga is doing right actions with right attitude. Right actions are those which help everyone and harm no one. Why should I do all good and do no harm,

one may ask? The law of Karma explains: ‘As you sow, so shall you reap.’ There is nothing chaotic or capricious about this law: We alone are responsible for everything we face in life. Thus, Karma becomes at once the motivation to do good (by invoking the inevitability of the law of cause and effect) and also nature’s way to restore moral harmony. Right attitude is towards actions and their results. Performance of one’s ‘duty for duty’s sake’ is the right attitude towards actions. It is an experiential fact that we have no control over the results of our actions. Thus, renouncing the fruits of actions is the right attitude towards their results.

According to Karma Yoga, it is not what one does, but the motive or intention behind the act that produces the binding effect of Karma. Someone has said that *God cares more for adverbs than for verbs*; that is, more for *how* a thing is done than for *what* is done. In Indian philosophy, the law of Karma is used to explain the cause of human bondage as well as the means to attain liberation from bondage. When actions are performed with a selfish motive, they *bind*; when actions are performed with the spirit of self-renunciation—and by way of submission to Divine will—they *liberate*. Performance of actions selflessly purifies the mind and renders it worthy to receive the liberating spiritual wisdom. *Ethics is thus considered a necessary prelude to spiritual freedom*. According to a well-known Indian dictum, “Scriptures do not cleanse the ethically unworthy.”

Thus, Karma Yoga furnishes the highest basis for acting ethically in the world. The law of karma tells us that *whatever we do to others is rendered unto us—manifold*. When we practice Karma Yoga in the right spirit, it fosters understanding, harmony, and mutual trust in the workplace environment. Performing duties selflessly purifies the mind and makes it a fit instrument to receive the higher teachings of Self-knowledge.

It is when one can so restrain oneself as to only perform actions in the spirit of self-renunciation that one ceases to accumulate any new Karma for fresh results. One only has to experience the results of one’s previous Karma that have ripened for giving fruits. If in the meantime one attains true knowledge of one’s real self, all past accumulated actions are destroyed. In elucidating what is called the doctrine of selfless action (*niṣkāma Karma*), the Bhagavad Gītā urges us to renounce selfish actions and fruits of actions. Commenting on Karma Yoga as enunciated in the Bhagavad Gītā, Mysore Hiriyanna (1949, pp. 120–121) explains, “The object of the Gītā is to discover a golden mean between the two ideals...of action and contemplation...preserving the excellence of both. Karma-Yoga is such a mean.... [It] stands not for renunciation *of* action, but for renunciation *in* action.” This is the alchemy of Karma Yoga.

In the ultimate analysis, renunciation is an inner, mental act and should not be confused with outward tokens of relinquishment. It is about renunciation of results and not renunciation of actions themselves. That is, renunciation *in* action and not *of* actions. True renunciation is the renunciation of *kartāpan*—the deeply ingrained *sense of doership*. The path of knowledge (*jñāna yoga*) furnishes the best *raison d’être* for relinquishing the sense of doership in our actions.

## Becoming a Person of Steady Wisdom and Attaining the Absolute

At the heart of the Gītā, there lies the conception of a sage of steady wisdom (*sthītaprajñā*) who has gone beyond the pair of opposites such as pleasure and pain, success and failure, virtue and vice. According to the Bhagavad Gītā, that person of steady wisdom, whose mind is unperturbed in sorrow, who is free from longing for pleasure, and who has gone beyond attachment, fear, and anger (*duḥkheṣv anudvīgnamanāḥ sukheṣu vīgataspr̥haḥ vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthītadhīr munir ucyate*, 2.56)—that person attains liberation (*moksha*):

One who rejoices only in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, who is content in the Self alone—for such a person, there is nothing left to do. Such a person has nothing to gain from work done or left undone and no selfish dependence on any being for any object to serve any purpose. Therefore, remaining unattached, always perform actions which are obligatory; by performing action without attachment, one attains the Supreme. (3.17–19)

Resting in the Absolute, with intellect steady and without delusion, the knower of Self neither rejoices in receiving what is pleasant nor grieves on receiving what is unpleasant. (5.20).

The inner autonomy described in the above verses is the blossoming of Self-knowledge that expresses itself in the threefold-virtues of security, peace, and freedom.

Such a person of steady wisdom acts naturally and spontaneously for the welfare of all and attains the Supreme Brahman: ‘The seers whose sins have been washed away, whose doubts have been cleared, whose disciplined mind is firmly established in God, and who are engaged in the welfare of all beings, attain Supreme Brahman’ (BG, 5.25).

## Attaining True Wisdom & Rejoicing in the Self Alone

Steady in wisdom, the *sthītaprajñā* enjoys the constant bliss of the Self, regardless of the changing circumstances. Established in the Oneness of Self, unattached and unperturbed, the person of steady wisdom is at peace and ease with everything in all situations. Such a person attains to the Absolute: ‘The *yogi* who is happy within, who rejoices within the delight of the soul, and who is illumined within (by the light of the soul) attains liberation in Brahman, having become one with Brahman’ (BG, 5.24).

Understanding the workings of the imposter ego and thereby rendering it ineffective is the first step on the path of wisdom. In the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā where Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins to describe the marks or means of True Knowledge (Gītā, 13. 7–11), we see ‘absence of self-pride’ (13.7) listed as the very first mark. In the very next verse (13.8), Śrī Kṛṣṇa again states... ‘and absence of egotism also’ (*anahamkāra eva ca*). Please note the word ‘also’ after the word ‘egotism.’ Out of the 20 marks of True Knowledge listed in verses 13. 7–11, the word ‘also’

(*eva*) is appended only next to the absence of ‘self-pride’ (*‘anahamkāra’*) (See: Maheshānandjī Girī, 1989). This is something to ponder over very deeply!

The Gītā presents detailed instructions about attaining steady abidance in Self-Knowledge. As long as one is harboring a sense of distinction/superiority, regardless of any reason—justified or unjustified—one is still belaboring in vain, not much unlike the ox that turns the oil press going back and forth. When God is all there is (*Vasudevaḥ Sarvam: Gītā, 7.19*), where is the need for entertaining any feelings of distinction or superiority—no matter what the justification may be?

Those who are truly awake become awake to the fact that ‘God is all there is’—including the ones who may not be yet awake, in their estimation! This knowledge fosters amity, understanding, and harmony in all settings and removes the conflict inherent in the ‘game of one-up-ness’ that plagues most human interaction. Likewise, we come to realize that most psychological and emotional stress is caused by our excessive self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is a condition borne with a deeply ingrained sense of separateness, anchored in self-ignorance. Self-knowledge is freedom from self-ignorance; when self-ignorance transforms into self-knowledge, our need to maintain our separateness is resolved into the fullness of our being. We no longer feel the gnawing sense of inadequacy, incompleteness, and insecurity. We have arrived at an unassailable stillness, blessed with the fullness of our essential nature. We have made peace with the universe.

## Doing Our Work Without the Tag of Doership

The Gītā makes it clear that all actions are performed by the interplay of the qualities of material nature. Due to our identification with ego, we think we are the doers. This identification results in attachment and aversion which affects the quality of our work and leads bondage. The seer of reality (*tattva-vit*) is firm (*yukto*) in his or her belief (*manyate*) that “I do nothing at all” (*naiva kiṃcit karomīti*), realizing that the senses are moving among the sense objects. Śāṅkarā explains in his commentary that one who has the knowledge of the actionless-Self sees inaction in action (4.18) for he or she realizes that in all actions the senses operate upon objects (sense objects) while the Self remains immutably inactive. The Bhagavad Gītā tells us that “for one who knows the self, who rejoices solely in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, and who is content in the Self alone,—for him there is nothing more left to do” (3.17). In other words, the Self is ever actionless, as action in nature (*Prakṛti’s guṇas*) is inaction in the Self (*Ātman*). This is the true understanding of a person of knowledge.

A question may be asked here: If, for the knower of the Self, nothing remains to be done, then how do we explain the apparent actions of the enlightened ones? In his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, Śāṅkara, the greatest Indian philosopher, presents at least four explanations. The sages act:

1. with a view to set an example to the masses, so the unwary do not go astray (3.26);

2. for the unification of the world at large (*lokasaṃgraham*, 3.20, 3.25);
3. for the welfare of the world at large (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*, 5.25;12.4);
4. for the purification of the self (*ātmaśuddhaye*, 5.11).

In verses 5.25 and 12.4, a liberated person is described as “most naturally and intently engaged in seeking and promoting the welfare of all beings.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa, using himself as an example of a liberated being, tells Arjuna, “there is nothing in all the three worlds for me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by me, yet I continue to work” (3.22). Then in verse 3.25 we find the clearest practical advice to live by: “*As the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise, seeking maintenance of the world order, act without attachment.*” In sum, the seers act for the well-being of all beings and for the unification of the world. At the highest level, they spontaneously embody the virtues of universal morality, such as selflessness, compassion, desirelessness, forbearance, peace, and harmony. This is the culmination of Karma Yoga.

### Samatā and Sthitaprajñā: Supreme Goals of the Gītā

If there are two key virtues that the Gītā teaches above all, they are equanimity and steady wisdom. Two important verses in Chapter 2 reveal the secret to this supreme goal, as well as the means to the attainment of the goal of *sthitaprajñā*, as follows:

*prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān |  
ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tadocyate || 2.55  
vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān pumāṃś carati niḥspṛhaḥ |  
nirmamo nirahankāraḥ sa śāntim adhigacchati || 2.71*

When one completely casts off all the desires of the mind, content in the Self alone, by [the joy of] the Self, then one is said to be established in steady wisdom.

One who has given up all desires and moves about free from longings and the sense of “I” and “mine” attains peace.

All schools of Indian philosophy take it axiomatic that the fundamental human error is self-ignorance. Due to this error we are not able to experience our intrinsic perfection and take ourselves to be limited, inadequate, and incomplete beings. Since self-ignorance is the cause of our malady, only self-knowledge can provide permanent solution to this gnawing sense of inadequacy.

A seminal verse captures both the means and the end of Self-Knowledge, as follows:

*ātmapamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yorjuna |  
sukhaṃ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṃ sa yogī paramo mataḥ || 6.32*

O Arjuna, that *yōgī* is considered to be the highest among all *yōgīs* who judges what is happiness and sorrow in all, by the *same* standard as he would apply to himself.

He looks at the joy and sorrow of all with the same eye, because he feels the pleasure and pain in others same as the pleasure and pain in himself, since he has realized the oneness of all existence. Although the word *yōgī* occurs 15 times in the Bhagavad Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has used the word “*paramah*” (supreme) along with the word *yōgī* only once in this very verse. Hence, the utmost importance of this unique verse!

When our mind has become pure and our intellect ‘*sama*’—‘balanced and equanimous’—we have attained oneness with the highest principle of existence. Such is the supreme importance of *samatā*.

The value of cultivating equanimity for today’s leaders and managers can hardly be overemphasized. Its importance is evident in every action, every decision a leader makes. Without the evenness of mind, self-awareness and emotional intelligence—two markers of success in leading oneself and others—remain a distant goal.

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## Concluding Thoughts: The Universality of the Gītā’s Teachings

The message of the Gītā is for everyone who is interested in attaining spiritual freedom. The sole purpose of the Gītā is the salvation of all of humankind. Regardless of one’s race, religion, or philosophical orientation, everyone can attain their spiritual welfare by following its simple teachings. The Gītā teaches the unique art of attaining Supreme fulfillment through secular conduct (*vyavahār mein paramārath ki kalā*)—by which one can, under every situation, performing all ordained actions, verily attain one’s spiritual welfare. It teaches us that all actions and their results are material in nature. When performed selflessly, actions serve as purifying agents and prepare the mind to receive the Self-knowledge which alone is the means to the ultimate goal of liberation. One should always remember the final goal and never get carried away by other pursuits. According to the Gītā, the final goal is liberation (freedom from all limitations) and Self-knowledge is the only means to it. All other means are but a preparation for it.

The Gītā teaches us that the real security lies within us and comes only from Self-knowledge. You are already the complete being that you long to be. The Gītā accomplishes this by revealing to us the true nature of the Self. Life will always have its ups and downs. Learn to forebear and do not get carried away. Always maintain *sattva-guṇa*—the quality of purity and truthfulness. It teaches us to perform our duties, in the spirit of detachment and sacrifice (*yajña*) and as an offering to the Supreme, for the mutual benefit of each other and for the welfare of the world (*lokasamgraham*: 3.20; 3.25). By cherishing each other in this manner, we will attain the Supreme Good (3.11). It further assures us that ‘by properly performing one’s duty, one attains perfection’ (18.45). While many scriptures enjoin to renounce the world to attain God, the Gītā states that one can attain perfection by surrendering to God (who is the source of all creation and is all-pervading) through the performance of one’s prescribed duty—*svakarmanā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ* (18.46).

When Self-knowledge removes self-ignorance that was covering our natural state of limitlessness, we discover that happiness is not a state of *becoming*; rather, it is a state of *being*. And we can retreat in this inner sanctuary of stillness of our being anytime and *be* ourselves. When we have discovered our inner font of peace and joy, we act “with” fulfillment and not “for” fulfillment. Thus, through equanimity, service, detachment, and surrender (to the Supreme), the Gītā teaches the art of spirituality while being ethically engaged in the worldly pursuits. This is the path of Self-realization paved by selfless service which alone leads to inner peace, fulfillment, and freedom. Having realized this Self-knowledge, the Gītā assures us, one swiftly attains supreme peace (*jñānaṃ labdhvā parāṃ śāntim acireṇādhigacchati*: 4.39).

As stated before, the Law of Karma places one’s psycho-spiritual evolution in one’s own hands. It inspires the leaders to evolve and help others evolve. The Gītā teaches renunciation *in* action, not renunciation *of* action. Renounce desire and attachment, not action, states the most important verse (2.47) on Karma Yoga in the Gītā. The sage outwardly does all activities like others, inwardly unattached. This is the essence of Karma Yoga of the Bhagavad Gītā. Wise leaders do everything without selfish motive, remaining equanimous in success and failure, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow.

Wise leaders offer their work as a loving service to the Supreme. They work for the purification of their mind (*ātmaśuddhaye*: 5.11) and act with a view to set an example to the masses, so the unwary do not go astray (3.26). They work for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite*: 5.25, 12.4) and for bringing the people together (*lokasaṃgraham*: 3.20, 3.25). This is the entire teachings of the Gītā on life and leadership. According to Hill (1928/1953, p. 62), the Gītā’s ultimate message in one sentence:

One who works with [Self-] knowledge and devotion, and without desire, wins liberation.

Therefore, by all our seeking, let’s seek Self-Knowledge.

Based on the teachings of the Gītā, we present below 15 leadership lessons by way of concluding summary. They are set as self-evident aphorisms representing the archetypical perennial philosophy as applied to the contemporary leadership and workplace.

### Key Leadership Lessons from the Bhagavad Gītā

1. Leadership is an internal affair. All battles are first fought within the mind (Chatterjee, 2012, p. 3). Mind matters most in life and leadership. Ultimately, right thinking and right conduct serve as the two unshakable pillars of leadership.
2. Effective Leaders master their senses instead of letting their senses master them. The leader should manage his anger and should not let anger gain control over him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that from anger, delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, reasoning power is lost and with the loss of reasoning one falls from one’s status as human being.

3. Therefore, effective leaders do not lead by anger or fear. They practice forbearance and use forgiveness as their principal armor. They are well aware that leading by anger and fear is unproductive and leads to disempowerment and disengagement.
4. Effective leaders approach life and leadership as peaceful warriors—bereft of attachment and personal likes and dislikes. Every decision they make represents a concrete choice between the right/wrong means for just/unjust ends.
5. The Gītā teaches the high art of *detached engagement*—to focus on the actions rather than the results. When we shift our attention from goal-orientation to process-orientation, the results take care of themselves.
6. Gītā teaches that selfless service is the highest principle of life and leadership. Effective leaders become instruments of the Whole and work for the well-being of all beings. This is the essence of the servant leadership.
7. The Gītā teaches us to choose the right goal (common good) and follow the right means (non-violence) and be detached from the results (by dedicating them to the Supreme).
8. Effective leaders know that self-awareness is the key to leading from within. They manage their awareness alertly to lead others effectively.
9. Self-awareness ultimately depends upon Self-knowledge. The Gītā presents detailed instructions about attaining steady abidance in Self-Knowledge (2.52–72; 13. 7–11).
10. Self-knowledge means the knowledge of one’s true self at the “soul-level”—beyond senses, mind, and intellect. While all other knowledge pertains to knowing everything that can be objectified externally, Self-knowledge is about knowing the knower.
11. Selfish desire obscures self-awareness and meddles with achieving life’s true ends. Self-aware leaders are not motivated by personal desires or interests. Their goal is contribution through service.
12. Leader’s true inspiration comes from doing selfless work. Selfless work brings equanimity of mind which in turn contributes to leadership effectiveness.
13. It is only when a leader is able to relinquish self-interest and egotism that he is able to know the true peace—rejoice and repose of the true self. Such a person then has nothing left here to do for himself (*ātmany eva ca saṁtuṣṭas tasya kāryaṃ na vidyate*: 3.17).
14. To rejoice and repose in the true Self is to be the true Sage of Steadfast Wisdom of the Gītā—a *sthitaprajña* (*ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tadocyate*: 2.55)
15. The greatest practical lesson that the Gītā teaches us is Karma Yoga—the highest discipline to live by: *use the right means for a just cause and leave the results in the hands of God.*

This is the message leaders need during these turbulent times!



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# Ten Key Management Messages from the Bhagavad Gita

# 4

A. D. Amar

“He [who should be leader] has no object here [from the act of leadership] to be gained by action done [as a leader], and none to be gained by action not done [as a leader]; he has no dependence on all these existences [the outcomes of his leadership] for any object to be [personally] gained [or lost].”

—*Gita* (3.18; Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018)

## Introduction

The question is why there is so much global interest from all walks of life and all quarters of knowledge in the *Bhagavad Gita*—an ancient Hindu text narrating the Indian intellectual and spiritual traditions that is dated around the fourth millennium BCE.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the main question is what can managers and management scholars around the world learn from it.

In quoting, transliterating, translating and understanding the *Bhagavad Gita*, as any reader will notice when going through this chapter that of all the immensely rich literature on the *Bhagavad Gita* available openly and widely, the author is mostly citing two sources. The first one of these is The Holy Bhagavad Gita (<https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/>) from which the author primarily quotes Swami Mukundananda. The second most quoted source is the Srimad Bhagavad Gita (<https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/>) from the Gita Supersite, developed and maintained by the Indian Institute of Technology—Kanpur, India. From the second source, he is mostly quoting the translations by Swami Sivananda.

<sup>1</sup>For example, Kak (2012) gives 3137 BCE as the year when Mahabharata (India’s biggest epic and the world’s largest work, containing over 200,000 individual verse lines) took place in which Lord Krishna, the eight incarnation of Vishnu, the Hindu name for God, recited the *Bhagavad Gita* to enlighten his disciple, warrior Arjuna about life, living, and the afterlife. These matters will be taken up later in a greater detail at the appropriate places in this article.

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The need for answers to the questions raised above comes from the several recent changes that are influencing life, work and the economy. These include the increase of knowledge as a production factor in all processes because of the switching of the economy from the industrial era to the knowledge era and the change in human outlook towards work and employment. These changes, which have occurred in the last few decades, have increased the appreciation for the message of the *Gita*. The other contributing factors are an increase in the acceptance of the role of spiritualism in the workplace, rise in human desire to attain satisfaction through service and work, the need for knowledge sharing in organizations, and an increase in the importance of innovation (Pandey, Gupta, & Arora, 2009). The *Bhagavad Gita* is contributing knowledge in finding satisfying answers to the above given questions.

What are the answers to these questions is the main purpose of this article. These answers come all most all from the *Bhagavad Gita*. Some of them also come from the Hindu value system and the philosophy of life and living while maintaining the broader focus of this article on the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *Bhagavad Gita*<sup>2</sup> that is intense on the themes of mind, knowledge, focus and concentration (meditation), and skillfulness in action (*yoga*) covers how to make all aspects of life meaningful for self and others in groups that help one cope with the changes relating to the above issues. It does this in 700 verses (*shlokas*) that are organized into 18 chapters on various facets of these and other issues we face in all walks of our lives.

The *Bhagavad Gita* conveys its message in dialogues between the two of its main characters in the settings of a battlefield, facing the armies of divided friends and relatives ready to kill each other for the control of land, part of a kingdom known as Kuru ruled from its capital in the city of Hastinapura. Krishna, the first character, believed to be the eighth avatar (incarnation) of God, is, indeed, a Hindu manifestation of the ultimate spiritual power, who answers dilemmas posed in questions from the *Gita*'s second main character named Arjuna—his warrior friend and disciple who is unaware of Krishna being an avatar of God. In answers to the questions posed by Arjuna, Krishna introduced karma, yoga<sup>3</sup> and meditation in the *Bhagavad Gita*. He asked everyone to practice vegetarianism to enhance the effect of their karma, yoga, and meditation—the main subjects that have become India's hallmark and link with the whole world. With the West, this link started during the 1960s with the migration of Indians to Europe and the USA. Since then, there has been a steady upsurge globally in the wisdom from India's past, some of them with a contemporary twist (see, for example, the *Karma Capitalism* (Engardio & McGregor, 2006) and the *closed circuit contemplation* (Hsu, 2016)). This resulted in the introduction of the ancient Indian books, including the *Bhagavad Gita*, in all types of universities in Europe and the USA. Some introduced the study of the *Bhagavad Gita* in their

<sup>2</sup>It is known also by its abbreviated name "*Gita*".

<sup>3</sup>Literally, yoga is the act of attaining physical alertness and mental consciousness. While yoga can be used as a convenient means to attain certain physical benefits, the real purpose of yoga is to train the mind. In fact, yoga is to empty the mind of the desire to achieve material goods, and to find happiness only in contact with the Self, i.e., attaining introversion. For detail on this, one may refer to the *Bhagavad Gita* (6–18 to 23).

curriculum. Take, for example, Seton Hall University in New Jersey where the author of this chapter is a professor, an archdiocesan Catholic university that, in 2007, made the *Bhagavad Gita* a mandatory reading for all its undergraduate students. Seton Hall University is a comprehensive research university that has ten schools, colleges and other academic units.

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## Looking at the *Bhagavad Gita*

The *Bhagavad Gita* that according to some computer models has its origin in 3137 BCE (Kak, 2012) has guided human behavior, social systems, and intellectual traditions in many parts of Asia and the Arab World for several millennia since its inception. It influenced thinking, philosophy, the arts and the social, cultural and political structures in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. It very artfully intertwines work and life with spiritualism. It belongs to a class of prehistoric works that date back to the period stretching the fourth millennia BCE, related to the Indus Valley Civilization. The influence of the *Bhagavad Gita* continued into the millennia to follow. Attempts to find meaning in life and what we do and what we get (*karma* and *phala*) continued into the first millennia in the works of thinkers such as the Mahavira<sup>4</sup> in sixth century BCE (Jacobi, 2008) and Gautama the Buddha<sup>5</sup> (Hanson & Mendius, 2009) in fifth century BCE. It was a period that eventually culminated in many developments in theology and spiritualism, astronomy and space, language and communication, mathematics and computation, science and medicine (Corcos, 1984), economics and political systems, and philosophy and literature, among many others. The Indians of the time built a culture and civilization that sustained numerous invasions, raids, and avalanches of invaders from all over the world and contiguously maintained its systems through the last 10 millennia.

## The Contemporary Premise of the *Gita*

The *Bhagavad Gita* that considers humans as multi-potential spiritual entities that work to seek meaning and a place in the larger plan of existence has some learning for everyone connected with management. For example, it guides how to achieve the goal of creating a purpose and meaning of what employees do at work (Nichols, 1994) which has become a factor in employees' decision in their picking of the best companies to work for in America (Colvin, 2006). They trade off higher salaries for a better organizational culture that meets this condition. That is what makes management's understanding of how to make work meaningful so important. Successful managers run their organizations so that their employees actually fulfill their desire to attain their purpose and meaning through the work they do (Pandey, Gupta, & Arora, 2009). The *Bhagavad Gita* is focused on it like no other book.

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<sup>4</sup>The founder of the Jain belief system.

<sup>5</sup>The founder of the Buddha belief system.

## The Timing of the *Gita*

The *gyana* (knowledge) tradition of the ancient India had been practiced for profoundly developing, and very intensely preserving its knowledge. It officially gave monopoly custody of knowledge, not only of the actionable productive knowledge but also of knowledge that only had entertainment value such as the drama and the art of story-telling, exclusively to just one segment of India's four societal structures, better known as the *caste system*. The caste that was bestowed the responsibility of developing and the custody of all knowledge is known as the Brahmins. The Brahmins were so very possessive of their knowledge. They preserved and protected it by all means possible. They kept it in their families, following the father-to-son tradition. When it came to the knowledge, they did not trust it to even their own daughters, as they were to be married away. They let their knowledge be destroyed than get in the hands of those whom they considered undeserving. They respected knowledge more than their wealth. Many preferred to lose their lives than lose their knowledge. They very carefully screened and selected who will receive the knowledge and, then, in an effort to keep a tight control on it, propagated it to those selected few by following the oral tradition—through recitation. They gave it only to those who could memorize it and keep it closest to their chest. They wanted to leave no written record to assure that it did not get in the wrong hands. In almost all foreign raids on India during the millennia of its history, the Indians did not risk their lives in the preservation of their wealth, but gave their lives to avoid their knowledge getting in the wrong hands.

It is for this oral tradition that the first print of any of their very ancient writings started to appear only during the first millennium BCE when the grip on knowledge that the Brahmins had possessed began to loosen. We could very well say that it could have been partly influenced by the arrival of Alexander the Great from Macedonia in a small Hindu kingdom known as Paurava (an area between the rivers Indus and Jhelum above the present-day Punjab) ruled by a regional king known as Porus<sup>6</sup> in North India. He had brought with him many intellectuals of various nationalities from the ancient Europe, Middle East, the Arab World, Persia, etc. who started to share their knowledge and impressed the Indians to do the same. The *Bhagavad Gita* was one of these texts that appeared in writing during the above—the so-called liberal—period of the first millennium BCE even though it had been composed three millennia before then.

While each chapter in the *Bhagavad Gita* covers one of its several themes, many of which we have covered in this book, there is also a very often-described interconnection among mind, knowledge, yoga and meditation. There wouldn't be any exaggeration if we stated that *Gita*, for these four interconnected subjects, has continued to guide the lives of not only the Hindus—in and outside India—but also of many citizens of the countries whose people traveled and frequently visited India for trade or other reasons.

With its focus on the philosophy of life, culture and sociology, *Gita* covers all kinds of human knowledge, including science, politics, economics, sociology,

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<sup>6</sup>Sanskrit word for “Man”.

psychology and social psychology. It introduced the *yoga* and meditation (*Dhayana*). In spite of having been composed over five to six millennia ago, *Gita* still guides behavior of the Indians, particularly the Hindus, in all phases of their lives, including the professions, business, and economics.

This chapter brings some important insights related to managing organizations meaningfully from the *Bhagavad Gita* to the readers of this book.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna counsels the warrior Arjuna about life, duty and the afterlife. The “*Gita*,” as the *Bhagavad Gita* is commonly referred to by its many devotees, is based on the teachings from the even older texts, known as the *Vedas*. These embody knowledge about evolution and creation, being and progeny, subsistence and survival, health and medicine, social and familial workings, politics and diplomacy, and behavior and spirituality through an intellectual appeal rather than any indoctrination.

The *Gita*, however, more specifically seeks to direct behavior in the various roles humans play within and throughout their lives—including, especially, their role as managers of themselves and others in work and other settings, such as within formal work organizations.

In spite of being a few thousand years old, the *Gita* is surprisingly timely in its approach to contemporary management due to the emergence of the knowledge economy that places a special emphasis on human mind in the task execution in organizations.

Recently, the author of this chapter has come to a realization that all he has been doing while practicing and teaching business management for all these years is just applying the lessons of his youth—the lessons of the *Gita*—to the management function synthesized with the academic theory and the business practice of large and small corporations.

To that end, the author had organized a symposium presentation on managing by *Bhagavad Gita* for the 76th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. The response to this symposium, “Looking into the *Bhagavad Gita* for Managing Organizations to Become Meaningful,” was overwhelmingly positive and many people asked if he might take some of the management lessons of the *Gita* and distill them into a short “takeaway for managers” so that they could be more readily shared with others. This book is it. May it serve well all readers interested in managing organizations with a new and more effective approach to human element in work.

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## Messages of the *Bhagavad Gita*

### Two Management Themes

#### Gyana

The *Bhagavad Gita*, because it was recited by Lord Krishna, is the word of God and, therefore, by the Indian classification of scriptures should belong to the *shruti*—the original word—category. However, because of its placement in the *Mahabharata*—a collection—it should belong to the *smriti* category of the ancient Indian literature.

Further, since the *Bhagavad Gita* is the best essence of the *Upanishads*<sup>7</sup> of the *Vedas*, it is a smriti work. In fact, it is the ultimate essence of the *Vedas* and uses their messages originally or through the *Upanishads*. It is, hence, difficult to separate the messages of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Since the *Bhagavad Gita* does the best job of bringing their message for real life application, it has become so popular.

Managers can draw a special motivation from the *Bhagavad Gita* for acquiring and making use of knowledge in every function they perform because it puts a special emphasis on knowledge (*Gita*, IV-37, 38). It states that both types of people, who know and those who do not know perform, however, the outcomes are different because knowledge and ignorance lead to different performance results. It clarifies by further stating that whatever is performed with knowledge, faith, and concentration is more effective (*Chandogya Upanishad*: 1.1.10).

It states that as blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge by turning all ignorance, and actions resulting out of it into ashes. It advises the use of knowledge as a weapon of destruction of ignorance. There is no purifier in this whole world like knowledge. And, with regard to the tacit knowledge, it states that anyone who perfects the practice of selfless action to find knowledge achieves it in himself, in due time. It compares the act of acquiring tacit knowledge to the act of yoga—yoga of the mind.

## **Kartavya**

According to the Hindu code, *kartavya* is what one ought to do. The closest word conveying that meaning in the English language is duty. *Kartavya* means doing what is right, what is ethical. It includes executing our responsibilities, and doing what we are expected to do. It is the most important lesson that the *Bhagavad Gita* imparts and reinforces from Chapter 1 (Verse 1) to Chapter 18 (Verse 78, the last chapter). *Kartavya* is doing our duty in all our roles, in all situations we face and under all conditions surrounding them. *Kartavya* has a special significance for all humans, including managers in organizations. This is where the *Bhagavad Gita* closely intertwines with the practice of management. Managers should be guided by their duty in the execution of any of their functions that draw from their roles in the organization. Whenever feeling confused or facing a dilemma, a manager should search for the answer by knowing what is his or her duty in that regard. The character of managers should be judged not by the outcome of their performance, but by if they performed their duty to their best ability.

In work situations, by accepting to do a certain job, we choose to play several roles that become our duty. This includes playing role as a superior of our subordinates, a subordinate of our bosses, and a colleague of our equals. It extends to the work related relationships beyond the workplace, such as role as a buyer to sellers, or a seller to buyers. No role, conceived or unconceived, structured or unstructured, known or unknown we perform is left out when it comes to talking about our duty. They all become our *kartavya* at work and we are expected to not only just perform

<sup>7</sup>For more information on the *Upanishads*, refer to Piparaiya (2003).

them, but also perform them to the best of our ability. Actually, it implies that we perform these roles ideally. If we do not do anything to the best of our knowledge and ability, then, we did not execute our *kartavya*.

*Kartavya* extends to work life balance by including roles employees play towards their parents, children, spouses, relatives, siblings, friends, and neighbors, etc. It also includes doing right by helping those in need of help such as those who are suffering, injured, dying, helpless, old, sick, or hungry, etc. This responsibility arises simply from the condition of those in need of help and not for any other reason.

The *Gita* stresses that every time manager is making a decision, choice or selecting out of the several options, one should ask if the outcome of the action would pass the *duty test*. In other words, the manager should ask would his or her action be the source of a sense that one did what one should have done, that one was expected to have done. If this test approves the act, then, the manager did one's duty. The duty test is the most important edict of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Manager should always take this into consideration when attempting to resolve a dilemma.

The most used model of *kartavya* in the Hindu practice comes from the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, the avatar as King Rama of Ayodhya in northeast India supposedly during the fifth to the seventh millennium BCE.

Specific messages of the *Bhagavad Gita* pertaining to *kartavya* and most of the other important management issues in organizations are given in the following sections. The chapter is begun by quoting the verse or verses that connect with the management issue and then continues to its transliteration, English translation, interpretations, discussion and applications of the message to management practice.

## Major Messages

### Karma - - Focus on the Process, Not the Outcome

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥2.47॥

Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte mā phaleṣu kadācana,  
mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

“Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits; let not the fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inactivity” (bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

Karma is one of the major themes of the *Bhagavad Gita* and it places the most importance on “karma”. In English language, it can simply be called the “act”, or the right to act. The description of karma is associated with *doing*, and its applications are narrated using verbs. Because all outcomes are achieved through karma, the *Bhagavad Gita* states that every human has the right to karma, and, then, expects everyone to be responsible for any outcome that is a consequence (*phala*) of one's



karma. Karma is the vehicle for the outcome. The desired outcome happens when the karma is right.

In the execution of management functions, the *Bhagavad Gita* advises that we focus on karma, i.e., action, and not on its result, as result is the outcome of action. We should start with clearly understating the outcome we want from our actions, and then decide on the karma that will lead to the result; however, once the karma begins, then, the only focus is on the karma. If we put our best in our karma, then, for sure, the outcome, whatever it is, will be the best possible. We should accept it that way with jubilation. We should never make the result our motive when we are engaged in karma; if we do, we will not be putting our full mind into the action; and, in that case, the outcome will not be the best possible; and, will, likely, lead to some regret. However, we should never be attached to inaction either. We have the right to our karma and, ergo, have control on the process that leads to the outcome. Distraction from karma will obstruct our mind, making the karma deficient and the outcome anything but the best possible (*Gita*, 2.47).

It is better to engage in karma and not achieve the outcome than not doing karma at all. The verse conveying the right to engage in karma is given later in its original. By some standards, this is the most quoted verse from the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *Bhagavad Gita* reaffirms its statement on not doing karma for its outcome by stating that one should give up what one got—good or bad—from own karma (*Gita*, 2.50), as quoted below.

Because karma is performed only in the present—not in the past or in the future, the *Bhagavad Gita* places a special emphasis on the present. It advises humans to stay not stuck in the past, or regress much, as that brings regret, which mostly causes depression and distracts from the karma that is being, or can be, performed in the present to build the future, and to undo the wrongs of the past. Paying full attention to the present could give the one an outcome that would be the best possible and hence be free of any consequential regrets, and set things up for the future.

The *Gita* also counsels not to get too much focused on what is in the future, as that could bring worry, which leads to anxiety and reduces the attention on the karma being performed in the present. Because everything is achieved by karma that is only done in the present, the present is the most important. Through the right karma, the present can take care of the past and the future. For example, the wrongs of the past can be redressed by the right karma in the present, and also can cause the outcomes in the future that would eliminate the worries that could arise in the future.

That is why one's karma is the most important for every human.

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।  
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥2.50॥

Buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte,  
Tasmādyogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam.

“One whose intelligence has attained to unity, casts away from him even here in this world of dualities both good doing and evil doing; therefore strive to be in Yoga; Yoga is skill in works” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

## Leadership

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन।  
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः॥३.१८॥

Naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana,  
Na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu kaścīdarthavyapāśrayaḥ.

“He has no object here to be gained by action done and none to be gained by action undone; he has no dependence on all these existences for any object to be gained” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The *Bhagavad Gita* gives a very high regard to leadership and makes the job of a leader very demanding and, hence, its selection and execution of leadership are put under very extenuating tests. For example, it states that the leader should have nothing to gain personally from the act of leadership because it raises and eliminates the possibility of conflict arising because of it. This goes on both ends of leadership act, i.e., doing something or not doing something. In either case, the leader should have nothing to gain or lose from the act of leadership. The Gita takes this as a qualification of the leader because it states that leader should not be dependent upon the outcomes of leadership acts for his existence. This is again to clear any conflict in leadership deeds. The *Bhagavad Gita* bestows the responsibility of leadership only to those who, without any conflict or semblance of one, can execute the role of leadership.

The *Bhagavad Gita* tells that leader’s behavior becomes an effective model of social behavior. People copy behaviors of leaders. Hence, the onus of providing a motivating behavior rests on the leaders. This behavior becomes the standard by which others go (*Gita*, 3.21). Therefore, leaders have to take seriously this implied responsibility.

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।  
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते॥३.२१॥

Yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janaḥ,  
sa yatpramāṇaṁ kurute lokastadanuvartate.

“Whatsoever the Best [Leader] doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice; the standard he creates, the people follow” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

## Emphasis on Accumulating Knowledge

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते।  
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्॥१२.१२॥

Śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsājñānāddhyānaṁ viśiṣyate,  
dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgastyāgācchāntīranantaram.

“Better indeed is knowledge than practice; than knowledge, meditation is better; than meditation, renunciation of the fruit of action; on renunciation follows peace” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The prime focus of the *Bhagavad Gita* is on the mind and knowledge. The praise of knowledge and the importance of acquiring it are covered all over the *Bhagavad Gita*. It says that having knowledge of a skill or ability is higher than being able to practice that skill; meditation—which the *Gita* uses as a metaphor for consciousness and engaging in undivided concentration focusing on creating knowledge—is superior to having knowledge; however, the *Gita* goes on by stating that still better is giving away or sharing the knowledge that is created by the act of meditation, because this brings instant tranquility as that is the intrinsic reward (*Gita*, 12.12) that is instantaneous, certain, proportional, selective, and effective.

In essence, this verse (*Gita*, 12.12) means that having the knowledge of how something happens, works or is done is better than being able to just do it, because codification of how to do something (explicit knowledge) can help others as it can be passed on to others. Then, thinking and researching (meditation) on how something happens, works, or is done is better than just being able to produce the codified knowledge, because meditation advances the understanding by bringing new knowledge (tacit knowledge). The *Gita* emphasizes “Meditate-Act-Accept the outcome-Renounce the reward” (dhayana-karma-phala-tyaga). Giving away the knowledge you found is the best reward because it brings internal pleasure. In other words, the *Gita* asks us to give away our tacit knowledge that we acquired through research (meditation) and assures us that the reward, in the form of a sense of tranquility, for doing this will come intrinsically.

We win over our mind and acquire knowledge to be able to gain objectivity and to do our duty, which, as we said previously, is supreme in *Bhagavad Gita*. It shows the appreciation of knowledge because it reduces ignorance “to ashes” (*Gita*, 4.37).

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन  
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा॥4.37॥

Yathaidhāmsi samiddho'gnirbhasmasātkurute'rjuna,  
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasātkurute tatha.

“As a fire kindled turns to ashes its fuel, O Arjuna, so the fire of knowledge turns all works to ashes” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The *Gita* states further on knowledge in the shloka 4.38, given below.

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते  
तत्त्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति॥4.38॥

Na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitrāmiha vidyate,  
tatsvayam yogasamsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati.

“There is nothing in the world equal in purity to knowledge, the man who is perfected by Yoga, finds it of himself in the self by the course of Time” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

### Conquer Your Mind

No one can control mind of the one who does not submit to its control by someone or something else. In fact, what to talk of others controlling one’s mind when one

oneself finds it so difficult to control own mind. Nevertheless, for success, especially on difficult or unstructured tasks, one needs a very strong mind control. The question is how to do it. This is where the *Bhagavad Gita* comes with a message.

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।  
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥6.35॥

Śrībhagavānūvāca:  
asamśayaṁ mahābāho mano durnigrahaṁ calaṁ,  
abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate.

“Without doubt, O mighty-armed, the mind is restless and very difficult to restrain; but O Kaunteya, it may be controlled by constant practice and non-attachment” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The *Bhagavad Gita* acknowledges that it is very difficult to control mind, however, it does not stop there and states that it can be controlled by constant practice and eliminating passion. Mind control is important in the Hindu system because of the importance the Hindus give to knowledge of any kind. It is the most sought after possession, and the one who possesses knowledge is the most revered. This is why the *Gita* gives great importance to controlling own mind. With the constant practice of yoga and meditation, combined with minor impositions such as vegetarianism, fasting, sacrificing, one conquers own mind, gains control over it. It is considered the ultimate victory for humans.

The *Bhagavad Gita* goes further and says that for him who conquers his mind, the mind becomes his best friend, but for the one who fails to do this, his mind becomes his biggest foe (*Gita*, 6.6), because it is with the mind that one achieves everything in life, in particular, knowledge and it is because of the lack of control of mind that one fails to achieve that which one would have achieved. Mind that is not in control will cause a lot of problem for the individual. The complete verse is reproduced below:

बन्धुरात्माऽऽत्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः।  
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत्॥6.6॥

Bandhurātmāstmanastasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ,  
anātmanastu śatruṭve vartetātmaiva śatruvat.

“To the man is his self a friend in whom the (lower) self has been conquered by the (higher) self, but to him who is not in possession of his (higher) self, the (lower) self is as if an enemy and it acts as an enemy” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

## How to Succeed

In Chapter 18, Shlokas 50–55 thoroughly cover who is successful and how to attain success. This section very thoroughly covers what one needs to be successful, and what qualities can predict success. Three main shlokas are reproduced below that describe these traits (*Gita*, 18.50, 51, 52).

सिद्धिं प्राप्नोति यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।  
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥18.50॥

siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me,  
samāsenaiḥ kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā.

“Learn from me in brief, O Arjuna, how, one who has attained perfection, attains the brahman (or the self), who is the supreme consummation of knowledge” (Gita Supersite, 2018).

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।  
शब्दादीन्विषयास्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥18.51॥

buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhr̥tyātmānaṁ niyamya ca,  
śabdādīnviṣayāṁstyaktvā rāgadveṣau vyudasya ca.

“Endowed by a purified understanding, subduing the mind by steadiness, relinquishing sound and other objects of the senses and casting aside love and hate;” (Gita Supersite, 2018).

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।  
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥18.52॥

viviktasevī laghvāśī yatavākkāyamānasaḥ,  
dhyānāyogaparo nityaṁ vairāgyaṁ samupāśritaḥ.

“Resorting to solitude, eating but little, restraining speech, body and mind, ever engaged in the Yoga of meditation and taking refuge in dispassion;” (Gita Supersite, 2018).

Success requires attaining perfection, knowledge of the self, and supreme consummation of knowledge. A successful person is endowed with pure intellect. He controls himself, does not seek sensual pleasures, and ends aversion and craving. He resorts to solitude, eats little and has restrain on speech, body and mind. He is dispassionate and engages in yoga of meditation (Mitchell, 2000: 192–193).

### The Gita Goes Against Extrinsic Controls

The *Bhagavad Gita* goes against extrinsic restraint of any kind. It states that one cannot achieve much when extrinsic controls are imposed because people behave according to their nature; that is, what is in their own control and is changed by their own initiative. Specifically, it states that humans behave according to their nature and that extrinsic controls will not have any effect on them (*Gita*, 3.33). By its corollary, while assigning tasks, manager should understand the nature of the person and then assign tasks to get high caliber performance without imposing any extrinsic controls. By a second corollary of this verse, we could say that when people become aware of the extrinsic controls imposed on them, they lose intrinsic controls and that does not help in performance, especially when it comes to knowledge jobs, that require mental work. This verse and its implication to the knowledge work are given below.

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।  
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति॥3.33॥

Sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛterjñānavānapi,  
prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati.

“All existences follow their nature and what shall coercing it avail? Even the man of knowledge acts according to his own nature” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

This statement has a special value in managing knowledge workers that are the main source of innovation without which organizations cannot fight competition in a knowledge economy. Not controlling employees extrinsically leaves their minds free to create and innovate. The *Gita*'s statement that “Beings will follow their own nature” (*Gita*, 3.33) implies that organizations while assigning tasks should take the nature of the workers into account.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is very clear about motivation in organizations and states not to use sense-borne pleasures as motivators. They are ineffective and ultimately become a source of “pain”, that is why a “wise man does not indulge in them” (*Gita*, 5.22) and, hence, such pleasures cannot be source of a motivation that is incessant, especially of knowledge workers.<sup>8</sup>

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते  
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः॥5.22॥

Ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te,  
ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ.

“The enjoyments born of the touches of things are causes of sorrow, they have a beginning and an end; therefore the sage, the man of awakened understanding, budhaḥ, does not place his delight in these” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

Sense-borne motivators drive mechanical functions of human body that bring pain, whereas, motivators of the mind appease the psyche, which energizes the body because mind rules everything. Motivators for the mind work should come to the knowledge worker intrinsically. They should be based in ethics and righteousness (*dharma*).

### Human Guna or Bhava (Personalities)

In search of qualities in humans, called the *guna* or *bhava*, the *Bhagavad Gita* recommends the one “Who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachments and egoism and is balanced in pleasure and pain and forgiving” (*Gita*, 12.13, 14). Based on these qualities, people are divided into three categories. The following shloka sheds additional light on this.

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत्  
मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम्॥7.13॥

Tribhirguṇamayairbhāvairebhiḥ sarvamidaṃ jagat,  
mohitaṃ nābhijānāti māmebhyaḥ paramavyayam.

<sup>8</sup> A chapter on motivation according to the Bhagavad Gita included in this book covers this subject in a greater detail.

“By these three kinds of becoming which are of the nature of the gunas, this whole world is bewildered and does not recognize Me supreme beyond them and imperishable” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया।  
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते॥7.14॥

Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā,  
māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetāṁ taranti te.

“This is my divine Maya of the gunas and it is hard to overcome; those cross beyond it who approach Me” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The *Bhagavad Gita*, rather than dividing people by traits with which they are born, divides them by their nature (bhava) and also guides how to modify the nature by developing control over their minds as we discussed previously. The following verse (*Gita*, 7.12) classifies people into three groups, *Sattva* (saintly), *Rajas* (kingly) and *Tamas* (lethargic). Based on these classifications, the Gita goes over their likes, dislikes, tastes, behaviors, etc.<sup>9</sup>

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये  
मत् एवेति तान्बिद्धि नत्वहं तेषु ते मया॥7.12॥

Ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasāstāmasāśca ye,  
matta eveti tānviddhi na tvahaṁ teṣu te mayi.

“And as for the secondary subjective becomings of Nature, bhāvaḥ which are sattwic, rajasic and tamasic, they are verily from me, but I am not in them, it is they that are in Me” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The sattva character is full of intelligence and imparts balance by maintaining homeostasis, whereas the rajas is full of energy and operates by willfully causing imbalance by tilting in favor of something or someone. The tamas that is just substance that creates inertia.

## Looking for Opportunities

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी।  
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः॥2.69॥

Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī,  
yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ.

“That which is night to all beings, in that the self-controlled man is awake; when all beings are awake, that is night for the Muni (sage) who sees” (Gita Supersite, 2018).

Literally, this verse tells that when it is night to all beings, to the muni (sage) who has mastered truth based on self-realization rather than based on the existing facts, it is the time to wake up. And, when it is the time for the being to wake up, the

<sup>9</sup>We cover this subject in a greater detail in some of the chapters included in this book.

self-controlled muni goes to sleep. This is not the time for the muni to be active because everyone is so busy following the herd. Because the wise can see through the darkness, which represents ignorance, and do what the beings do when it is day. When all beings are awake, that is the night for the muni who enters when the masses depart (Chinmayananda, 1996: 159).

I look at this message from the *Bhagavad Gita* from the investor point of view and get a meaning that sets a strategic direction for how investors should pick investments for their portfolios. An edict that, in business, suggests to look for the opportunities and avail off them when others are busy, not looking at them, and to back off when others are fiercely competing for them by bidding them way up seems to have applied this message from the *Bhagavad Gita*. In fact, Warren Buffett, America's second and the world's third richest man, who made billions from stock market, says something that seems to have come very much from this shloka: "When others are greedy, I am afraid; when others have fear, I become greedy."

### Don't Be Looking for Work to be Assigned to You

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चना  
नानवासमवासव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि॥3.22॥

Na me pārthāsti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu kimcana,  
nānavāptamavāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi.

"... I have no work that I need to do in all the three worlds, I have nothing that I have not gained and have yet to gain, and I abide verily in the paths of action..." (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

The author sees organizational perspective in it for everyone connected with work and management. It advises us not to be looking for others to give us work when we have finished doing what we were doing or when we have nothing to do. We should take independent initiatives by self-picking what to do for the organization when assigned work is completed. In a way, this verse sets a reason for working even when there may be no rational reason supporting continuing to work. One should always be working even when there is no prescribed duty or work for him to do (*Gita*, 3.22). In knowledge organizations where the work is unstructured such as in the R&D department, one has to take the initiative, look for opportunities and take the lead to avail off them for the good of the organization. This verse states that we should not be looking for work to be assigned to us, but engage in work that we believe needs to be done, or look for what needs to be done.

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## Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the tenth and the last message that was selected for organizational managers from the *Bhagavad Gita* is presented. This is the culmination of teaching that could come for managers of organizations for managing the functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.



## If Only One Thing You Have to Take from the Bhagavad Gita

This verse, Shloka 11 from Chapter 12, produced below, is the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* and if manager has to take just one thing from it, this is what will convey the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Applying the essence of just this message will bring realization of the *Bhagavad Gita* to organizations.

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।  
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥12.11॥

Athaitadapyaśakto'si kartuṁ madyogamāśritaḥ,  
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān.

“But if even this constant remembering of Me and lifting up of your works to Me is felt beyond your power, then renounce all fruit of action with the self controlled” (Bhagavadgita.org.in, 2018).

If it is difficult to remember and assimilate the nine preceding messages that have been scanned for you from the *Bhagavad Gita*, then, this is the one that may suffice. Apply it, and you will see how it transforms your life—personal and professional. You will see success and tranquility coming to you. This is the yoga of devotion. In this case, we will say that you are practicing the yoga of devotion by applying it to your work and life situations. This is the very basic teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*, not because it is said so here, but this is what Lord Krishna said to Arjuna: do your karma (act) without attachment, and renounce all the phala (outcomes or rewards) of the karma. This means do your best without the desire for reward. The desire for reward from the karma interferes with it and by setting it aside, whether it is good or bad, focuses all mental, physical, emotional and psychic energy on the karma. The consequence of implementing this message will be that one who does his duty without any emotional attachment to outcome or reward from it will use absolute wisdom in decision-making and acting. Not having the desire for reward—good or bad—will get the best result possible.

And, in the postscript, it is added that phala will always follow the karma. We should remember that there is only one certainty in the world and that is that every karma will have its consequence.

From one of the corollaries of the above, it can be said that good karma will have good phala and bad will have bad phala. Any violation of this truth will be simply transitional in nature. The most deviation that could happen is that the phala may be delayed. It will never not happen. There is no forgiveness from the outcome of a karma with or without confession or repentance. The God says, “Even I do not have the power to alter this.” This is the ultimate truth.

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# Leadership and Communication in the Bhagavad Gita: Unity, Duty, and Equanimity

# 5

Jon Radwan

## Introduction

Organizations and communication are fundamental facts of human life. As social animals and relational beings we must collaborate across all planes of our existence, from the micro levels of family and neighborhood all the way up through macro levels of state, nation, and our global community (Stewart, 2012, p. 9). At each level these groups require a sense of direction and focus to maintain themselves and grow. Without focus and shared meaning groups can develop dysfunctional interaction patterns that harm their own members and drag the whole toward disintegration. Meaning is thus a vital resource for all organizations, and humanity is blessed with many ancient wisdom traditions that can shed the light we all need to flourish and grow together (Ekmekçi, Teraman, & Acar, 2014; Küpers & Pauleen, 2013). In Western management theory the Hindu tradition is a relatively unknown source of meaning and light, and the ideas it shares can offer valuable perspective on the perennial challenges facing all leaders (Beer, 1994; Mishra & Sharma, 2015; Ramachandran & Sharma, 2013; Reddy & Srinivasan, 2015; Roka, 2015, p. 2). This chapter looks to a Hindu spiritual masterpiece, the *Bhagavad Gita*, to draw lessons for contemporary leaders. Themes of Unity, Duty, and Equanimity are explored via direct textual quotations to suggest ways to communicate light and meaning that can strengthen and motivate our organizations.

Looking to an ancient religious tradition for meanings to guide businesses and other secular organizations may seem unusual to contemporary Westerners, but Modernity's catastrophic failures over the past two centuries, devastating World Wars, crippling economic crashes, environmental degradation and widespread corruption, all prove that Enlightenment critiques pushed religion too far from the

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public sphere (Ashokkumar, 2014; Lounsbury, Phillips, & Tracey, 2014). Coupling a winner take all approach to economic activity with an unbridled will to power can make sense only in the absence of religion's stress on community and shared ways of life (Engardio & McGregor, 2006, p. 91). To cite a recent finance industry example, Greg Smith's very public resignation from Goldman Sachs in the *New York Times* decries an organizational culture that drifted from a successful tradition of client care to a "toxic and destructive" prioritization of profit over all else, including the client's best interest. In Smith's view, the view of an experienced executive director and head of their United States equity derivatives business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the "firm changed the way it thought about leadership. Leadership used to be about ideas, setting an example and doing the right thing. Today, if you make enough money for the firm (and are not currently an ax murderer) you will be promoted into a position of influence" (2012, p. A27). Viewed in isolation and at minimum, Smith's testimony marks a public relations crisis for one company. Viewed within the context of senior executive convictions at other major firms like Andersen, Enron, and Worldcom, his resignation shows that too many American businesses need serious help in discerning what it means to be a leader (Saraswat, 2005).

Thankfully, today's Post-modern turn re-opens the conversation between religion and the marketplace, and the *Bhagavad Gita* in particular presents itself as a prime source of meaningful guidance. As Mohandas Gandhi explained (cited in Gandhi & Strohmeier, 2000, p. xxii),

[t]he common belief is that religion is always opposed to material good. 'One cannot act religiously in mercantile and other such matters, there is no place for religion in such pursuits, religion is only for attainment of salvation,' we hear many world-wise people say. In my opinion the author of the *Gita* has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line between salvation and worldly pursuits. On the contrary, he has shown that religion may rule even our worldly pursuits. I have felt that the *Gita* teaches that what cannot be followed in our day-to-day practice cannot be called religion. (p. xxii)

Our day-to-day practices clearly involve communicating and sharing work, and in a broad sense all wisdom traditions, whether religious, philosophical, political or ideological, invite us to adopt fundamental *attitudes* toward life and the art of living and working together (Burke, 1970, p. v). They provide a meaningful set of terms that we use to try and answer the deep questions that have continually posed themselves to humanity from the very beginning (Paul VI, 1965, p. 1; Dhiman, 2013). Animals face uncertainty with conditioned reactions, but humans, however conditioned we may be, always insist on pondering life's mysteries and acting in accord with the best answers we can find. How should we live? How should we love? How should we lead? By relating Krishna's advice to Arjuna as he faces the dilemma of leading his troops into cataclysmic battle, the *Bhagavad Gita* offers timeless answers to all of these questions (Wulf, n.d., p. 4). Every leadership challenge may not be a life or death crisis, but Arjuna's battle is a powerful metaphor for the daily choices we all face and Unity, Duty, and Equanimity can provide a rich and meaningful frame for organizational communication.

## Unity

One of the primary axes of religious meaning is the unity <—> diversity continuum, where the key terms proposed by a particular tradition vary in their understanding of ultimate quantities.

**One** ←-----→ **Many**

Polytheism, as seen in ancient Greece and several other global traditions, posits a diverse and crowded pantheon, whereas Monotheists propose one God. In the Abrahamic traditions God is the Father and humanity are His many children, so this large group might occupy the middle of the continuum. With the *Bhagavad Gita*, the extreme unity pole is approached. All are parts of the whole, and one means one. As Krishna explains to Arjuna,

I am the ritual and the worship, the medicine and the mantra, the butter burnt in the fire, and the flames that consume it. I am the father of the universe and its mother, essence and goal of all knowledge, the refiner, the sacred Om, and the threefold Vedas. I am the beginning and the end, origin and dissolution, refuge, home, true lover, womb and imperishable seed. I am the heat of the sun, I hold back the rain and release it; I am death and the deathless, and all that is and is not. (9.16–19)

When God means all and everything, and beyond, “all that is and is not,” when He is pure creative and destructive energy itself, the answers to the big questions about how to live, love and lead all stress unity. This expansive monistic worldview frames everything in terms of everything else, a grand life-context characterized by divine interdependence and balance.

Unity is obviously a useful theme for inspiring traditional management functions like building a team or planning collaborative work-flow, but the *Gita* asks us to look further. On the interpersonal and social levels distinctions between self and other disappear, encouraging enlightened leaders to grow beyond a separate sense of self. Co-workers and competitors, for instance, are not to be set apart as distinct others. Instead division is an illusion and all are equal manifestations of the One.

Mature in yoga, impartial everywhere that he looks, he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself. The man who sees me in everything and everything within me will not be lost to me, nor will I ever be lost to him. He who is rooted in oneness realizes that I am in every being; wherever he goes he remains with me. When he sees all beings as equal in suffering or in joy because they are like himself, that man has grown perfect in yoga. (6.29–32)

The leader who identifies with all, even unto seeing herself in a competitor and seeing the competitor in herself, can act with inspirational levels of nobility and justice (Kerns, 2005). Too often, unethical leaders attempt to deny their connections to the whole and attempt to act for simple selfish gain. But the consequences of our actions can never impact a single self. In the worst cases entire industries are harmed when leaders cannot see that co-workers and competitors all constitute one another. You are in me and I am in you so “impartiality” and “equality” are not mere cultural catchwords, they are social reality itself.

Within the *Bhagavad Gita* unity is more than a meaningful theme for interpersonal and social action, it is also a supreme goal at the personal level. Here discipline and mental focus replace chaotic thoughts driven by strong sensations and desires (MacFarquhar, 2007). Faced with an extreme leadership crisis, Arjuna laments that the “mind is restless, unsteady, turbulent, wild, stubborn; truly, it seems to me as hard to master as the wind” (6.34). The Pandava leader is far from alone with his difficulty in getting his thoughts together under pressure. Our fast-paced media age has created a generation of information overloaded multi-taskers so Krishna’s ancient call to focus may be needed more today than ever before. Arjuna eventually learns that single minded focus and concentration can indeed be achieved, and that the process of perfecting this mindset is the path to enlightenment. Our second theme, Duty, helps us find out exactly what each of us needs to focus on.

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## Duty

It seems fairly obvious that a clear sense of purpose and disciplined patterns of thought and action are assets for any leader. What is not so obvious is exactly what leaders should focus on. In Western management theory there is a great deal attention directed toward results—goal setting, outcomes assessment, and productivity metrics all set up external future objectives that workers must strive to reach. Unfortunately the many stresses that accompany this “make your numbers” philosophy are frequently counter-productive (Burton, n.d.). According to the *Bhagavad Gita* all of these problems can be credited to excessive desire. Goal-directed thinking prioritizes product over process, an end over means philosophy that can justify unethical tactics or inspire a pervasive fear of failure and eventual employee burn-out. Instead of perpetually striving to force an uncertain future into certainty, focus on the moment as it unfolds. Right now, what are you supposed to be doing? How is it supposed to be done? Are you doing it? Why not? Because you’re thinking about the quarterly projections and nervously anticipating what they’ll do to your paycheck or bonus? Get your mind out of the future and focus on the now. As Krishna explains,

Know what your duty is and do it without hesitation. For a warrior, there is nothing better than a battle that duty enjoins. Blessed are warriors who are given the chance of a battle like this, which calls them to do what is right and opens the gates of heaven. (2.31–32)

A meaningful sense of duty is essential for successful organizational cultures, and one’s duty cannot simply be assumed as a given based on a social position or job title. Instead every member of the team must know their task and receive the support and training required to fulfill this function with precision and skill (Hawley, 1995). In spiritual terms we are all warriors like Arjuna; our battle is fought every moment and the gates of heaven are immediately before us, right here and right now.

Once we have a firm basis in duty and knowledge we can forget about potential payoffs or losses and address the reality of the task immediately at hand. In the arts

or sports we describe peak artistic or athletic activity as being “in the zone,” a performance so free of all distractions and outside influences that it becomes its own functional and beautiful end in itself (Galleway, 1997). In the *Gita’s* terms, the “wise man lets go of all results, whether good or bad, and is focused on the action alone. Yoga is skill in actions” (2.50). When work becomes skillful process the worker merges with the moment. Any outcomes simply take care of themselves as the eternal now continually progresses into the future.

Surrendering our desires will remain a real challenge unless we stay grounded within the context of divine Unity. If we can grow beyond individualism we can let go of the ego-driven idea that our actions are for us alone, that everything is about oneself. Interpersonally and socially we may each have different and diverse duties, but ultimately everyone has the same divine nature. According to the *Bhagavad Gita* we can get over ourselves if we re-orient our purposes and devote all action to the One, to God. “He who acts for my sake, loving me, free of attachment, with benevolence toward all beings, will come to me in the end” (11.55). Devoting action to God means that we must work to a divine standard. Every choice and every action is nothing less than worship itself. In knowing that we can meet this supreme standard, and especially in feeling that we are realizing it, our leadership becomes service that infuses the organization with self-less compassion. With our last meaningful term, Equanimity, we see how these understandings of Unity and Duty manifest themselves in a leader’s attitude.

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## Equanimity

A life devoted to gratifying our fleeting desires is doomed to misery because time guarantees change. Failing to satisfy desires is heart-wrenching enough, but even success can create its own form of misery as we try to increase our good fortune and make it last. Whatever you thought you wanted, even if you got it, is different now that you have it and before you know it you’ll be wanting more. This is why the *Bhagavad Gita* commends an attitude of equanimity. Rooted in divine Unity and skillful and resolute in our Duty, we can engage others and reality for who and what they are, not who and what we want them to be. When we have let go of desire, grown beyond duality, and devoted each interaction to God we have attained enough wisdom to face organizational challenges with a calm and confident attitude that radiates peace. Gandhi (cited in Gandhi & Strohmeier, 2000, p. xx) describes an ideal leader who

... is jealous of no one, who is a fount of mercy, who is without egotism, who is selfless, who treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery, who is always forgiving, who is always contented, whose resolutions are firm, who has dedicated mind and soul to God, who causes no dread, who is not afraid of others, who is free from exultation, sorrow, and fear, who is pure, who is versed in action and yet remains unaffected by it, who renounces all fruits of action, good or bad, who treats friend and enemy alike, who is untouched by respect or disrespect, who is not puffed up by praise, who does not go under when people speak ill of him, who loves silence and solitude, who has a disciplined mind.

Leading with equanimity requires self-mastery and control. All of our inner fears and selfish impulses must be dispelled so that all of our outward practices can demonstrate purity and justice (Finding, 2006).

Leadership theory often focuses on persuasive discourse, where inspirational speeches convince members of the group to contribute energy and follow directions (Herrick, 2013, p. 4). The *Bhagavad Gita* does not preclude rhetoric as a source of inspiration (the only two chapters that directly address speech, 10 and 17, are covered below), but in general it advocates leading by example. Krishna tells Arjuna to “let go of the fruits of action” in many different ways, but Arjuna continues to ask how. This is because even scriptural teaching, holy words of inspiration and grace, are ultimately superfluous. Life is immediate and immanent, not linguistic, mediated, or referential.

As unnecessary as a well is to a village on the banks of a river, so unnecessary are all scriptures to someone who has seen the truth. You have a right to your actions, but never to your actions’ fruits. Act for the action’s sake. And do not be attached to inaction. Self-possessed, resolute, act without any thought of results, open to success or failure. This equanimity is yoga. (2.46–2.48)

Theologies, words about God, can offer only select details of the ultimate One and as they do they fall short of the magnificent divine fullness abiding beyond all dualities (2.45, 10.42). Instead of arguing for a particular interpretation of God, the person of faith lives and works for the whole with an attitude of calm peace because everything, all that is and is not, is divine.

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## Application Principle 1: Meaningful Leadership

For the uninitiated, the message of the *Bhagavad Gita* can seem like a lot to take in and even more to try and implement. Fortunately, lack of experience is never a problem for spiritual practice, only lack of will and direction. Poor Arjuna, like many of us, laments that this teaching has “bewildered my mind” (3.2), but Krishna assures him that in the great karmic cycle even small attempts to grow will be rewarded; “no one who does good work will come to an evil end” (6.40). When organizations can provide a meaningful context for their members, good work and good leadership are no longer mysterious or impossible, they are clear realities built up together (Reave, 2005). Have no fear—this is the meaning of faith, of all faiths. All *can* work together and the good *can* be achieved. Applying the *Gita’s* principles *can* productively reorient management (Adhia, Nagendra, & Mahadevan, 2010; Chow Hoi Hee, 2007).

One way to see how the *Bhagavad Gita’s* principles of Unity, Duty, and Equanimity can be applied is to show how they can connect with traditional leadership functions. The following matrix connects Gary Yukl’s (2010) famous list of effective leadership functions to their associated Gita values.



## Leadership Function/*Gita* Value Matrix

Yukl's Leadership Functions	<i>Gita</i> Values:	Unity	Duty	Equanimity
1. Help interpret the meaning of events		X		X
2. Create alignment on objectives and strategies		X	X	
3. Build task commitment and optimism			X	X
4. Build mutual trust and cooperation		X	X	
5. Strengthen collective identity		X	X	
6. Organize and coordinate activities		X	X	
7. Encourage and facilitate collective learning		X	X	
8. Obtain necessary resources and support			X	X
9. Develop and empower people			X	X
10. Promote social justice and morality		X	X	X

When leaders are faced with a particular leadership challenge the associated values provide a starting point to frame the issue. For instance, when facing the very practical challenge of obtaining resources and support, leaders can begin by understanding that not only is it their duty to obtain support but also that all members of the unit need that support in order to perform their own duties. On top of duty/support interdependence, the value of equanimity reminds us that balanced attitudes are essential for leaders. Whether the necessary resources are actually gained or not, leaders should engage co-workers in a calm and even spirit of equality and selflessness. When resource requests are denied the decision-maker cannot be demonized or retaliated against; instead the next most likely support opportunity should be explored. Similarly, when requests are granted it is not an occasion for undue celebration but an opportunity to move on to the next agenda item with calm satisfaction and faith in the whole.

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### **Application Principle 2: Meaningful Communication**

Arjuna is an archer, a warrior and a man of action, so his duty is to fight and by joining the battle he will inspire his men to follow suit. “Whatever a great man does ordinary people will do; whatever standard he sets everyone else will follow” (3.21). In adopting war as its primary context the *Bhagavad Gita* clearly focusses on leading by physical example, skillfully and resolutely joining the fray and achieving glory regardless of the battle’s outcome. If this military context is approached metaphorically, it is safe to say we all are faced with challenges but while our duty may frequently call for resolve it may not always call for so much skill in aggressive actions like drawing the bow, taking aim, and firing. On many occasions our leadership challenges seem much more social and relational rather than physical and

material. Indeed it's hard to imagine performing any of Yukl's management functions without speaking to co-workers about events, objectives, identity, etc. Successful communicating is a process that builds strong relationships and effectively coordinates work. Since communication is a crucial action for all organizational contexts, many managerial positions require frequent group meetings and nearly constant interpersonal interaction and talk. In addition to all of this day to day speech, upper management roles can call for formal public addresses to interpret events and foster shared commitment. For a final application principle we will turn to Krishna's teaching on speech to learn options for infusing organizational communication with meaning.

First, Vedanta philosophy recognizes five organs of human action: hands, feet, speech, genitals, and bowels (Nikhilananda, 2004, p. 379). This means that speech is an embodied mode of action within the same moral orbit as physical actions like striking a foe or fleeing a battle. Placing speech in an embodied physical context can provide roots and an anchor for leaders thrown by the paralyzing dilemmas postmodernity often finds in discursive abstraction. Sophistic manipulations of truth or relativistic constructions of reality can be ignored or even firmly denied because speech is muscular and concrete, not merely ephemeral and symbolic. The *Bhagavad Gita* is clear that speech, like all action, is physically embodied with Karmic valences that are both immediately and cosmically significant.

Since communication is cast as one particular type of bodily action among many, all of the *Gita's* lessons on actions in general are directly relevant. This is especially true of Krishna's advice about results. Almost the entire Western rhetorical tradition teaches us to communicate for persuasive effect, and history shows that pursuing this goal can create a cultural dynamic of conflict and dissension even when we are advocating peace (Burke, 1969, pp. 49–55). Just as the man of action let's go of fruit, so must speakers avoid orienting themselves toward outcomes. Instead of adopting an instrumental approach to public discourse, working hard for results and "hankering" after a specific audience response, communication, like all other actions, should be performed as an act of worship. Whether it is delivering an oral report on changes in client demographics, leading a brainstorming meeting to generate new ad copy, or celebrating employee appreciation day, adopting a divine standard and offering a focused and skillful performance to God is liberating because it places the outcomes in his hands, not yours. In contrast, speakers who adopt a human standard of success bind themselves to the limitations of their audience. When audience adherence is the goal the speaker must trade in and even play upon their opinions and beliefs, but when God is the goal our discourse reaches toward a divine plane of truth and light (Plato, 1989).

When Krishna turns from describing the general requirements of all actions to focus on speech as a sub-species, there are profound implications that provide both reinforcement and detail to the *Gita's* embodiment theme. Arjuna is the archetypal leader and man of action and like many of us he is having difficulty visualizing God. Seeking divine help, he asks God how he can know him. What should he focus on? Krishna is everything in universe, so Chapter 10 treats readers to a very long list of just "a few of my manifestations, the most glorious ones; for infinite are the forms

in which I appear” (10.19). He is the Self, gods, demi-gods, mountains, priests, generals, the ocean, sages, saints, demons, animals, wind, warriors, monsters, rivers, and at the mid-point of the list, power itself. This God is eternal and pure undifferentiated energy, power that is creative and destructive and everything in between. This fascinating passage on divinity’s manifestation as sublime energy is the first of only two *Gita* verses where the power of speech is directly addressed, and it has deep implications for the embodied nature of discursive action. Krishna explains that “I am imperishable time; the Creator whose face is everywhere; death that devours all things; the source of all things to come; of feminine powers, I am fame, wealth, speech, and memory, intelligence, loyalty, forgiveness (10.33–34). This gendering point, affirming feminine manifestations of God and numbering speech among productive forces, can foster an important shift in our understanding of communication. As ancient literary traditions originally written for male leaders, both the Western rhetorical tradition and the *Bhagavad Gita* have been criticized and even dismissed for their misogyny (Herrick, 2013; Mitchell, 2000, p. 35; see 9.32). Contrary to the charge of valuing masculine argumentation and aggression over feminine creativity and community, in studying divine manifestations we learn that Krishna unites all aggressive and creative powers, that his creative powers are explicitly feminine, and that speech is central among feminine creative powers. Devotees who use the *Gita* to justify gender inequity have missed a crucial point. Here, beyond all dualities, the man of action is simultaneously the woman of speech.

Approached as feminine and creative, speech can be understood a matrix or source rather than an instrument or tool. Expression is a generative process of bearing and nurturing ideas, not gaining favor with an audience. Ingratiation and flattery might gain fleeting interest, and forceful or authoritative expression might secure temporary compliance, but when people adopt our ideas and make them their own there is a genuine commitment that ensures future development and growth. Following the feminine manifestations of God in verses 10.33 and 34, speech that shares intelligence with a genuine spirit of cooperation and engagement can inspire loyalty and forgiveness, and may even go so far as to generate wealth and fame.

One good way to appreciate the feminine power of speech is to approach it as an article of faith. In the *Bhagavad Gita* faith is not tangential or even optional; it is an integral and constitutive component of identity—“Faith is a person’s core; whatever his faith is, *he is*” (17.3). Believing in communicative matrices and committing to nurturing our ideas like children requires engaging others as essential partners for an idea’s growth and development. We cannot create alone, so others are not simple bystanders and even opponents represent vital and fertile partners. Operating with this mindset is an act of faith, a leap from the mundane world of individual humans striving for advantage to a divine world of unitive bliss and peace.

Krishna’s teaching on faith and control marks the second and final time the *Gita* covers speech. Chapter 17 outlines different types of faith, detailing them by distinguishing between different types of food, worship, control, and charity (17.7). In keeping with Chapter 10’s embodiment theme, speech cannot be separated from physical or mental action. Instead communication is central, uniting body and mind as we engage the other.

Honoring the Gods, the priests, the teachers and sages, purity, non-violence, chastity, uprightness—all this is control of the body. Speaking the truth with kindness, honesty that causes no pain, and the recitation of scripture—this is control of speech. Serenity, gentleness, silence, benevolence, self-restraint, purity of being, compassion – this is control of the mind. (17.14–17.16)

Thus like all actions, enlightened speech must be disciplined, austere, and benevolent. With no thought of outcome or reward, exhibiting skill and self-control, speech that is grounded in spiritual wisdom and expresses the truth with kindness can unite us with God. Commentators on the *Gita* are united in their view that all components described by Krishna must be included (Nikhilananda, 2004, p. 338; Swarupananda, 1996, p. 357). Within Hindu tradition, Sankaracarya’s gloss on the text is especially well respected. In his words “[w]hen a sentence is used in order to make another understand, if it happens to be devoid of one or two or three among the qualities—truthfulness, agreeability, beneficialness, and non-hurtfulness—then it is not austerity of speech” (2012, p. 645). In this way Krishna’s teaching sets a divine standard for our communication. In addition to a clear commitment to reality and truth, there is also a Hippocratic commitment to the well-being of the other. This should come as no surprise for devotees of the *Gita*. All acts, including spoken acts, are to be performed as worship. Lying to the other is also lying to both oneself and God, and harmful words make so bold as to attempt to harm God in both self and other.

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## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined themes from the *Bhagavad Gita* and indicated application opportunities to help leaders make organizations more meaningful. These ideals are as necessary as they are lofty. Operating with material values like profit or territory invites organizational dysfunction as leaders attempt to maximize personal power at the expense of co-worker relationships (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). It takes real courage to let go of ourselves, of our passions and desires and jealously guarded fruits, but this courage is immediately rewarded. Moving beyond selves opens up our freedom to adopt attitudes and make inspirational choices promoting social values like Unity, Duty, and Equanimity. The stakes are cosmic—in enacting our daily choices we create nothing less than our families, our neighborhoods, our corporations, nations, globe and reality itself.

To provide a closing thought, this powerful quotation from leadership guru Parker J. Palmer (n.d.) echoes the *Gita*’s wisdom and makes an inspirational call for everyone to lead our lives and grow our organizations with a spirit of shared responsibility and enlightened hope.

We can make choices about what we are going to project, and with those choices we help grow the world that is. Consciousness precedes being: consciousness, yours and mine, can form, deform, or reform our world. Our complicity in world-making is a source of awesome and sometimes painful responsibility—and a source of profound hope for change. It is the ground of our common call to leadership, the truth that makes leaders of us all.

## Chapter Summary

- Humans are social beings that exist in relation to one another.
- Organizations are collaborative groups found across all levels of human life.
- Groups require shared meaning and focus to maintain themselves and grow.
- Communication is the collaborative process that develops shared meaning.
- Leadership develops shared focus and direction for organizations.
- Modernity attempted to develop leaders and political and business organizations with no reference to spirituality. It failed because material values like profit or territory generate organizational dysfunction as leaders attempt to maximize power at the expense of the very relationships that constitute the organization.
- Post-modernity re-opens the conversation between socio-economic institutions and religions. There can be no sustainable distinction between spiritual and worldly pursuits.
- Ancient religious traditions are resources that can help form individual attitudes and provide meaning and direction for organizations.
- The *Bhagavad Gita* is a spiritual masterpiece from the Hindu tradition that can provide meaningful themes for organizational communication and enable inspired leadership.
- The *Bhagavad Gita* tells the story of Arjuna, a military leader who is paralyzed with despair on the eve of a battle. Krishna's teaching shows him how to face this challenge. We all may not be military leaders, but we all do encounter challenges and Krishna's lessons can provide useful perspective.
- Three themes central to Krishna's teaching are Unity, Duty, and Equanimity.
- Divisions and individuals are illusions. The universe is a unified whole characterized by inter-dependence and balance. The enlightened leader "sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself" (6.29).
- Concentration and unified focus is the path to enlightenment.
- Goal-directed thinking prioritizes product over process, an end over means philosophy that can justify unethical tactics and lead to burn-out. Instead, focus on performing your duty in the present moment as it unfolds. "Know what your duty is and do it without hesitation" (2.31).
- An attitude of equanimity requires letting go of desire, growing beyond duality, and devoting every action to God. This calm and confident attitude radiates peace.
- Leadership functions, such as obtaining resources and support or creating alignment on objectives and strategies, are usefully framed in terms of Unity, Duty, and Equanimity.
- Speech is embodied creative action, a feminine manifestation of God. Spiritually enlightened speech is true, agreeable, beneficial, and does no harm. All four components are necessary in performing speech as an act of worship.

### Questions for Reflection and Scenarios for Application

1. Imagine that you are an entry-level employee with only two weeks on the job. Your manager is very busy so you are frequently on your own. You enjoy the independence and even feel trusted but you are not 100% sure what your job really is. You were required to watch three training videos during the first week so you have a rough understanding of your tasks, but when you tried to ask questions your manager just referred you back to the videos. Now that you're actually performing your tasks some of them seem to actually slow down the business and make extra work. You have ideas about how to improve procedures, and since you've been trusted to be on your own you think your manager may even appreciate input from a fresh perspective, but you're not sure how to broach the subject. What *Bhagavad Gita* values can inform this decision? Should you even attempt to propose changes?
2. Imagine that you are an entrepreneur running a small service business that is entering the final quarter of its third year. Year one was difficult, but year two was much more successful because you landed a client who appreciates your work so much that he made you his sole sub-contractor. He needed most of your time so you dropped almost all other clients, and this worked out well because it allowed you to focus your business and maximize efficiency. Unfortunately, your circumstances changed unexpectedly early in year three. Your landlord sold your location so you were forced to move further from your best client. The new time and travel expenses led you to re-negotiate terms, and your top client responded quickly and positively, but now that you've settled into the new long-distance routine it appears that any distant client, no matter how good, does not fit your needs. Your distant client is expanding and wants to contract for even more work, but you are torn between loyalty and a strong need to develop a new local client base. Assuming that re-locating again to move closer to your best client is impossible, how can Unity, Duty, and Equanimity inform your business plan for year four?
3. Consider the following leadership challenge. A mid-level manager with one year of experience uses the company credit card to send a fruit basket to a colleague in another department who has just suffered a debilitating accident. Her goal is to provide support for a fellow employee in a time of extreme need. One month later, her supervisor sends her an email informing her that using company funds for personal gifts is a procurement policy violation—personal gifts are disallowed if there is no express business purpose. She is told that the expense must be personally reimbursed and any future misuse of funds will result in new purchasing procedures that will make it harder to do her job. The mid-level manager is especially troubled by this response because her supervisor has made similar purchases in the past, and she has admired the caring concern for employees

that these small expenses express. Support in times of need is one of the things that makes her proud to work for this organization. Is email the best channel for a response? How can she plan an appropriate response to her supervisor that underscores the importance of Unity, Duty, or Equanimity?

4. Consider a more advanced leadership challenge. You are a mid-level manager with one month of experience at a large non-profit organization and decide to seek funding for a worthy new initiative that has been pitched to you. All funds within your department are already earmarked for existing projects so you ask the grants officer about external funding opportunities. No grants for this type of initiative seem available, so the grants officer decides to contact the major gifts officer to inquire about possibilities for soliciting a donation. The major gifts officer is intrigued with this possibility, so to learn more about this new initiative he invites you to have coffee together and copies your supervisor on the invitation. You were not expecting this new contact and accept with excitement, but before the coffee meeting you are called to your supervisor's office. Without providing any opportunity for explanation he chastises you for seeking donations and informs you that he is cancelling your coffee meeting and that there is to be no further contact with the gifts officer. His rationale is that there are larger projects that the gifts officer should be focusing on and your distractions are counter-productive. When you are eventually given a turn to speak, how should you respond? Is it possible to invoke Unity, Duty, or Equanimity?
5. Imagine that you manage a sales team with fourteen members and that you have just had your best quarter in 5 years. Your new and relatively inexperienced regional supervisor interprets this achievement as a personal success justifying his new position. He is ecstatic and wants you to plan an elaborate celebration for your entire salesforce and their families. You know that your team has worked hard and deserves recognition, but you fear that an expensive party will yield only temporary results. In your view, the time you are being asked to spend planning this event would be better devoted to planning for next quarter. In the past you have celebrated successes by paying your team modest bonuses, and you are fairly certain your employees would appreciate a new bonus more than a party, but when you mentioned this established practice to your new supervisor it had little impact. What kind of duties seem to come into conflict with this scenario? Is there a way to reconcile them? Assume that your duty to your supervisor is primary and you fully commit to planning a party. What kind of celebration can you design that might build unity within a mid-sized team that is not receiving an anticipated bonus? Next, assume that your duty to your employees takes primacy and you want to send your supervisor a formal proposal advocating bonuses. What line of argument has the greatest likelihood of success? Can Unity, Duty, or Equanimity inform this proposal?

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# Karma Yoga: Application of Gita (2:47) for Superior Business Performance During Industry 4.0

Charles Chow

## Introduction

*“Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward; but never cease to do thy work.”*

—Gita (2:47), translated by Mascaro (1994, p. 52)

We are already into the Fourth Industrial Revolution as predicted at the 2011 Hannover Fair. Robots and artificial intelligence will redefine human work. Unlike the preceding industrial revolutions, Industry 4.0 cannot be attributed to any specific invention or innovation. More importantly, the present borderless and seamless interconnectivities (commonly known as the “Internet of Things”, IoT) present volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) challenges.

Amidst all the chaos and apparent confusion, today’s managers would still need to manage. In order to be effective, managers would need to align own passion with their business purpose. Gita (2:47) is an enduring guide for this.

*Nishkama karma* (desireless action), as explained in Gita (2:47), is to focus on the delivery and not on the deliverables. However, conventional management theory stipulates clear definition of goals before any action. There is a reward system to entice action in order to consolidate commitment for results. This is an outward-inward funneling process. However, with The Bhagavad Gita, business goals are aligned with individual callings, leading to an inward-outward radiation of energies. Then, every ordinary worker will deliver extraordinary results. Therefore, when The Bhagavad Gita is applied to business:

- Damage to reputation can be worse than death (Gita, 2:34);
- Work becomes worship (Gita, 2:47); and
- Courage is desirable, however clarity of purpose is divine (Gita, 2:31).

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This analysis is divided into three parts. Part A will explain the concepts of competition and work. Part B will focus on Gita (2:47) and extract the key management principles that are embedded in it. Then Part C concludes by specifying the limitations and outstanding issues in this *shloka* that need further investigation.

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## Superior Performance

Application of The Bhagavad Gita to business is valid because every registered business is a legal entity with rights and obligations like any adult person. Business is about people and, more importantly, about relationships. Therefore, superior performance arises when the business model is **DARE**:

- **D**ifferent from those already in the industry;
- **A**nticipate demand, just ahead of time—neither too early nor too late;
- **R**esourceful, i.e. not just assets but how these can be organised and optimised; and
- **E**ver-ready, i.e. scalable and sustainable, usually user-friendly and highly impactful.

Very often, the obvious may not always be evident. They exist even without being known, like gravity and oxygen. Likewise, the need for transport and retail are obvious components in any society. Yet these essential needs are perceived and performed differently during Industry 4.0. For example, UBER ([www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)) does not own any vehicle yet it has the world's largest taxi fleet. ALIBABA ([www.alibaba.com](http://www.alibaba.com)) is now known as the world's most valuable retailer, yet it does not hold any inventory. Both business entities flourish because they make information easily available and transparent. Customers trust them. They add value by satisfying customers' needs promptly and perpetually, thereby making profit accordingly. So, superior performance drills deep and distils the obvious for profitable enterprise. Much of such wisdom is contained in Indian metaphysics or *vedanta* in Hinduism, and The Bhagavad Gita is an example.

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## Part A: Business Competition and Work

Hinduism has neither a founder nor a prophet. There is no ecclesiastical order or governing body with a unified system of belief encoded for declaration of faith or creed. Devotees can choose to be polytheistic (many gods), pantheistic (God is present in all things), monotheistic (only one God), agnostic (cannot know God) or even atheistic (godless). According to the Supreme Court of India on December 11, 1995 as reported in PUCL Bulletin of February, 1996:

“Unlike other religions in the World, the Hindu religion does not claim any one Prophet, it does not worship any one God, it does not believe in any one philosophic concept, it does

not follow any one act of religious rites or performances; in fact it does not satisfy the traditional features of a religion or creed. It is a way of life and nothing more.”

Therefore, according to Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the first Vice President of India (1952–1962) and the second President of India (1962–1967) as well as a professor in Indian philosophy (Subhamoy Das, 2017, para 1):

“Hinduism is not just a faith, but in itself is related to the union of reason and intuition. Hinduism cannot be defined, but is only to be experienced.”

Indeed there are many Hindu gods and their associated deities. However, all these are commonly consolidated into the *Trimurti* of *Brahma* (the creator), *Shiva* (the destroyer) and *Vishnu* (the preserver). A study into The Bhagavad Gita would reveal the connection between an ordinary person (represented by Arjuna) and a specific god (Krishna being the avatar of Vishnu) or *bhagavan svayam*—the source of all incarnations (Swami Tapasyananda, 1980, p. 1). More importantly, within 700 *shlokas*, the understanding of oneself is revealed—not from merely reading but through personal reflection and the acceptance of “becoming” (Radhakrishnan, 2009, p. 368)—in aligning one’s real nature (*svabhava*) with one’s own calling (*svadharma*). This chapter further links such personal dispositions with doing business, especially during Industry 4.0.

In the words of the founder of Ramakrishna Order of Monks (Swami Vivekananda, 2007, p. iv):

“Every soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature: external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.”

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## Reputation

Since every soul is potentially divine, it is the task of every individual to unleash own potentials. There are formal channels like training schedules and specific exposures. The informal channels include networking and even a personal crisis. However, these opportunities for self-awareness are constrained by own reputation. This is the distinctive “aroma” that goes before an individual and would even still linger on after a person’s death.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the key features in The Bhagavad Gita: Arjuna, although stationary, continues to move as long as the chariot moves. For Arjuna, this is “action in inaction”. In Fig. 6.2, the chariot represents a business organization and the employees are warriors with management depicted as the chariot driver.

A business purpose and corporate values are the mandate for management, like horses that pull a chariot forward. For a business to thrive, the key feature between employees and management is trust. To ensure compliance with an organisation’s mission and vision, corporate governance is vital. Ultimately, the art of business is

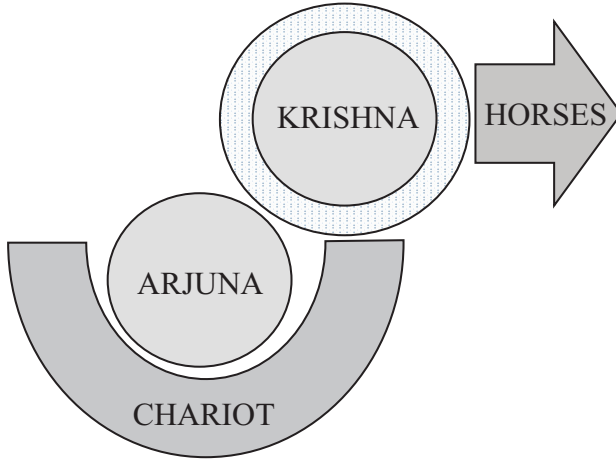


Fig. 6.1 The Bhagavad Gita illustrated

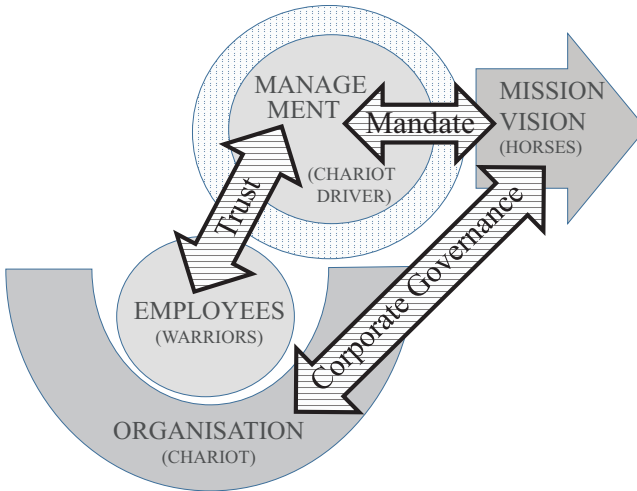


Fig. 6.2 The Bhagavad Gita applied to business

to continue to remain relevant to a community and generate profit while doing so. However, there are also non-profit entities that thrive through charities and volunteers. In addition, there are not-for-profit organisations that make profit but channel their gains to beneficiaries resulting in zero profit recorded in their annual balance sheets. Therefore, being relevant and staying relevant are the cardinal features for doing business. In essence, it is the professionalism in a profession that ensures business continuity as illustrated in the following example on Arthur Anderson.

## Damage to Reputation is not Death

In June 2002, Arthur Anderson was convicted of accounting fraud with American energy giant Enron. Their license as an accounting firm was revoked by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in August 2002. However in May 2005, the Supreme Court of America reversed Anderson's conviction due to serious flaws in the jury instructions. Although legally free to resume operations, the damage was so severe that this Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) could not regain their previous level of operations. From a high of 28,000 employees in USA and 85,000 worldwide, this LLP was left with only about 200 employees in USA who were re-deployed into four different companies named Omega Management I through IV as at December 2007.

However, since 2013 there is a group of new partners to reconstruct their business. As at March 2017, Arthur Anderson is now represented by 26 offices in 16 countries in 5 continents. This brand started in 1913 and departed abruptly from the market in 2002. It took them 11 years to resuscitate their roots for new shoots. Based on the Arthur Anderson example, damage to reputation is not death. However, when the reputation was damaged in 2002, the partners and employees then must have experienced the agony of disgrace that was worse than death as outlined in Gita (2:34).

After linking individual *shlokas* to business, the next section will provide an overview of the connection of the entire book of The Bhagavad Gita to doing business.

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## The Yogas in Business

Table 6.1 below summarises the 18 chapters of The Gita with links to modern business:

In Gita (9:19), Krishna states that he is both *sat* ("being") and *asat* ("non-being"). The former refers to the tangible - an existence without qualification. For example, the poison that is deadly for human beings is harmless to the snake that produces it. A grown-up tiger can be dangerous, yet as a cub, it can be cuddled playfully. So, in Hinduism, there is strictly neither explicit good nor definite evil. Such judgement is situational. Likewise, in business, there is never excess profit. Surpluses can become a burden when a need turns into greed.

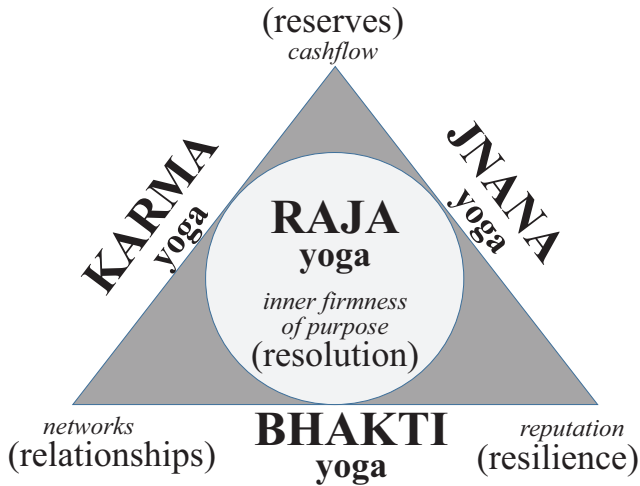
On the other hand, *asat* refers to the intangible. There is an inter-connectivity among the multiplicity of diversity that appears to be different individual variations. For example, nectar collected from different flowers anywhere tastes the same. Taste is intangible. When salt is dissolved, the water becomes salty although the salt is no more visible. Therefore, like nectar and salt, everything and everyone everywhere are in essence the same and yet different. Applied to business, the needs for transport and retail are evident yet such needs are serviced differently in different countries due to local laws and traditions.

**Table 6.1** The Bhagavad Gita applied to modern business

The Bhagavad Gita	Key Issues	Focus of Link	Applied to Modern Business
Chapters 1 to 6	Self-doubt, Spirituality of being, Understanding awareness, Wisdom in action, Sanctification of work, Meditation.	<b>Karma Yoga</b> actions without attachment to fruits of labour: <u>Duty</u>	Resourcefulness, Business cycles, Social enterprises, Protection of own interests, Work becomes worship, Contingency plans >> cashflow, especially <b>reserves</b>
Chapters 7 to 12	Supreme truth, Universal consciousness, Devotions, Alignment options, Universal form, Divine qualities.	<b>Jnana Yoga</b> self-knowledge: <u>Decorum</u>	Business principles, Inclusiveness, Diversity, Global footprint, The right person for the right job >> networks, especially trustworthy <b>relationships</b>
Chapters 13 to 18	Detachment, Wisdom transcends knowledge, Supreme self, Divine and demonic natures, Faith, Renunciation	<b>Bhakti Yoga</b> devotions: <u>Discipline</u>	Focus on delivery, Group think, Self-renewal, Corporate governance, Reliability in scalability, Keeping secrets secret >> reputation, especially <b>resilience</b>
Overall	<i>sat-chit-ananda</i> (existence-consciousness-bliss) <i>tat twam asi</i> (that thou art: I am that I am)	<b>Raja Yoga</b> conquering the mind: <u>Decisiveness</u>	The “inner firmness of purpose” that is to be discovered and cannot be developed >> passion, vision, mission, i.e. the business <b>resolution</b>

The term *sat-chit-ananda*—“existence-consciousness-bliss” or sometimes translated as “truth-awareness-bliss”—is not listed in The Bhagavad Gita. This phrase originates from Katha Upanishad (Nawal, 1998, p. 148). The concept of *sat-chit-ananda* explains that everyone is pure consciousness and part of *Brahman* (universal consciousness). All beings are in one, and everyone is in all beings. The current global-warming is indeed a vivid illustration of the link of everyone to everything everywhere everytime.

In addition, the phrase *tat twam asi* is also not stated in The Gita. This term originates from the sixth chapter of Chandogya Upanishad: Father (Uddalaka) explains to son (Shvetaketu) that everyone is part of the whole and also the whole is in everyone. Such inter-connectivity is further explained by Adi Sankara in *Drg-Drśya-Viveka*—translated as “Wisdom of the Seer and the Seen”. The Ramakrishna Mission has summarised Adi Sankara’s 46 shlokas into a 12-minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=210x9KR6aGs>. “You are that” or “I am that I am” is self-realization that everyone’s true nature is unconditioned, unchanging and unlimited by space, time, name or form. He who knows *Brahman*, verily becomes *Brahman*. The key features in Table 6.1 are consolidated in Fig. 6.3 below:



**Fig. 6.3** The Yogas in business

Karma Yoga (work-in-action) links relationships with reserves. The equanimity at work is a continuous strive for better productivity. One common myth about successful companies is their focus on beating the competition. However the research by Collins and Porras (2002, p. 10) has proven otherwise. Visionary enterprises focus on beating themselves instead. Beating the competition comes as a residual result from their relentless strive for self-improvement. This is done as a disciplined corporate culture. In some cases for over 150 years like Procter & Gamble that was founded in 1837 and Johnson & Johnson in 1886. No matter how much they achieve—no matter how far ahead they are from their competitors—they never think that they have done “good enough”.

On the other hand, there are companies that remain very close to their customers by sustaining a tight bond in keeping secrets secret. Business growth hinges on working intimately with customers to offer them what they need, according to Simon (2009, p. 29). This is Jnana Yoga, (knowledge-in-action) that links reserves with resilience. Here speed to market and, more importantly, the strict safeguard of confidential information will ensure superior business results.

A third perspective is Bhakti Yoga (faith-in-action) that manages relationships and resilience. Management of the fear of failures, and even to leverage on failures, can help create even more successes. Very often, it is not about when to start a new venture but when to stop an apparently successful one before huge losses are incurred. This requires entrepreneurial “gut feel” and a strong self-belief to connect what appears to be unrelated, yet impactful, collaborations. For example, Anita Roddick sold her entire international chain of The Body Shop stores to L’Oreal in 2006 after discovering her liver cirrhosis in 2004 that led to her death in 2007.

Raja Yoga (mind-in-action) focuses on development of the human mind and its control. Applied to business, it is about an “inner firmness of purpose” to steer a

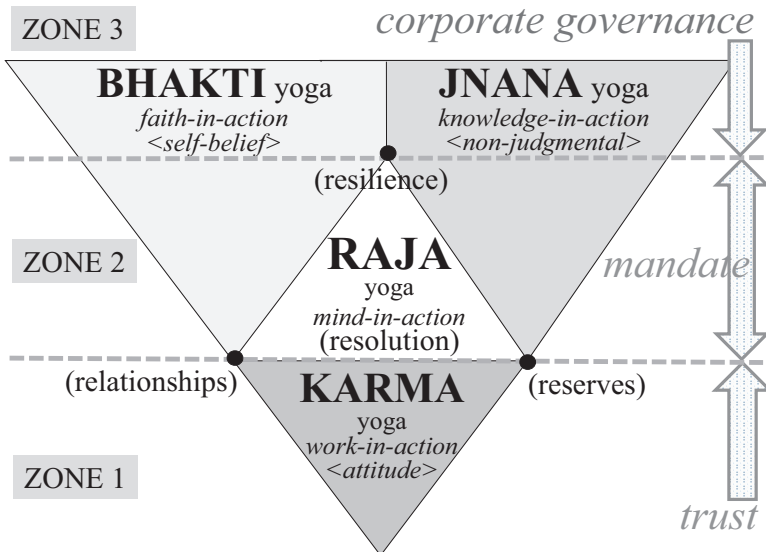


company’s drive to succeed. PepsiCo’s tagline “Performance with Purpose” by Chairperson and CEO Indra Nooyi is an example. It is not about how to spend money but how to make money instead. “Performance with Purpose” has three dimensions, (Rothaermel, 2017, pp. 432–434):

- healthful sustainability to only sell nutritious foodstuffs and nourishing beverages;
- environmentally friendly to ensure zero impact on the natural eco-system; and
- advocating the whole person at work, i.e. “not just to make a living, but to also have a life” thus allowing employees to unleash their mental and emotional energies at work.

The *yogas* outlined above do not stand alone. They reinforce one another like the sides of a triangle in sustaining relationships, reserves and resilience. Central to all these *yogas* is the business resolution to encourage individual *svadharma* or personal calling or corporate core competence as illustrated in Fig. 6.4.

Figure 6.4 links Fig. 6.3 with Fig. 6.2. The four *yogas*-in-action can be divided into three zones. The foundation (Zone 1) is the individual attitude or the trust between employees and management. Without trust, it is impossible to sustain business resilience that in-turn secures relationships and reserves. However, this trust hinges on the business resolution (Zone 2) that specifies the mandate for corporate governance (Zone 3) to regularly review the vision and mission. Then, the business continues to remain relevant to customers.



**Fig. 6.4** Summary of Yoga-business interactions

## Svadharna

The key criterion for individual resolution is *svadharna*. The Sanskrit *sva* means personal or a particular inclination. *Dharma* refers to the orderly fulfilment of an inherent nature, like a dog barks while a cat meows. So, a cat cannot bark and neither can a dog meow. Therefore *svadharna* is an individual calling or a specific duty. However, this has to be discovered and cannot be developed.

For example, Genghis Khan was born with a blood clot in his hand. This was a sign according to local folklore that he was destined to become a great leader (Man, 2010, p. 40). He turned this belief into his *svadharna* to consider himself sent by God to punish sinners and to unify the Mongols. When he died, his entire empire stretched from the Yellow Sea in the East to the Caspian Sea in the West. The Mongols after Genghis Khan created the world's largest continuous land empire in human history, spreading from Asia into Europe, including parts of the Muslim Arab region. Back then, even traders from Rome could reach Beijing safely using this overland route.

A popular elaboration on *svadharna* (without mentioning it) is by Jobs (2005, YouTube 22.09 mins) of Apple Inc. at his Stanford Commencement Speech:

“Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And, most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”

Covey (2004, pp. 37–63) also describes the need to find own voice and to inspire others to find theirs. The choice for this voice is because of personal freedom, guided by physical, mental, emotional and spiritual intelligences. All these features are akin to discovering *svadharna* as an individual. However, this Hindu aspect is not explicitly mentioned in Covey's book.

Likewise, Novak (1996, 117–133) elaborates on the courage to carry out decisions which are difficult and painful, yet necessary. This is both for the overall working of a business and in meeting possible setbacks. He advocates three cardinal virtues:

- creativity, in particular to foresee the needs of others and to satisfy them;
- community building among persons for the sake of other persons; and
- getting things right while getting things done.

Everyone has a calling (*svadharna*) and each has a unique way of expressing it. For example, to many, a stone is merely another piece of rock. Yet Michelangelo can turn it into Pieta. Likewise, it takes a succession of many leaders a long time to build a nation, yet Lee Kuan Yew turned Singapore from Third into First World within one generation. Both Michelangelo and Lee excelled because they were given (or self-created) opportunities to blossom. Lee could not have sculptured a Pieta and Michelangelo was not a nation-builder. But both focussed on their respective deliveries according to their individual calling. However, behind every glamorous

achievement is a web of supporting networks that must remain anonymous, faceless, traceless and mysterious in order to be effective, according to Sun Zi's *Art of War* (Griffith, 2005, p. 146 and Wee, 2003, p. 137).

### The Busyness in Business

Unless a calling is clear, the work can turn busy. For clarity, the practice of yoga as a skill can help. For example, the world celebrated the first "International Yoga Day" on 21 June 2015. The United Nations General Assembly has scheduled this as an annual event to coincide with Summer Solstice—the longest day in the northern hemisphere according to Gregorian (Christian) calendar.

This annual yoga event is possible because on 27 September 2014, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi highlighted to the United Nations General Assembly (UNIC report of 12 Dec, 2014):

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature."

*Yoga* in Sanskrit means "to link". The "International Yoga Day" promotes universal consciousness so that everyone can be connected globally. This universal get-together will intangibly reinforce one another directly and to help expand global harmony indirectly, for the present as well as for the future.

It is important to note that every business enterprise is like a tree. It grows only when it is healthy. The day a tree stops growing, it starts dying. Therefore, the purpose of business needs constant watering and pruning. So having like-minded people together, like "International Yoga Day", will help build and defend a common purpose and remove the busyness in business.

Busyness comes from straying away from own *svadharma*. Gita (18:47) states that executing one's duty, however humble, is better than performing the duty of another, even if this was great. (Swami Dayananda Saraswati, 2011, p. 188) Oprah Winfrey terms this disorientation as being "*not centred*" and therefore "*all stressed out*" (Winfrey, n.d. in 3 min).

So, whatever work done is basically guided by an inner disposition. Individuals find fulfilment and harmony in getting their own work done (Swami Ranganathananda, 2008, p. 315). Since everyone has a precise place in the scheme of things, performing duties ordained by one's own nature, however imperfect, is better than doing well in the duty designated for another (Swami Chinmayananda, 2002, p. 1177).

A similar comparison is in the deployment of patrol vessels. Smaller police boats are designed to chase after bandits in narrow channels and for deployment in local rivers while huge naval gunboats safeguard the sea territory of a country. The small police boats will capsize in open heavy seas and big naval boats will be grounded when negotiating narrow bends in coastal operations. So every vessel is designed for a specific task, just like every individual having a designated calling. Going beyond own task would lead to busyness. To overcome this disorientation, modern management advocates "mindfulness".

## Mindfulness

Even among Buddhists, there is no one common definition for “mindfulness”. On one end of the spectrum, there is “right mindfulness” by Allan (1996) as part of the Eightfold Path of Buddhism. Then there is Kabat-Zinn (2012)’s “paying attention to the present moment non-judgmentally”. This is akin to Gunaratana (2002)’s phrase of “present time awareness”. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Dunne (2008)’s definition of “non-distraction”, i.e. the mind does not forget an entity.

With reference to Gita (2:47), the focus is on work and not on its reward. This appears to deviate from prevailing management practices. Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Management by Objectives (MbO) specify clearly the returns to effort as stipulated by or as agreed with supervisors. However, in order to focus on work, one has to be mindful about oneself, the emerging trends and also current developments. Therefore, mindfulness in this Hindu perspective is “inaction in action”. The key features are (Chow, 2014, p. 46):

- Really accessible—not just available, but also engaged;
- Actually attentive—to participate instead of being merely present; and
- Always appropriate—neither too much nor too little.

An example on container and contents can perhaps better clarify this mindfulness concept. Half-full or half-empty is a matter of interpretation. Change a container’s size, then the half-full could become almost-full or almost-empty, assuming that the contents remain the same. Likewise, by putting in the larger pebbles first, then the smaller and granular ones can later completely fill the empty spaces within the same vessel.

The practice of mindfulness fills the neglected parts apparent in every moment. Therefore, “first things first” is to focus on the key essentials and the less important will follow. The half-vessel-themes convey optimistic and pessimistic expectations. More importantly, however, is to know the relative benchmarks between contents and container.

In essence, a business exists because of customers. Value is added in the doing for, the delivery to and the deliverables perceived by the customer. However, within the delivery, there is a tone to every communication. This is the attitude that shows the drive and determination to complete a task. While the drive starts, it is determination that sustains an enthusiasm. However, individual discretion is vital. For example, a drive without discretion would lead to burn-out. Too many concurrent obligations will strain resources and confuse priorities.

On the other hand, determination without discretion is stubborn pride. In business, one needs to be abreast with fresh trends and be vigilant about competition. For example, billionaire Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba Group, advises entrepreneurs not to be the “they” in this idiom that is borrowed from Mahatma Gandhi to describe India’s non-violent activism against the British (Vulcanpost):

“First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.”

So, even when the competitor is still small in size or still weak, one should take this threat seriously and monitor this opponent like a giant. On the other hand, even

when the competitor is huge, one should not regard oneself as a weakling instead. So, awareness about the competition is good, but self-awareness is better.

Therefore, can a person be “mindful” when the mind is full? Basically “yes”, since mindfulness is a skill and not a state. There are breathing techniques to reduce individual anxiety and mental exercises to contain distractions in order to focus on the present moment. For corporations, there are standard operating procedures (SOPs) to handle similar recurring incidences and contingency plans in case of emergencies.

So, in being mindful, one would not only hear but also listen, not merely look but actually see. In addition, one would be able to discriminate ordinary clutter and rise above the noise for proper discernment. A task blossoms into a duty, and ordinary routine work would become harmonious preoccupations. Then work becomes worship. This transcends the physical into spiritual as a form of interconnectivity with universal consciousness, without being religious.

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## Work Becomes Worship

The spiritual dimension in Gita (2:47) elevates ordinary work to extraordinary performances. Chatterjee (2012, p. 38) invented the term “workship” as an acronym for “work as worship”. This sanctification of work involves the fullness of every moment or faith-in-action.

To worship is to conduct a recurring ritual in order to express a personal commitment or association. Likewise, when an attitude becomes a recurring habit, the work involved would turn into worship. There is calmness of the mind, always sturdy in intentions and steady in the delivery.

## Fullness of the Moment

In Fig. 6.5, Zone 1 contains benchmarks (‘should be’) for performance in the present. Actually, everyone has more inherent capabilities and capacities (‘can be’) than those stipulated as performance benchmarks. Therefore, the commitment to a task (‘meeting the moment’) is a compromise between the “should be”-s and “can be”-s. When in Zone A, a conventional task is perceived as a duty. Then “fullness of the moment” merges with “meeting the moment”. This “aware of being aware” is a skill and a habit that is embedded in strong self-belief, by trusting own rhythm with an abundance attitude and always non-judgmental about others.

Figure 6.6 illustrates this “awareness” in greater detail. The “know” zone indicates knowledge that is already registered and acknowledged. This part has been elaborated in the previous Fig. 6.5. In the “not sure” zone in Fig. 6.6, there is information deficit or incomplete information that increases the risk for wrong action. Then, in the “don’t-know” zone, some unknowns are tolerated, like planning assumptions and non-negotiable constraints in language or local customs. In this zone are also reflex actions that cannot be explained yet predictable. Very often

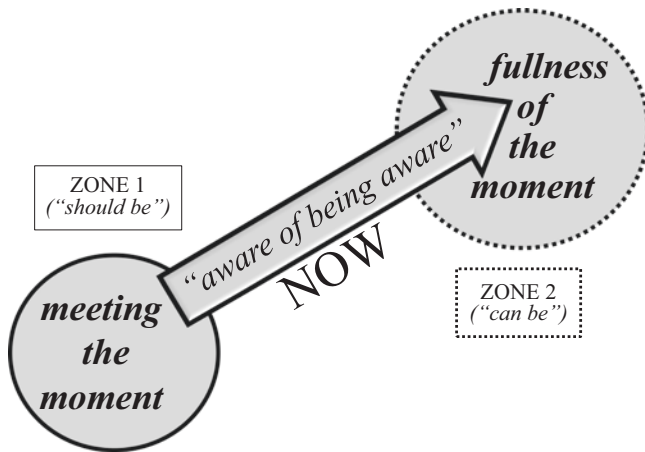


Fig. 6.5 Meeting the “Fullness of the Moment”

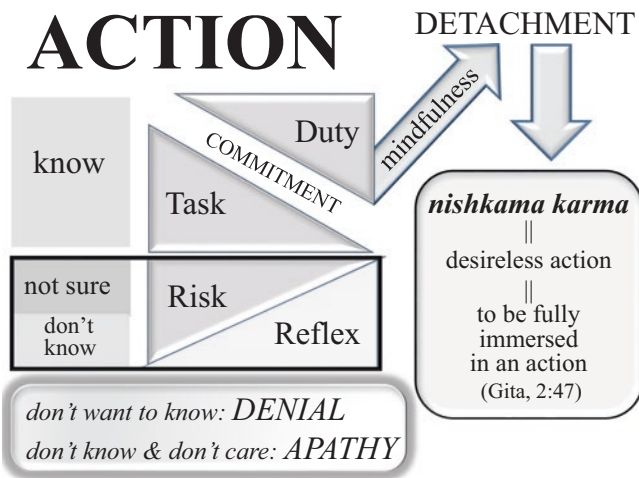


Fig. 6.6 Gita (2:47) illustrated

there is knee jerk reaction to accept pre-approved procedures according to company policy. For example, the rejection of an offer solely based on price will distort the long-term relationship with a trustworthy supplier.

As illustrated in Fig. 6.6, “action” may also be denial, when one refuses to accept or “don’t know and don’t care”, viz. apathy.

With commitment, a task becomes a duty, elevating a static state into a dynamic trait as illustrated in Fig. 6.7. This is *nishkama karma*, with total immersion into an activity, yet totally detached from the expectation of a reward. The Bhagavad Gita further explains in Gita (18:14) that every action has five components as illustrated in Fig. 6.8.

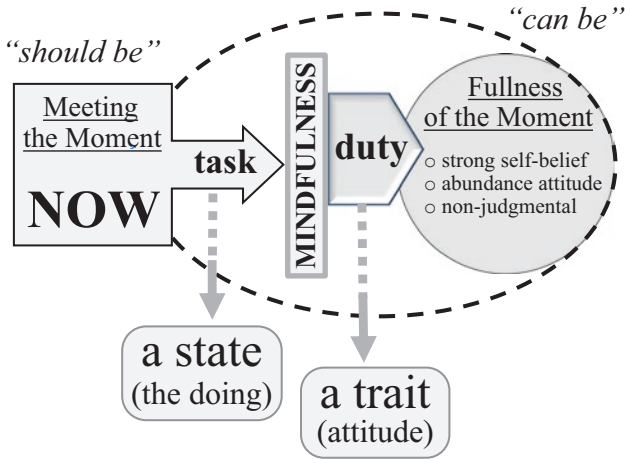


Fig. 6.7 A state becomes a trait

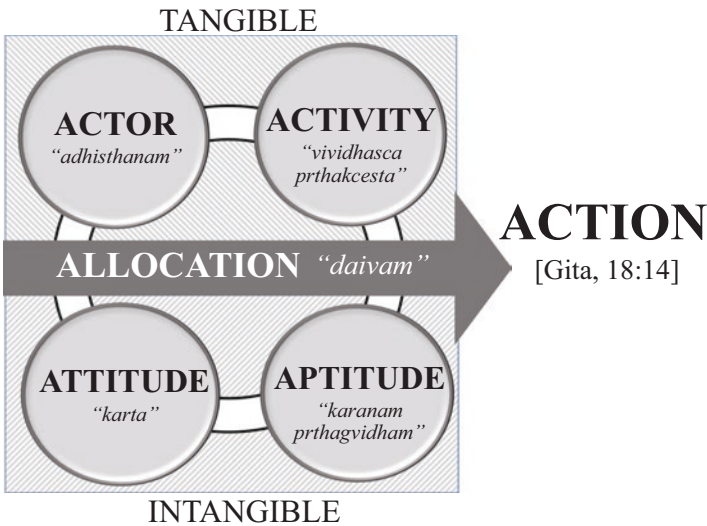


Fig. 6.8 The composition of an action

### Diavam

Every action needs an actor, who has the aptitude but constrained by personal attitude. However, among all the components as detailed in Fig. 6.8, the most important is *daivam*. This can be translated as “chance”, i.e. in the allocation of a challenge by design or default.

Meeting the “fullness of the moment” is a choice. However, every intangible needs a tangible in order to make it visible, like a vessel to determine the content as

half-full or half-empty. Yet, every vessel has a shape. This shape has internal tensions that enjoy an outward appearance. Mindfulness fills the neglected parts of the moment by accommodating the inherent tensions for a wholesome outward posture. It is the mind that decides and controls such moments. Therefore, minding a business is really a business of the mind. There is a never ending cycle of decision-making, a homeostatic process.

### Management Cybernetic

Minding a business includes “inputs” that would be processed in the “throughput” for an aspired “output” as detailed in Fig. 6.9. However, to ensure proper output, timely “feedforward” is necessary. This is competitive intelligence. Likewise, proper “feedback” through checks and controls would ensure appropriate processing of inputs. This closed loop is always in perpetual interaction hence termed as “management cybernetics”. However, this process can be distorted by changes in resources or advancements in technology. An unintended and unscheduled interference is akin to *daivam* in Gita (18:14). Every *daivam* presents both opportunities and threats.

Usually not pre-planned in “output”, but definitely with impact on “output”, is the “outcome”. These are repercussions or ripple effects in attaining an “output”. For example, Singapore’s successful family planning programme (“Stop at Two”) has resulted as output the highest GDP per capita in Southeast Asia. But this success has also the outcome that there will not be sufficient young Singaporeans to take care of a fast ageing population. The resultant outcome distorts a planned output. Therefore clarity of purpose is vital.

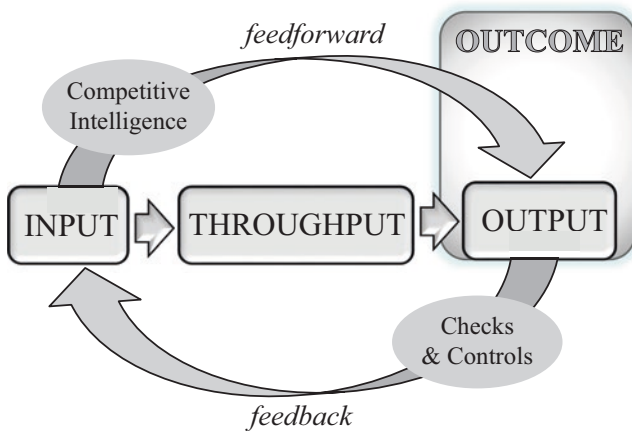


Fig. 6.9 Management cybernetics



## Clarity

Clarity of purpose determines proper action. Out of the 18 chapters, The Bhagavad Gita's Chapters 12 and 15 are the shortest with each having only 20 *shlokas*. The former explains devotion while the latter captures the greatest secret of The Bhagavad Gita—the way towards Supreme Self. In India, since ancient days, Chapter 15 would be recited as a prayer by the Brahmins before taking food (Swami Chinmayananda, 2002, p. 973). This chapter also describes the extra faculty required of a spiritual seeker, i.e. the “Eye-of-Wisdom” (Swami Tapasyananda, 2010, p. 571 and Swami Dayanana Saraswati, 2011, p. 101).

It is an illusion to think that man is the centre of the universe and our physical bodies are real. Krishna consciousness means becoming free from this illusion. The name “Krishna” originates from the Sanskrit word *KRSNA*. When all the senses become concentrated and directed towards *KRSNA*, the resultant state of mind is called *bhakti* (devotion). (Swami Tapasyananda, 1980, p. 258) This is considered the fifth *purushartha* (proper goals for living), besides *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (pleasure) and *moksha* (liberation). (Swami Tapasyananda, 1980, p. 1)

In Bhakti Yoga, man and the Divine are two separate entities. To some, *KRSNA* is the source of all incarnations, as *bhagavan svayam* (one without a second) with purifying and liberating effects for devotees and to grant relief from all miseries in life. (Swami Prabhupada, n.d., SB1.3) There is no business equivalent for this religious perspective.

However, in Hinduism every person has an individual consciousness called the *atman*. This has neither birth nor death and is never killed when the body dies (Gita, 2:20). At death, the *atman* abandons the old body and takes on a new one like a person changing garments (Gita, 2:22). Applied to business, the *atman* is similar to the officially registered name of a commercial enterprise. The composition of shareholders and management personnel may change over the years, but this business name prevails.

The universal consciousness of *KRSNA* can have a business perspective akin to “Zeitgeist”. This word is etymologically from German, translated as spirit (“Geist”) of our time (“Zeit”). This can be associated with business cycles and business trends. According to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, ISKCON ([www.krishna.com](http://www.krishna.com)), true success in life comes only by understanding the grace of *KRSNA*. To have the courage to acknowledge this bond between man and the Divine is liberation (*moksha*) for the individual.

Therefore, the practice of Gita (2:47) (*nishkama karma*) must have reference to Krishna (*KRSNA*). Applied to business, however, this spiritual aspect can be associated with upholding human dignity and individual freedom. These are explained in “intent” and “worth” as detailed below.

## Intent

When plugged into an intelligent system, traffic lights can be programmed for a “green wave”. This allows the seamless and safe flow of vehicles and pedestrians. So traffic lights are indeed self-less, desire-less and promptly accomplish all critical tasks as programmed. However, there is no *nishkama karma* because these lights change automatically but not willingly.

Marquet (2012) practised *nishkama karma* without even mentioning it. He turned around his entire crew in an American nuclear-powered, fast-attack submarine from the worst into the best performers in their fleet. He did so by transferring the control of the ship to his crew, although he held command of the vessel between 1999 and 2001. The steps taken were evolutionary, yet the result was revolutionary. He basically respected the dignity of every sailor under his command and trusted their independent decisions that were deemed to be made for the good of the submarine. Mistakes never happened because these were corrected by the operator personally or by a team-mate. (Marquet, 2012, p. 124).

Likewise the Chinese international conglomerate Haier ([www.haier.com](http://www.haier.com)) has designed their ZZJYT (Zi Zhu Jing Ying Ti, 自住经营体) as “self-organizing, autonomous operating units” to have zero distance to customers. (Fischer, Lago, & Liu, 2013, p. 98) A ZZJYT makes own hiring and firing decisions as well as to adopt new IT and social media systems. This business model attracts colleagues eager to have freedom to make decisions, to act swiftly, and yet have a strong drive to work as a team. With ZZJYT, ordinary employees can then do extraordinary things, which is akin to “work becomes worship” in *nishkama karma*. However, this Hindu aspect is not mentioned in the Haier report.

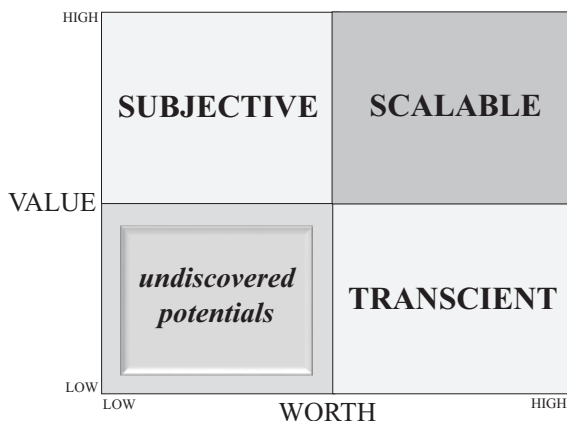
## Security

According to Chopra (1997, p. 86), the search for security is actually an attachment to the known. This is linked to the past, with an association of personal comfort in dealing with familiar situations. Therefore the yearning for personal security actually inhibits innovative ventures and restricts creativity.

It must be noted that Gita (18:67) states clearly that The Bhagavad Gita is not to be shared with non-devotees, especially those who do not want to hear about or who would argue against such teachings. In addition, it is also not to be shared with those who are devoid of the self-discipline for service. In essence, evangelisation of The Gita is explicitly prohibited according to this *shloka*.

More importantly, Gita (18:63) stipulates that after contact with The Bhagavad Gita, every individual should have the freedom to personally decide on own course of action. So the secrets after personal reflection should remain secret.

**Fig. 6.10** Value-worth matrix



## Value vs. Worth

In keeping secrets secret, when applied to business, there must be a clear distinction between value and worth. As illustrated in Fig. 6.10, an entity with neither value nor worth has undiscovered potentials.

Value is basically intrinsic. Comfort foods and folk music appeal differently to different individuals. Likewise, a company's history and own retiree-network are very valuable to itself but not valuable to others in the industry directly. On the other hand, a company's worth is extrinsic, based on market appraisal. For example, both Telsa ([www.telsa.com](http://www.telsa.com)) and Grab ([www.grab.com](http://www.grab.com)) are still financially in the red, yet investors consider them highly attractive.

High worth is transient, when the value is low. For example, both travel insurance and protective wrappings are only necessary during travel or transportation. They become worthless then after. Professions like doctors, teachers and the police have their inherent value but have no worth (market rate) to an individual until their services are required, especially in an emergency.

Therefore, protection of business resources should focus on those that have high worth and high value. These should have high resale value, high support during a breakdown and high scalability in modular expansion. An example of conversion of high value to high worth is in customer loyalty. On the other hand, conversion from high worth to high value are the commercially proven intellectual properties like franchising and licensing.

## Opportunity Share

In order to preserve the high value and high worth sector, management needs to monitor closely the emerging trends while still defending their current market share (present profit channels). According to Hamel and Prahalad (1996, p. 26), exploring "opportunity share" (future profit options) would be better to sustain corporate competitiveness than to merely protect current "market share".

## Part B: Key Management Principles in Gita (2:47)

While Part A has highlighted the general application of The Gita to business, Part B will analyse the key management principles embedded in one *shloka*, Gita 2:47. Translations of this Sanskrit verse are taken from three different Hindu authorities that have expanded their work outside of India. Although five *swamis* (men) are quoted, there are also *matajis* (women) who devote their lives in different Hindu orders. However, all of these cannot be included due to space constraints.

### Key Management Components

The Chinmaya Mission and ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) have each their own standard text on The Bhagavad Gita. However, unlike these two, the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda did not compile one standard publication on The Bhagavad Gita, although he made commentaries on The Gita in many of his talks and presentations. As detailed in Table 6.2, the translation listed in the publication by Swami Ranganathananda are the exact words of Swami Vivekananda, when compared with Swami Madhurananda's publication.

Common to all three missionaries is the interchange of meaning between “**duty**” and “**work**”. This can be linked to “work becomes worship” when ordinary tasks are elevated to duties, encouraging fullness-of-the-moment with faith-in-action. In business, this is the strong self-belief with a persistent proposition embodied in the business vision and mission.

Another common feature is the “**fruit**” of action which can be associated with business output and outcome. It is also necessary to include *daivam* of Gita (18:14) as another component of the actual result. By focussing on the process, results will

**Table 6.2** Comparison of translations of Gita (2:47)

Ramakrishna Mission		Chinmaya Mission	ISKCON
Swami Ranganathananda (2010, p. 177)	Swami Chidbhavananda (2012, p. 172)	Swami Chinmayananda (2002, p. 119)	Swami Prabhupada (1983, p. 35)
Your right is to <b>work</b> only; but never to the fruits thereof. May you not be motivated by the <b>fruits of actions</b> ; nor let your attachment be towards <b>inaction</b> . Swami Madhurananda (2011, p. 49)	Seek to perform your <b>duty</b> ; but lay not claim to its fruits. Be you not the producer of the <b>fruits of karma</b> ; neither shall you lean towards <b>inaction</b> .	Thy right is to <b>work</b> only, but never to its fruits; let not the <b>fruit-of-action</b> be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to <b>inaction</b> .	You have a right to perform your prescribed <b>duty</b> , but you are not entitled to the <b>fruits of action</b> . <i>Never consider yourself the cause of action, and never be attached to <b>inaction</b>.</i>

follow. Business “best practices” are usually adopted as proven success models. However, when a business prospers the local community must also benefit. Such outreach is commonly termed as “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) that reduces current profit but secures future profitability of the business.

Lastly, the word “**inaction**” is also common. As illustrated in management cybernetics, the management components are in perpetual motion within a closed loop. Like many rivers that flow into the sea, yet the sea does not overflow. Therefore, to keep this momentum, there is a constant search for opportunity share with high worth and high value propositions.

### Power of Purpose

Included in Swami Prabhupada’s translation is a phrase, “*never consider yourself the cause of action*”, which is not featured in the other translations. While *svadharma* is implied, there are limitations to an individual’s effort as illustrated in Fig. 6.11 below.

The speed, rhythm and intensity of individual effort hinges on a plan-implement-review cycle. In a business, the strategy and structure can be planned formally. Although the corporate culture can have an explicit framework, it will over time be complicated by tacit links that can distort formal channels and standard procedures. To be effective, these official processes need to be reviewed regularly and audited with proper corporate governance.

During the implementation of a plan, interferences and misinterpretations can be barricaded through contracts and legal channels. However, the internal pilferages and collusion of own employees with external parties in order to cheat a business



Fig. 6.11 Limitations of individual action

are like cancer that need isolation before treatment. But, isolation can only happen after such deceptions are detected.

During the review stage, contingencies and redundancies can be catered for. But, not within immediate control are the alternative support like sleeping partners and entities of great political and financial influence. These can retard or even reverse the efforts involved.

### Superior Performance Re-Examined

Therefore the various efforts in performance are not always explicit. Superior performance includes strategic positioning in order to achieve an aspired purpose. For example, as illustrated in Table 6.3, when two out of three runs determine the winner in a horse race, the competition could be tactically arranged as follows:

Therefore, superior performance need not always involve the “best”. However for Team B to win, they would need competitive intelligence on the status of horses in Team A. In addition, disruptive innovations can also distort superior performance, like spiking a horse with drugs.

### Gita (2:47) During Industry 4.0

For superior performance in Team B, there can be six different levels as outlined in Table 6.4. However, during Industry 4.0, these location boundaries are porous. So the processes that advocate Gita (2:47) would also become universal.

Presently Uber ([www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)), Grab ([www.grab.com](http://www.grab.com)) and Didi ([www.xiaojukeji.com](http://www.xiaojukeji.com)) are disrupting the taxi and car rental industries globally. However, these do not have a “revolutionary” business model other than providing faster and cheaper services instead. A paradigm shift has yet to come. For example, an individual's need for transport can be predicted and a vehicle would always be available even before it is summoned through a bidding service. In essence, the demand would be properly anticipated and promptly serviced without any disruption to the lifestyle of the customer.

**Table 6.3** Superior performance in a horse race

	Team A	Team B	Result
Race 1	Best horse	Inferior horse	A wins
Race 2	Inferior horse	Average horse	B wins
Race 3	Average horse	Best horse	B wins
			Overall Winner = Team B

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tian\\_Ji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tian_Ji)

**Table 6.4** Superior performance levels for Gita (2:47)

Performance level	Industry 4.0	Examples on application of Gita (2:47)
Global	Breakdown of traditional boundaries due to transparency & connectivity in the internet of things	<u>International Yoga Day</u> – to showcase the inter-connectivity between man and nature as well as to enhance insights into individual “inner firmness of purpose”.
Region		<u>Africa</u> : Ban on the manufacture and use of plastic bags in Kenya, Nigeria and Cameroon. This ban is mandate for management decisiveness, to focus more on the delivery instead of the final deliverables.
Country		<u>France</u> : Since April 2016 ban on supermarkets to throw away unsold food, fruits and vegetables but to donate these to the needy instead. This ban encourages community engagement for more diversity and inclusiveness in local business.
Industry		Sharing “ <u>best practices</u> ”, although individual company’s secrets must remain secret.
Company		Like PepsiCo’s “ <u>Performance with Purpose</u> ”, Gita (2:47) enhances life-long learning in order to be “Fit for Purpose” and driven by individual “Power of Purpose”.
Individual Employee		Mindfulness with focus on company’s <u>core competence</u> .

Therefore during Industry 4.0, Gita (2:47) can perhaps be applied as follows:

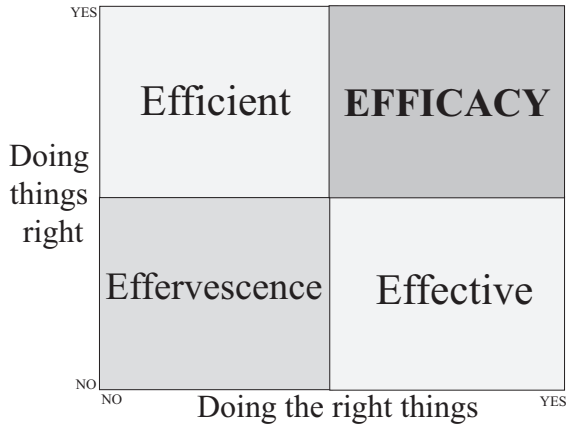
### Scenario 1: Change Without Changing

Like the revival of Arthur Anderson, a new team continues as professional accountants worldwide, perhaps with more stringent checks and controls. “Work as worship” (workship) takes a secular approach by focussing on human dignity and benefits to the local community where business is done.

### Scenario 2: Enhanced Interoperability

Artificial intelligence and robots will add a new dimension to the definition of work. There will be rights and obligations between man and thinking machines. Likewise, rest and recreation will have new economic values, especially for work-life balance. Many will have passive income like Tesla sheets on house roofs and car surfaces to generate electricity that can be sold into the main power grid. There will be a greater search for the purpose and meaning of work. The philosophical analysis of Gita (2:47) will be intensified.

**Fig. 6.12** Management efficacy. Adapted from Chow (2014, p. 4)



### Scenario 3: Blended Efficacy

Work done will not only be effective (doing the right things) but also efficient (doing things right), hence with efficacy (i.e. to be both effective and efficient) as illustrated in Fig. 6.12. Some work like taxi driving will become obsolete with driverless electric cars that can merge seamlessly with public transport on land, at sea and in the air.

The efficacy of work will be in closed communities like Haier’s ZZJYT, serving residents in smart cities. Gita (2:47) will have a global impact besides International Yoga Day that promotes life-long learning. There will be more social innovations to plug service gaps, especially among elderly residents and active-agers in smart city clusters.

### Analysis of Analysis

Business during Industry 4.0 would likely transit from Scenarios 1 to 2, and then to 3. The transition from one scenario to the next will depend on the cohesion between man and artificial intelligence (thinking machines). Just like the smooth flow in a “green wave” of traffic lights, there will be chaos when individual street lamps malfunction. Therefore, regular maintenance of these traffic lights is essential. So, even in Industry 4.0, The Bhagavad Gita will still remain an essential guide for managing relationships, in particular for creating and maintaining new perspectives to planning, performing, appreciating and appraising work.

There will be increased anxiety about losing or frequent changing of jobs as new technologies make radical innovations to the way we work and live. Unlike previous revolutions, first-movers or early adopters of new technologies will not have significant and sustainable advantages. New trends will change quickly due to a faster pace for improvements and the transparency in information exchanges. Therefore, superior performance is about being “fit for purpose”. So, Gita (2:47) would still be

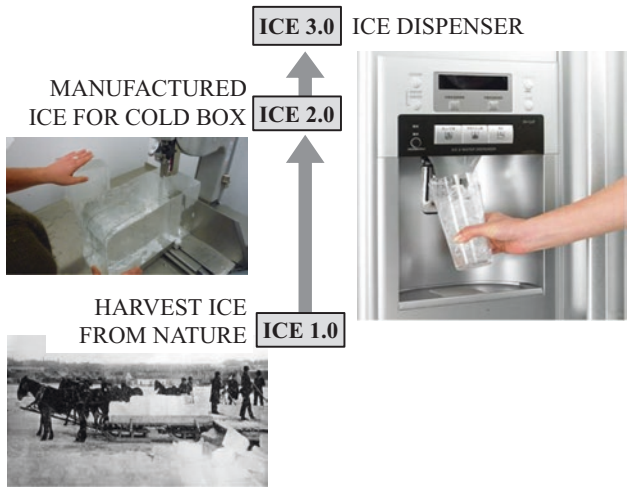


valid during Industry 4.0 because it focuses on the individual attitude instead of aptitude for work. The latter can be supported by life-long learning, hence ensuring continued employability.

To thrive in Industry 4.0, there is also a need to change the thinking mode. Conventional linear thinking is to project future developments based on past achievements. During Industry 4.0, the thinking must go into the exponential mode instead. For example, the linear development for a refrigerator is started by harvesting and storing ice from nature before ice-blocks can be manufactured and kept in closets to contain the cold. Today, refrigerators can dispense ice on-demand as illustrated in Fig. 6.13.

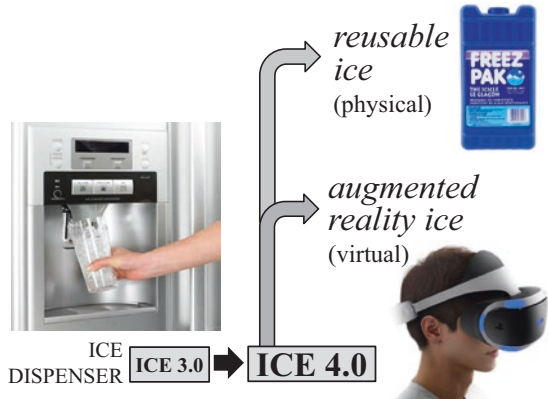
The exponential thinking mode leverages on similarities without being the same. As illustrated in Fig. 6.14, it is about harnessing the properties of ice without having the ice physically. Freeze packs can keep things cold and these packs can be recycled. The ice-cold feeling can also be manifested by virtual reality. Gita (2:47) can reinforce this “power of purpose” due to continuous commitment to desireless action.

Franchising is another example. The linear thinking lies in direct benefits from sale of items as well as royalties from established processes. The exponential mode of thinking will include forward and backward integrations in the supply chain as well as to co-operate with others in the industry cluster in order to expand the outreach and impact of the franchise. This will include finance, branding and social media marketing to jumpstart new franchise options and to deliver directly to individual customers on-demand with the help digital printing based on tested and established recipes.



**Fig. 6.13** Linear thinking

**Fig. 6.14** Exponential thinking



### Part C: Limitations of Findings

This analysis has extended The Bhagavad Gita from an individual level to business perspectives at local, regional and global levels. As explained in Chapter 15, reference to Krishna (*KRSNA*) is necessary for the study of The Bhagavad Gita. Therefore this analysis on Gita (2:47) is actually incomplete without taking into consideration *Srimad Bhagavata*, also known as *Bhagavata Purana* or *Srimad Bhagavata Maha Purana* that explains the life of Krishna in twelve *skandhas* (books).

In addition, the study of Bhagavad Gita would usually be preceded by *Gita Dhyanam* which has nine *shlokas* (verses). Links, if any, between Gita (2:47) and *Gita Dhyanam* have been neglected.

Although many business examples have been highlighted, none have officially included or publicly acknowledged The Bhagavad Gita in their operations.

In addition, although superior performance is attributed to principles in DARE, namely **d**ifferent, **a**nticipate, **r**elevant and **e**ver-ready, the links among these four components (e.g. the weightage of each component that contribute to optimal result) and their interactions (like the need for precursors or catalysts) are not discussed with reference to Industry 4.0.

In business, every person has a position, specifying the person’s role in an organisation. There is a distinction between the “Self” as a person (e.g. an engineer) and the “Self” of a position (e.g. chairman presiding a meeting). Doing what needs to be done, e.g. to provide technical inputs as a professional engineer, is different from getting a second opinion on the same matter as the chairman at a discussion. Gita (2:47) can be applied to both situations. Therefore, another shortcoming of this analysis is the lack of differentiation between person and position.

Although the business components in Gita (2:47) have been identified, there is no investigation into the inter-relationships among these components, e.g. “duty/work” with business vision/mission, “fruit” with benefit(s) to local communities, and individual/corporate “inaction” with opportunity share.

## Conclusion

The Bhagavad Gita is too catholic to be confined to only one philosophical doctrine or a religious orientation. (President Sri Ramakrishna Math Mylapore, 2008, p. 9.) The key difference between “action in inaction” and “inaction in action” is in self-realisation. The former goes with the flow while the latter flows on the go.

The Bhagavad Gita is about the spirituality of relationships. The devotion to *KRSNA* can be applied to business as upholding of human dignity and the respect for individual freedom. For Gita (2:47), at the individual level it refers to mindfulness with focus on the core competence of a business. At the corporate level, the local communities are engaged to benefit from a business activity. At the global level, Gita (2:47) is a gift from ancient India to rekindle the harmony between man and nature.

Therefore, applied to Industry 4.0, there will be a seamless transition from an apparent no-change into enhanced interoperability between man and machines, until the work done is a paradigm shift to be both effective and efficient, hence with efficacy.

While superior performance is about being “fit for purpose”, Industry 4.0 thrives on the “power of purpose”. The spirituality of “work as worship” will be elevated by exponential thinking to form competence networks beyond national boundaries. In upholding human dignity and the respect for individual freedom, ordinary work will be transformed into extraordinary performances. In essence, minding a business is a business of the mind.

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## Summary

- The links between Arjuna and Krishna in The Bhagavad Gita are illustrated graphically by circles and an arrow (Fig. 6.1). This model can be adapted for modern business (Fig. 6.2) and further amplified by a triangle (Fig. 6.3) to showcase the various zones depicting corporate relationships, resilience, reserves and resolution (Fig. 6.4).
- The essence of Gita (2:47) is graphically illustrated as “aware of being aware” for “fullness of the moment” (Fig. 6.5). Detachment is neither denial nor apathy, but the complete immersion into an action (Fig. 6.6), elevating every task into a duty (Fig. 6.7). However, care should be taken to address opportunities and threats presented as *daivam* (Fig. 6.8).
- Application of Gita (2:47) during Industry 4.0 can evolve from an apparent no-change, to enhanced interoperability between man and machines, until the work done is a paradigm shift to become effective and efficient, hence with efficacy.
- The Bhagavad Gita, especially Gita (2:47) can help more research into the spirituality of work, in particular on the distinction between person and position, in upholding human dignity and the respect for individual freedom.
- Figure 6.15 consolidates the key features of this chapter:

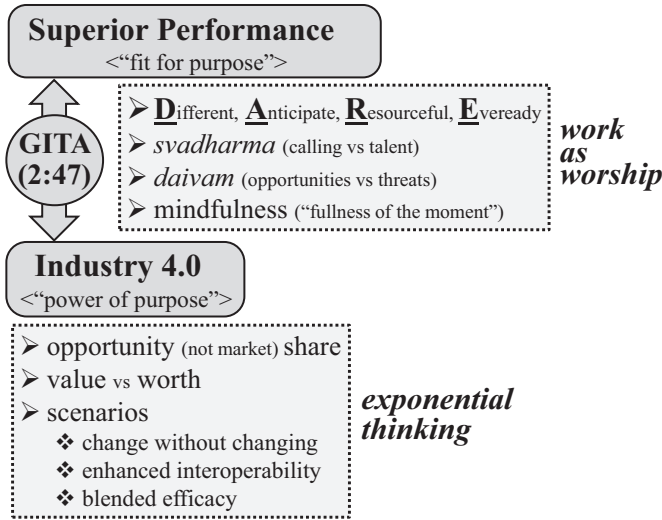


Fig. 6.15 Chapter synopsis illustrated

## Reflections

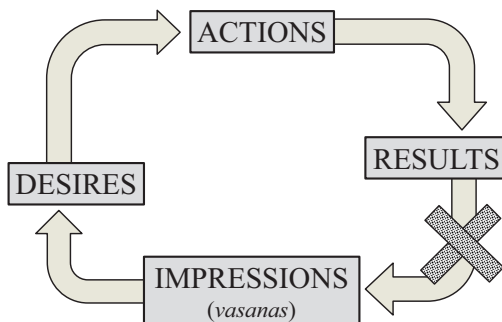
1. What are the key business insights that can be derived from the links between Gita (2:47) and Industry 4.0?
  - (a) Business is about relationships and every relationship is a choice.
    - The Gita, especially *shloka* (verse) 2:47, specifies that your choice is in action and not in the result. Focus on the process and results will follow.
  - (b) The VUCA in Industry 4.0 will change conventional best practices in business.
    - Processes can change, yet the attitude in the doing magnifies the work done. For example, the janitor believes that he is actually helping to put a man on Mars by cleaning toilets at NASA using robots.
  - (c) Busyness results from a disconnection (ignorance) between individual role and personal duty.
    - There is more haste and less speed in muddling through daily routines, without connecting the dots for a “big picture”. “*Aware of being aware*” (mindfulness) is a skill that can be developed to cherish the fullness of every moment by being attentive, accessible and appropriate.
  - (d) Industry 4.0 is about seamless inter-connectivity through the Internet-of-Things (IoT). Likewise, The Bhagavad Gita is also about inter-connectivity, however among living beings. Every creature and feature is interlinked in Universal Consciousness. For example, a holy man meditating in his cave can actually personally feel the back pain of a distant farmer who has toiled the entire hot day to plant his rice. In essence, everyone is with everyone, and

is actually part of Universal Oneness. Therefore, business is more than a marketplace to merely satisfy supply and demand.

- To remain relevant, every business has to be DARE, viz. **d**ifferent, **a**nticipate demand ahead of time, **r**esourceful and **e**ver-ready. This is driven by the “power of purpose” which is expressed in Gita (2:47) as “inaction in action”. There is always calmness of mind, never disturbed by whatever that happens, with a focussed steadiness on the process and not on distracted by results.
2. Since everyone has a specific role (*svadharmā*) in society, then everything is preordained. Therefore, no one can change his own destiny. Discuss.
- (a) The roles in Hindu society are basically specified in *varna* and *ashrama*.
- *Varna* is specified in *Rigveda*. People in a society are divided into four categories to perform functions like parts of a body:
    - *Brahmins* (head): priests, scholars and teachers.
    - *Kshatriyas* (hands): rulers, warriors and administrators.
    - *Vaishyas* (body): farmers and merchants.
    - *Shudras* (legs): labourers and service providers.
 However, these categories have been politically abused in India to include a new category called *dalits* or “untouchables” that perform the lowest and dirtiest type of work, like removal of rubbish, carcasses as well as cleaning of latrines and sewers. Mahatma Gandhi re-named this category as *harijans* (meaning “Children of God”). Since 2008 it is unconstitutional to use the term “*dalit*” in India.
  - Marriages and social circles in India today still conform to this caste system. However, individual professional development has gone beyond these constraints. The 11th President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (2002–2007) was a Muslim and a bachelor. The 10th President of India, Mr. K.R. Narayanan (1997–2002) was the first President of India from the “untouchable” caste. Since July 2017, Mr. Ram Nath Kovind is the present (14th) President and second President of India also from the “untouchable” caste.
  - *Ashrama* is the Hindu guide for individual fulfilment and personal development stages according to age:
    - *Brahmacharya*: student or bachelor stage in life, especially to learn about *dharma* (righteousness, morals and duties) and the practice of self-discipline. This stage starts with the Hindu ritual of *upanayana* and ends with *samavartana*. The former is a traditional rite of passage that marks the acceptance of a student by a guru and an individual’s entrance to a school in Hinduism. The latter is a ceremony that is associated with the end of formal education. This includes a ceremonial bath. Anyone who has completed this rite is considered a *idya-snataka vidya-snataka* (literally, bathed in knowledge, or showered with learning), denoting that one has crossed the “ocean of learning”.
    - *Grihastha*: householder in a marriage to raise a family, educate own children and to lead a family-centred life in society.

- *Vanaprastha*: retirement stage, to handover household responsibilities to the next generation and take on an advisory role, gradually withdrawing from the world.
  - *Sannyasa*: renunciation of all material desires and prejudices that can be undertaken anytime. Anyone can enter this stage after completing the *Brahmacharya* stage of life.
- (b) An individual's identity changes are outlined in *ashrama*. Basically, every identity has two parts. One is that which is perceived by others and another is that which has been achieved according to official records.
- Every **perception** has both a place and a position concurrently. As place, in examples for person: like being a son to parents, brother to siblings, husband and father in own family. On the other hand, as examples within an organisation: as a subsidiary based on ownership of shareholders, contribution to a supply chain, or partnership in a consortium. As position, in examples for person: like project engineer as well as union leader at workplace, or a junior manager whose father owns the entire business. As example in organisation: geographic location in global operations, contribution to the profitability of a conglomerate, or ranking in the industry according to paid-up capital or number of employees.
  - The identity **achieved** is in reputation (e.g. personal stories circulated in social media, brand-recognition or brand-retention by repeated customers), and accolades (e.g. awards like best student or top entrepreneur or certification as Singapore-government-approved plumber or ISO 9001 in quality management).
- (c) The role that a person plays in society is usually based on certifications achieved. However, a person's reputation may displace such achievements. For example, a medical doctor has been fined in a local Court of Law due to negligence proven by his patient. Therefore this damage to reputation can be worse than death (Gita, 2:34). So, even when this person's calling is in medicine, circumstances dictate that he has to practice medicine at a different location instead.
- (d) *Svadharm*a cannot be developed but has to be discovered personally. This "inner calling" is an attribute or personal inclination according to one's own particular physical, mental and emotional nature which in-turn determines an individual's skills and aptitudes. For example, an astute sense of taste can result in becoming a chef, a food critic, a dietician or a profession not related to food yet as a hobby cook instead.
- (e) Therefore, *svadharm*a does not preordain an individual's occupation but can influence performance instead.
3. Gita (2:47) is a guide to purity of intentions. Discuss.
- (a) According to Param Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, of the Chinmaya Mission, there is an endless chain or "bondage of action" in desires that prompt actions which bring results that in-turn create deeper or more new impressions called *vasanas* as illustrated in Fig. 6.16.

**Fig. 6.16** Bondage of action



These accumulate as subconscious inclinations that influence future desires, actions and results.

By adopting purity of intentions in the practice of Gita (2:47), the existing impressions get exhausted. No new *vasanas* are created, thus reducing the pressure of impressions and the mind becomes free for higher pursuits.

- So, when actions are done without likes or dislikes or selfish motives, and without insisting on results, the doer remains calm and collected while doing.
- (b) Life-goals in the Hindu art of living are expressed in *purushartha*, viz.
- *Dharma*—righteousness, morality and duties.
  - *Artha*—wealth and income to secure livelihood.
  - *Kama*—pleasure, relationships, emotions.
  - *Moksha*—liberation, self-realisation, freedom.

*Dharma* is considered the most essential goal and *moksha* is the ultimate goal for everyone. To some, like devotees of ISKCON, International Society of Krishna Consciousness, *bhakti* (devotion) is considered a fifth *purushartha*.

- Therefore, it is intention that gives meaning to the spirituality of work. You are what you do and not do what you say you will do. When the intention is good, the heart is pure, there is a feeling of harmony and blissful peace.
  - Although *purushartha* provides the direction and focus for individual intentions, it is the attitude in the execution that induces the inner calm and a steady outward composure.
- (c) The Hindu concept of *karma* is complex and difficult to define. The English language lacks appropriate vocabulary to fully translate concepts from Sanskrit directly. For example, “bad” is not merely “not good” (with malice) but it can be “insufficient of good” (not ready) or “awaiting to be good” (in transit or in transformation). Basically the Law of Karma states that good intent and good deeds contribute to good *karma* and future happiness, while bad intent and bad deeds contribute to bad *karma* and future suffering. This law is further complicated by the concept of reincarnation that *karma* can be

accumulated to affect the next and future lives. So good or bad deeds are like boomerangs that return to an individual sooner or later.

- Based on the concept of *karma*, the “detachment” as advocated in Gita (2:47) would have to embrace good intentions and good deeds. So the focus on the doing is to do good and to do well.
- This act will excel since the reason for doing (the purpose) is unified with intuition (inner drive), i.e. to be “aware of being aware”, thus thriving on the “fullness of every moment”.

4. Can Gita (2:47) be executed without allegiance to Lord Krishna?

- (a) Lord Krishna is an avatar of *Vishnu*, the Hindu God of Protection and Preservation. He is part of the Hindu *Trimurti* that includes *Brahma*, the Creator and *Siva*, the Destroyer. These concepts of “God” contain various aspects of the Divine. Yet in Hinduism, “God” is already inside everyone and everyone is part of “God”. Associating oneself with a personal “God” (i.e. as devotees to Vishnu or Siva) is like having glasses to see better or audio-aids to hear better. Allegiance would help a person to better focus on individual piety and to foster closer networks with the like-minded.
- (b) Similar concepts on the “sanctification of work” as detailed in Gita (2:47) are in the Catholic faith as advocated by Saint Josemaria Escriva ([www.opusdei.org](http://www.opusdei.org)) and in the Taoist concept of Wu Wei (translated as “non-doing”). These concepts are similar but not exactly the same.
- (c) Therefore *nishkama karma* can be executed without knowing Krishna, although knowledge of Krishna would add greater depth and appreciation for such a practice.

5. Knowing Gita (2:47) and not practising it is a sin. Comment.

- (a) The Vedanta (Hindu philosophy) proposes no sin or sinner. There is no God to be afraid of since He is actually within everyone and with everyone. However, Vedanta recognises error. And the greatest error is to be weak, i.e. to think of oneself as a miserable creature that is powerless and useless.
- (b) So, it is not God that is worshipped but the authority that claims to speak in His name. Sin becomes disobedience to authority and not a violation of integrity.
- (c) Knowing Gita (2:47) and not practicing it could mean that the doer is cautious, perhaps not to be disadvantaged as the first-mover. Therefore, it is “wait-and-see” before committing to action. On the other hand, due to other more pressing issues or sheer oversight, Gita (2:47) is neglected.
- (d) Based on Fig. 6.17, the reasons for not doing can also include:
  - Ignorance: Not knowing that one does not know (an unknown unknown).
  - Denial: To reject the concept knowingly and willingly.
  - Apathy: Not bothered or totally indifferent to the concept for whatever reasons that are not relevant for discussion here.
- (e) Besides “knowing and not doing”, there is “doing without knowing” as illustrated in the bottom right quadrant of Fig. 6.17. This is about blind faith or sheer obedience and compliance without question. Such actions could be automated like the technical maintenance of a lift based on time schedule instead



**Fig. 6.17** Knowing & doing

	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ cautious</li> <li>➤ negligent</li> </ul>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">             purity of intentions           </div>
<b>KNOW</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ignorance</li> <li>➤ denial</li> <li>➤ apathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ faith</li> <li>➤ obedience</li> </ul>
	NO	NO	YES

**DO**

of actual wear and tear resulting from frequency of use. This doing (lift maintenance) according to schedule is basically “to do for the sake of doing”.

- (f) Lastly, there are situations of knowing Gita (2:47) and doing it, yet incompletely or inappropriately. For example, the equanimity of action is linked to a personal mortification like fasting from food or other pleasures. Therefore, the purity of intention in the doing is vital in order to sustain this “inaction in action”.

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# Bhagvad Gita Approach to Stress Mitigation and Holistic Well-Being

# 7

Radha R. Sharma and Ronak Batra

## The Bhagvad Gita (BG)

Bhagvad Gita forms a part of epic *Mahabharat*, one of the Sanskrit epics of ancient India composed by Vyasa “after the very early Vedic period” (Datta, *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature (Volume 2 (Devraj to Jyoti, 2006))*. BG is the essence of Hindu philosophy which is considered to be among the oldest schools of philosophy (Flood, 1996) the exact origins of which are difficult to trace, but are believed to be predated by centuries of oral tradition (Avari, 2007; Bryant, 2001). The Hindu philosophy relies on preachings of the BG (literally meaning “The Song of the God or of the Divine One”) which is the Sanskrit text from the epic Mahabharata (Johnsen, 2001). The Mahabharata, specifically its section on *Bhishma Parva*, describes the philosophy of practicing detachment from the consequences of one’s actions. Several other important philosophical concepts of the BG include the concept of *Ishvara* (the Supreme Controller), *Jiva* (the soul), *Prakrti* (matter/nature), *Karma* (action) and *Kala* (time).

The content of BG is the dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, a *Kshatriya* (warrior) prince in exile, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra as a sermon for *Dharam Yudh* (the war of righteousness). In verse 17 of Chapter 18, Krishna put forth the idea of enlightenment that can be achieved only after one has stopped identifying with one’s ego, which is temporal attached to the senses (Mukundananda, 2013). Desires, once aroused but not fulfilled, cause stress and sufferings to people; hence Krishna advocated that the mind needs to be disciplined and engaged in some form of higher level activity, of a higher plane. Thus, in order to achieve the higher plane or transcendence, the BG suggests three paths (*Bhakti, Gyan and Karma Yoga*) that can take a human being towards the *Supreme*.

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BG has had major ideological influence in the field of management and leadership (Sharma, 1999). As per a report in Bloomberg's subsidiary Business Week, BG has been recognized as an oriental text of seminal value because its teachings are embraced by the world at large (Rajghatta, 2006).

## **Bhagvad Gita and Western Philosophy: A Comparative Perspective**

BG, a source towards spiritual knowledge, highlights the role of faith and love of the Supreme (God) which is similar to the ancient western religious writings on wisdom including the Bible (Assmann, 1994). The teachings of BG have universal appeal hence it has been widely read and accepted all over the world. It is similar to some of the classical texts in other religions as well since they transcend geographic and cultural boundaries. Considering the multiple facets of BG and its relevance to the modern lifestyle, extensive work has been done by several Indian scholars, viz., Munshi (1962), Vivekananda (2003), and Western scholars including Steiner (2007).

BG has been used across the globe as it has been translated into 75 languages worldwide; and in English alone there are 300 translations (Davis, 2015). Because of its teachings of selfless work and faith in the divine power and interconnectedness, it may be argued that the BG exemplifies the cultural psychology of traditional India (Jeste & Vahia, 2008). Further its teachings are rooted in theosophical tradition, anchored in an ancient system of values, attitudes, and behavior that may be at variance with the ethos of the modern life and that of the western culture. Also, there are some interesting differences between ancient Hindu philosophy and modern western view of wisdom. BG emphasizes on control over desires and senses, and avoidance of materialistic pleasure by renouncing materialism and complete faith in the Supreme. Sacrifice for one's duty, with a sense self-contentment resulting from fulfilment of one's responsibilities, is considered superior to sacrifice for obtaining personal rewards. This is in contrast to the individualistic culture of the west where more emphasis is given on personal and emotional well-being (Brugman, 2006). Comparing the two perspectives Takahashi (2000) posits that the eastern philosophy assigns low value to the materialism whereas western perspective focuses on personal well-being.

The understanding of BG, known as *Bhagvada Gyan*, is a journey of an individual from *tamas* to *rajas* and finally towards *sattva* where an individual accepts *yoga* (alignment with the Supreme) as a way of life. At this stage begins the journey of an individual towards selecting the *Yoga* (*Karma*, *Jnana* and *Bhakti*) When an individual evolves from *tamas* to *sattva*, he starts treading on the path of *Karma Yoga* (Agarwalla et al. 2015). The domains covered by BG overlap with a number of modern theories of wisdom including emotional regulation, and appropriate action in the face of uncertainty, personal well-being, helping common good (Jeste & Vahia, 2008).

## Stress Mitigation Through Bhagvad Gita

The term “stress” was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change” (Selye, 1973). His concept of general adaptation syndrome explains how stress, over a period of time, generates hormonal changes which may cause ulcers, high blood pressure, kidney problems, and numerous physical reactions (Selye, 1973).

The Indian philosophical approach describes stress as a *klesha*, i.e. a manifestation state where unfulfilled worldly desires cause *Dukh* as the individual develops attachment with the objects of pleasure creating strong desire to possess them. If the fulfilment of the desired objects is denied, it leads to anger, frustration and may cause depression and emotional exhaustion. However, if a desire is fulfilled, it develops increased demand for the same thus a person gets into a vicious cycle. This affliction results in the five *kleshas*: *Avidya* (ignorance), *Asmita* (egoism), *Raga* (cravings, strong likes and attractions), *Dwesh* (aversions and dislikes), *Abhinivesha* (clinging to life or strong desire for life) (Patanjali Yoga Sutra, 2018b, 2.4–2.9).

The affliction also results in physical symptoms, such as the flow of breath and hyper tension. According to Patanjali the problems that accompany the obstacles to *samadhi* (*vikshepa* in 1.29), include a list of illnesses related to exhalation and inhalation, *shvasa* and *prashvasa* (Parker, 2017). The state of “*Dukha*” can be equated with non-self-actualization state of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1971).

According to Bhagvad Gita the source of stress can also be explained through the concept of “*Karma*” or deeds which influence the outcomes of various actions in one’s life. It is the bad *Karma* or “*dush Karma*” which adds up to *dukha*. Therefore, stress or *dukha* occurs because of a conflict between the natural pull of the *ultimate goal* and forces generated by the involvement with worldly affairs (*klesha*) and the reactions. It also occurs because an individual has to face the consequences of his bad deeds (*dush karma*) which produce stress either in form of increased attachment to worldly things and the fear and anxiety associated with these or in the form of sufferings and miseries. Based on the *karma* (actions) rooted in *klesh-a* (sufferings/distress) people go through present and future experiences of life (Patanjali Yoga Sutra, 2018a, 2.3, 2.12); and this cycle continues until ‘*moksha*’ is achieved. This will be discussed in detail later.

According to BG levels of wisdom vary among individuals but wisdom can be acquired; yogi has the highest level of wisdom. Diverse views can be observed among western scholars in terms of the relative prevalence of wisdom and wise persons. Baltes and Staudinger (2000) considered wisdom as a rare “utopian” trait, whereas Baltes and Smith (1990) opine that it is not a common trait, but different levels of wisdom can be found in people, based on their life experiences and social roles. According to BG Prakriti or nature is composed of the three *gunas* which are tendencies or modes of operation. *Gunas* is a Sanskrit term which implies attribute, virtue or quality. These levels are termed as *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. The *gunas* are the most subtle qualities and the energies through which not only the surface mind, but our deeper consciousness of an individual operates. The journey of an individual starts from experiencing *tamas* (substance, creates inertia), it moves to *rajas* (energy

causes agitation, egoism, excitement and imbalance). *Sattva* (harmony, awareness, clarity) is the ultimate position from where an individual's journey towards *Yoga* begins. From here onwards, it is the choice of the individual whether he wants to choose the path of *Karma Yoga* (selfless work), *Bhakti* (spirituality) or *Jnana Yoga* (knowledge). The role of experience is highlighted, as experience can help one progress to a higher state of wisdom. It is imperative to understand the elements of wisdom from the teachings of BG which lead to living a stress free life and developing the highest potential of an individual towards mental well-being. Since emotional well-being is a universally desired state, the teachings of BG have wide acceptance not only in the academic world but also in the business world.

### **Context of Bhagvad Gita as an Allegory to Human Existence**

BG offers the essence of living i.e. living without desires (detachment) and walking on the path of *karma*. When faced with the stress and dilemma of fighting one's own kin at the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna had to be reminded of his duty as a warrior and that it was a part of his *dharma* to fight whether he liked it or not. He had to overcome his internal struggle and mental/emotional stress that was disturbing and distracting him from walking on the path of *karma* and following his *dharma*. *Dharma* implies "law of the universe," "social and religious rules," and/or one's own individual mission or purpose (BG, 18.47). A lot of internal conflict and stress can be taken care of if one follows the right path, the path of *dharma*.

Arjuna's battle in *Mahabharata* was with his kinsmen but metaphorically or symbolically was a battle between *svadharma* (one's own duty/obligations) and *adharma* (injustice). There, Arjuna's *svadharma* as a *Kshatriya* (warrior) was to engage in a just war to protect his people and rights but he was torn between his duty as a warrior and feelings for his kinsmen. This kind of stress is a classic example of choosing between the ethics and values. According to BG when there is mental stress and conflict between two *dharmas* the way out is follow the righteous path, as living by the conscience transcends one to higher values.

### **BG Perspective on Desires and Anchoring with Cognition, Emotion and Behaviour**

The verse 62 of Chapter 2 in BG elaborates on how anger develops and manifests in human behavior (Mukundananda, 2013). It starts with a thought towards an object or a subject and develops an attachment to it. This attachment then manifests as a desire for the object or subject; and non fulfilment of the desire leads to anger. Frequent experience and manifestation of anger in high intensity spoils interpersonal relations and causes interpersonal stress in social and organizational situations.

The desires which are fulfilled also do not guarantee happiness because once a desire is fulfilled, it leads to another thought in the mind, resulting in another attachment and then another desire. BG posits that a desire multiplies upon fulfilment. Therefore, all desires end in the state of unhappiness and resentment, even if some may cause happiness for brief moments. In order to evade the unhappiness caused by the endless cycle of desires, the BG advocates practicing *karma yoga*. It helps to break the chain of desires and the subsequent unhappiness caused by them as *karma yoga* helps to focus only on the action undertaken by the individual without being

desirous of the reward of that action. Further, *manan* or self-reflection and *chintan* or contemplation aid in the process of getting rid of the unhappiness generated through desires. Individuals can understand how their mind functions with respect to the worldly elements by reflecting upon their desires and subsequent consequences of those desires. This can lead the individuals to reason with their mind and become aware of the futility of the having desires and their insatiable and recurring nature. Hence, these two factors of self-reflection and contemplation become catalysts in the adoption of *karma yoga*, for an individual and successive happiness thereafter (Bhawuk, 2008).

## BG on Self Realization

Self-realization is the ultimate goal of human life as per the Indian spiritual philosophy. *Karma yoga*, therefore, is described by BG as the best method to attain self-realisation. *Karma yoga* results in a peaceful state of mind by not longing for the fruits of one's labour, and is described as the *sthitaprajña* (equanimity) state. It is the state of level-headedness where a person's behaviour is not affected by cognition and emotion. This state of level-headedness or equanimity is described in Chapter 2 of BG. In this state the individual gives up all the desires and is content with his/her own *atman* (inner self). Such an individual is free from all the emotions such as attachment, fear, disappointment, anger, and does not get affected by the joys, sorrows or stresses that he/she encounters. Thus, BG describes the possibility of such a metaphysical state which can be achieved through the path of *karma yoga*. In simpler words, individuals can engage in their duties and obligations of this world (behaviour) and can still move beyond cognition and emotion; simply by disconnecting themselves from the fruits of their actions and desires. This will reduce stress and prevent burnout (Sharma & Cooper, 2017)

## BG's Contribution to Positive Psychology and Well-Being

Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "*When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies.....*" (Koslowski, 2001)

The science behind positive psychology is concerned with knowledge of and facilitation of positive virtues like happiness, creativity, hope, optimism and resilience so as to enhance the psychological and subjective well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000b). It is about understanding the role of positive strengths of an individual as well as positives of one's societal systems and how they promote overall well-being. Psychological well-being is realised when one achieves one's full psychological potential and it increases with age and experience, maturity, stability via education and consciousness. Individuals like to get over stress and experience well-being, therefore, the concept of well-being has been receiving increasing attention of scholars and practitioners for years, however, there is no universally accepted definition of mental well-being so far. In the western perspective "a

dynamic state of well-being is characterized by a physical and mental potential, which satisfies the demands of life commensurate with age, culture and personal responsibility” (Bircher, 2005). However, in the Indian context the conceptualization of well-being is very different. It is achieved through minimization, restraint, and detachment from physical need fulfilment rather than maximization, indulgence, and striving for need fulfilment (Sharma, 2011).

BG encapsulates some concepts such as *samatva*, *sattva*, and principle of illumination of *sattva* which can contribute to well-being and may finally lead to a state of bliss or ‘*Ananda*’. *Ananda* refers to a state of consciousness, characterized by positive feeling, which is not dependent on any object or events of external reality (Goparaj & Sharma, 2011). The perspectives of stress and well-being with *Sankhya* philosophy and approaches to mitigating stress with Patanjali’s *yogasutra* especially *ashtāṅga yoga* have been discussed in detail by Sharma and Cooper (2017).

Though there are numerous beliefs in the Indian philosophy that provide the basics for living life, three beliefs are known to be fundamental to the Indian way of existence are *karma*, *atma* and *mukti* (Dasgupta, 1991, p. 71). According to the *karma* theory all performed actions will result in joy or sorrow for the doer in the future depending on the nature of those actions. Second belief is about the existence of an eternal entity referred to as *atma* or soul, that is our truest and purest form as it is uncorrupted by the impurities of this world. The third belief is that of *mukti* or salvation. Actions are our way of participating in this endless cycle of birth and death and therefore, freeing oneself from performing actions or performing actions which are not fuelled by any desire of the reward, can propel us into *salvation*. According to BG the nature of actions will determine one’s freedom from the perpetual cycle of birth and death. BG is hence, built upon these three fundamentals of Indian philosophy. However, the Indian philosophy leaves room for multiple paths that can be taken by individuals towards achieving this *mukti* from birth and death, depending upon the temperament of the individuals (Vivekananda, 1999).

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## BG and Karma Perspective of Work

*na hi kaśchit kṣhaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhatyakarma-kṛitkāryate hyavaśhaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛiti-jair guṇaiḥ* (BG, 3.5)

*Translation: ‘There is no one who can remain without action even for a moment. Indeed, all beings are compelled to act by their qualities born of material nature (the three guṇas).’* (Mukundananda, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e)

Explaining the verse Swami Mukundananda (2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e) posits that at any given time humans are involved in some action which are governed by innate qualities and nature. In the Indian context, the culture inherently inculcates the value of work in relation to all the roles people undertake throughout their life (Sinha, 2000, p. 19). More significant is that people give precedence to duties over rights (Sinha, 1997) thus it can be said that the concept of work is rooted in culture. With deep dive into spiritual texts we find a colloquial equivalent of action or work in the word *karma*. The value of *karma* is truly highlighted in BG



which deems it to be a way for a human to attain *Moksha* (salvation). In other words, it could be inferred that work has the innate ability to make people strive for liberation from mortal bondages. *Karma*, as a terminology, has its genesis in the word *Kri* which encapsulates activities (either physical or mental) coupled with an individual's speech. Tilak (2000) in his transcribed version of BG has classified *Karma* in terms of skillset into three dimensions. These are:

- (a) Ability to accomplish action (BG, 2.50)
- (b) "Equability of mind towards outcomes of actions" (BG, 2.48)
- (c) As a *modus operandi* to discard the essence of attachment (BG, 2.50)

As far as the rationale of ownership is concerned, individuals are responsible for their own *karma* as they are beings endowed with ability to make their own choices (Nicholson, 1985).

It is important to place the context of motivation in here. The idea of motivation is important because it propels us to do something in the first place. There are two types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation drives us for action because of the expected outcomes. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, drives us to perform the activities simply because we like them. Intrinsic motivation is more personal and can be developed by an individual by finding somewhat challenging tasks or activities matching their capabilities or simply because these satisfy them.

Owning responsibility is of paramount importance as the consequences of *Karma* would be our own doing. A perusal of translation of BG by Tilak's (Chap. 2, p. 47) reveals channelizing the *karma* in serving the fellow beings would be a good form of discharging responsibility towards others. BG also the emphasis is on one's control over the state of mind. Events which transpire over one's lifetime are bound to generate certain emotions which would range from happiness to pain. While the former might make one yearn for more of that state while latter might be catalyst in leading to experiences deviating one from their *karma*. These states of desires can lead to an endless spiral unless one of the following is exercised via the mode of spiritual intervention.

- (a) repudiation of actions which lead to the desires.
- (b) Maintaining a *tathastha* stance (neutral) towards emotions (Tilak, 1915/2000).

Thus, control over state of mind is essential to ensure that states of misery or happiness are received with an equanimity. According to Vivekananda (1999) a doer is one who is able to relax while indulging in a demanding activity, and is able to engage mentally during the state of relaxation. Together with the doctrine of salvation, cause and effect propel human beings to take responsible actions and live a more enlightened life, while serving those in need.

It is to be noted BG only describes the duties of a *Karma yogi* and not the consequences thereof due to one's dutifulness. For a *Karma yogi*, who is focused on *karma*, BG (Radhakrishnan, 1948/1993) predicts a lot of positive results such as: the end of his/her sorrows, peace, happiness, satisfaction and bliss.

## Karma Yoga Links with Positive Psychology

In BG, Krishna says that one's *karma* or duty is the only thing within one's control, not its outcome/result. To quote:

“*Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshukadachana*” (BG, 2.47)

*Translation: ‘You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.’* (Mukundananda, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e)

BG advocates to be more conscious of one's actions and act with right intentions, to have peace of mind in this process. It is important to note that based on virtue all actions and all work performed bear some fruit which may be positive or negative but that should not dissuade individuals from the karma. This is where positive psychology links are found with karma yoga. Positive Psychology is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a).

Another major message imparted by Krishna in BG was the philosophy of being *present, here and now, and focus in the present* and not worry about the future. We can always plan for the future because the plan is being sought in the present but what will happen in the future is not in our control.

*āvṛitaṁ jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā  
kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya duṣhpūreṇānalena cha* (BG, 3.39)

*Translation: ‘The knowledge of even the most discerning gets covered by this perpetual enemy in the form of insatiable desire, which is never satisfied and burns like fire, O son of Kunti.’* (Mukundananda, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e)

The verse implies that wisdom is a virtue which is gauged by a lack of extreme sentiments of either positive or negative in nature which should be embraced with equanimity. Renunciation of such emotions while engaged in *Karma* is the true path. (Mukundananda, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e)

*Karma yoga* is getting immersed in one's work. It arises out of one's intrinsic motivation which then leads to concentration and pleasure is found in the very act of performing the work. This is what is referred to as ‘flow’; it has the potential of leading an individual to salvation.

## Multiple Facets of Karma Yoga

Absorption and service consciousness were found to be the major dimensions with respect to *karma yoga* (Rastogi & Pati, 2015). These are elaborated in the following paragraphs.

**Absorption.** This first dimension of *karma yoga* i.e. absorption, has been also referred to as the ‘flow’ (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Schaufeli, Salanova,

Gonza'lez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002); which is described as the state in which an individual has many positive characteristics. Since absorption has also been described as a state marked by complete engrossment in the actions undertaken (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonza'lez-Roma & Bakker, 2002); one of the positive characteristics experienced by the individual is focused attention or unparalleled concentration. It gets manifested into other positive characteristics like an individual has clarity of mind and is also likely to feel harmony between mind-body; all leading to a fundamental sense of enjoyment with respect to one's work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) addresses absorption as a state where individuals lose awareness about one's self due to being immersed in the activities at hand. It is almost a transcendental experience to be fully present in the moment of the activity and not pay attention to even the time aspect. This explains why individuals who are highly absorbed mentally in the work that they perform tend to 'forget' or become unaware of their surroundings and are rendered unaffected by any other environmental stimuli (Kreutz, Ott, Teichmann, Osawa, & Dieter, 2008). It is important to remember that with respect to absorption, it is not always an internally driven phenomenon where the object of focus is internal like a memory but can also be driven by an external stimulus like nature (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974).

To attain 'absorption' following moral principle is a precondition along with engagement in spiritual endeavour of enlightening others about the spiritual path (Sharma, 2008). Attaining Samadhi (ecstasy) is the epitome of such efforts, for in such a state, a true disciple is able to overcome the hurdles which may make him prone to indecorous conduct (Yogananda, 2002). In order to achieve such a state, one needs to be in an 'unattached' mode; Aurobindo suggested "*Internal Yoga*". One of the major corollaries of it is 'Emotional Development' which via yoga facilitates the release of '*granthis*' (knots) of energy tied down. (Sharma & Cooper, 2017). With the unentangled senses, a human being might be able to perform the designated duties (Yogananda, 2002).

**Service Consciousness.** The second major dimension of *Karma Yoga* is service consciousness. It can be defined as being compassionate and empathetic to the sufferings of mankind and identifying the feeling of oneness with fellow beings in recognising that the feelings of pain and misery are common to all; and allowing oneself to be open to provide help and comfort of any kind possible (Badrinath, 2006). The feeling of compassion must be followed with being content (Vivekananda, 1896) as one is diligently working towards serving others for their welfare instead of pursuing personal ambitions (Yogananda, 2002). It is a state where one is driven 'not to think about ourselves... but to live for the good of all' (Easwaran, 1997, 1999). This is wherefrom individuals can derive meaningfulness of the work they do (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003). Service consciousness arises out of a deep conviction that all the different living beings in our universe are interconnected as they come from one source of higher power (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). This gives rise to a sense of responsibility towards taking care of fellow beings and dedicatedly work towards their welfare.

Hannah, Jennings, Bluhm, Peng, and Schaubroeck (2014) describe service consciousness to be largely similar in idea to duty orientation which is also concerned with serving other members of a group while sacrificing one's personal interests in order to help accomplish the objectives of the group. However, one's understanding with respect to what an individual considers his/her 'group' will vary from person to person. For some, it is only limited to one's family primarily, while some may also include one's friends, immediate relatives, one's countrymen to be a part of one's group and, therefore, may extend this service orientation towards them (Mulla & Krishnan, 2006).

In order to imbibe the nuances of 'service consciousness' one should believe in philosophy of serving the fellow humans, for it is equivalent of serving God. One should curb the stream of expectations in terms of gaining something out of such service. To attain such a state, it is important to persist with selfless service while the thoughts of supreme deity encompass our psyche (Sivananda, 1995). "Transcendental Meditation" (TM) initiated by Brahmananda Saraswati (Williamson, 2010) can act as a facilitator in this regard. Through this it is possible for a person to reach a state of 'restful alertness'. A human mind's potential is boundless and TM allows a human mind to reach a state of 'transcendental awareness' (Pardasani, Sharma, & Bindlish, 2014; Sharma & Cooper, 2017). One should work without being bound by emotions which accompany our actions (Vivekananda, 1896).

## **Stress Management and Karma Yoga**

Stress is said to arise in situations where there is a marked difference between what the situation demands and what the person can deliver. It is no surprise that stress causes a lot of psychological illnesses such as acute stress disorder, various psychosomatic disorders and more. Stress induced due to work is commonly found to result in episodic depression, leading up to morbidity in relation to the community, cardiovascular disease (Sharma & Cooper, 2017).

This is why mind-body medicine in the form of meditation has become a popular way of dealing with workplace stress. It is important that stress should be managed in order to improve one's lifestyle. This trend of changing one's life for the better is the basis of positive psychology. The focus on the present and away from the worry of the future can be an enabling factor to reduce stress. Focus and concentration should be on the daily chores that individuals have to do rather than spend energy on worrying about the fruits or the results. Therefore, *Karma* yoga can act as a therapeutic methodology by which anxiety can be reduced and in turn, psychiatric and medical illnesses can be reduced too.

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## **Alternate to Karma Yoga: Jnanyoga (Path of Spiritual Knowledge)**

A person may also decide to take the path of *Jnan yoga*, which propagates the practice of renunciation of not only the fruit of actions but also the actions. With the renunciation of worldly agency, man allows his transcendent self to take over the senses and reaches the state of a consciousness which is unhappy (Aurobindo, 1942).

This *Eternal Self* is the ultimate source of origin for all life and nature, “himself all energies and... all things and all beings”. One may also address it as *Master Nature*. It is known as the *Supreme Self*, the highest form of *Purusha* that governs this worldly nature of *Prakriti* and the soul that we witness in all around us is only a partial manifestation of the *Divine Purusha*. (Aurobindo, 1942).

When man pays complete devotion to this *Supreme Self*, it does not stand for negating the knowledge he has attained or work he has done but instead, this devotion raises and invigorates his knowledge about the divine. And finally, he develops the realization that the ego-self is not the doer of actions but only an incarnation of the Supreme Self as *Prakriti*, who performs actions consciously yet disinterestedly. With this divine understanding of *Nature as Spirit*, comes the deeper understanding of the duality of one’s self; which is manifested at one level as lower form of *Maya* or the illusion of multiple phenomenon and at another level as *Prakriti*. It is a realization of being and existence that sets in motion the cyclical battle of that which exists and that which wishes to exist along with all that stands between the two. This is the struggle between the Self and the ego; of all that we have understood so far, the impersonal against the desirous will. This struggle helps the man to align himself with the divine more than ever in a thorough practical manner. The ultimate ‘fruit’ or goal is to achieve absolute freedom from the bondages of action or performance in this material existence through the struggle; and still somehow be able to act in order to conquer this material existence so as to imbibe all of its divine being (Aurobindo, 1942).

## Understanding *Gunas* for Well-being

Aurobindo (1942) discusses two classical triads. The first one is the three basic qualities of human beings’ nature, also known as *prakriti*, considered in ascending order –*Tamas* (darkness or ignorance), *Rajas* (activity or passion) and *Sattva* (purity or reality).

*tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśhakam anāmayaṁ  
sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena chānagha* (BG, 14.6)

*Translation ‘Amongst these, sattva guṇa, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illuminating and full of well-being. O sinless one, it binds the soul by creating attachment for a sense of happiness and knowledge.’* (Mukundananda, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e)

Mukundananda (2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e) elaborates on the meaning of abovementioned verse by heralding *sattva guna* as the one which is pristine among the three. More crucially it is a vital cog for well-being since it positions the soul in the warp of knowledge and contentment.

Second is the three forms of *yoga*, namely, *karma* (action), *jnan* (spiritual knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion). Individual’s journey starts from the bottom level of qualities of *tamas* that is, in sensory ignorance, where he is in closest proximity to the material world in terms of experiencing both the object world and the egotistic self. The man takes this experience to be the only truth and does so in a passive manner, creating a state of inertia. From *tamas*, the individual then

moves on to next level of *rajas* qualities where the individual actively seeks an expression for his capabilities, desires, and become an acting agent; in comparison to the inertia of the *tamas* level of qualities. The individual has mastered the technique of subordinating the qualities of *tamas* inside of him/her in order to get to *rajas*. And then, when the individual finally begins to reach out to know and understand his own self and the world, he has learnt how to subordinate both *tamas* and *rajas* qualities and rise above to the plane of his *sattvic* qualities (Mukundananda, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e).

Once the qualities of *rajas* and *sattva* meet inside an individual, as he is moving away from the previous and towards the latter, the individual has his initiation on the paths of *yoga*. Yoga is the path of realising that the self is one with the truth and that the truth is not identical with the phenomenon surrounding oneself in this material world. Aurobindo (1942) articulates what constitutes the soul of a human being when he says that it is “a spiritual being apparently subjected by ignorance to the outward workings of *Prakriti*” who then is represented in this material world in the form of a mobile, thoughtful personality, also an ego.

When man reaches the level of *sattvik* gunas (pristine qualities), he becomes capable of practicing *Karma yoga*, the path towards achieving union with the Supreme (Aurobindo, 1942). The man when working through *Karma yoga*, learns to see the reality of this world’s play, all the action, motion, that he finds himself indulging in; for he then finally sees his own reality to be a higher, eternal and impersonal self (Aurobindo, 1944). The man realises the truth about his soul, which is removed from the material reality of this world and is an unperurbed witness, partaking in worldly actions only to support its physical presence (Aurobindo, 1944).

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## Nishkama Karma for Social Responsibility

As discussed under the heading ‘*Karma Yoga links with Positive Psychology*’, BG emphasises that we have control over our efforts but not on their outcomes. This is what *nishkama karma* is all about. *Nishkama karma* is a state wherein a human is unfazed by work while engaged in it. It doesn’t suggest non involvement in the work but non attachment with the desires while working. Detachment of one’s ego is an important factor to consider. Once the ego is absolved the motivation to be engaged in *karma* comes from within and such actions thereby lead one closer to supreme. Soul, unlike the body, is deemed as that of divine existence and when the calling comes from this divine entity, the attribute of selfless service comes to the fore. From there on the *karma* is not dictated by insatiable desire of favourable result borne out of it, but rather equanimity (Singh, 1999).

BG’s philosophy of *nishkama karma* (action without desire) was to let mankind understand the joy of pure action without harboring the desire for the intended results. It is largely a form of practice that requires cultivation through human faculties. One of the outcomes of *nishkama karma* is long-lasting happiness, which is

achieved simply by performing the act in itself and the other is that it, brings the person closer to Supreme (Singh, 1999).

A human following the modus operandi of *nishkama karma* is likely to manifest the traits of sacrifice, faith in the *Supreme* and voluntarism for the betterment of the society. Such virtues are the need of the hour in the capitalism driven corporate world. While we talk of social and financial inclusion as a responsibility of business organization, *nishkama karma* needs to be deployed not for a mere display but its attributes should be imbibed by management which plans and executes measures for alleviation of society as a whole. It can go a long way in making world a better place (Singh, 1999).

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## Conclusion

The chapter presents the highlights of Bhagvad Gita (BG), an ancient Indian epic which contains knowledge of life for emotional regulation, compassion, control over desires, stress management, work and work motivation, conflict management, equanimity, health and well-being. The objective of this endeavour is to bring the ancient wisdom written in Sanskrit to the people at large who may adopt some of the concepts, principles and practices to effectively deal with work pressures, stresses in their personal and professional life and lead a holistic and fulfilling life.

According to BG desires and greed are the root cause of stress. People have control over their efforts and actions but not on the results which are influenced by a number of known and unknown factors in the situation. Hence *karma yoga* has been recommended to avoid frustration and anger. Lord Krishna in his preaching to Arjuna has advocated *nishkama karma* which does not include desires and hence no stress could be generated on failure or not achieving favorable results. The emotional conflict faced by Arjuna between his duty and feelings for his kinsmen was resolved by preachings of BG which helped him realize his duty (*karma*) (as a warrior who was responsible for his people) over worldly relations.

This chapter emphasizes on the essence of one's state of mind by neutralizing the states of pain and happiness in day to day life with *Bhagvad Gyan*. BG describes the reason of anger and stress and provides with the ways of reducing the stress and getting over the worldly desires and greed with the application of positive mindset. *Nishkama karma* has been described as an important factor of attaining *moksha*. It is imperative to understand that BG describes the duty of a *karma yogi* and not of the consequences that may occur to him due to his dutifulness. The results of any *karma* should not deter people from being happy and living in the present than to regret about the past and worry for the future. This *karma yoga* has been described as an important factor to help individuals combat stress. Further, *samatva yoga*, (*equanimity*) i.e. balance state of mind in good and bad times and accepting the present, helps one enhance well-being and mitigate stress.

An alternate to Karma Yoga is *Jnan Yoga* which leads to the path of spirituality while relinquishing not only *karma phal* (Fruits/rewards of an actions) but also the *karma* (action). With the divine understanding of nature as spirit, the illusion of

*maya* vanishes and with this deep knowledge comes the realization that the universe is just a small reflection of infinite energy of God. This is described as *Vibhuti yoga* which has the potential reach to a higher consciousness.

Human nature has been classified in three categories in BG. *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Sattva* and yogas have been described as *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* yoga. Once the nature transcends from *Rajas* to *Sattva*, an individual begins his journey towards *Yoga which is alignment with the Supreme*. BG describes a wise person as one who is committed to one's duty in the society. The motive is to attain wisdom which comprises the components such as commitment to work and maintaining discipline with respect to work. The focus is do work (*karma*) for the sake of doing and not for the sake of achieving positive or favorable results. According to the BG, a wise person works in order to discharge his/her responsibilities to the society, and not for the sake of material rewards.

In the modern society and in the world of cut-throat competition of reaching to the heights, people often forget the essence of living a comfortable, stress-free and meaningful life. The essential part of living is not to accumulate wealth by acquiring stress but to accumulate happiness by giving a vision to life. As Lord Krishna rightfully says that do your *karma* and the fruit will follow, if the same preaching could be accepted by the generation, this could bring breakthrough results in reducing stress. In the business world the learnings are often modulated in the form of stress management sessions. But the real impact lies in imbibing the preaching of BG and leading a meaningful, happy and stress-free personal life along with effective professional life.

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## Summary

- BG is the summation of knowledge of life for emotional regulation, compassion, control over desires, stress management, work and work motivation, conflict management, equanimity, health and well-being.
- Arjuna was in extreme stress, unable to decide how he could fight a war with his kinsmen. *Bhagvad gyan* in the form of preachings of BG helped him realize his duty (*karma*) over worldly relations.
- Krishna helped Arjuna resolve his moral dilemmas by emphasizing duty (*dharma* and *karma*) over feelings.
- Root cause of stress is the desire and the greed for favorable results.
- BG describes the reason of anger and stress and provides ways of reducing the stress and getting over the worldly desires and greed with the application of positive mindset.
- *Nishkama karma* includes detachment from desires and hence no stress could be generated on failure or non achievement of desired results and hence is an important step towards attaining *moksha*. The focus is to do work (*karma*) for the sake of doing and not for the sake of achieving positive or favorable results.
- Emphasis is given on the essence of one's state of mind by neutralizing the states of pain and happiness in day to day life with *Bhagvad gyan*.



- *Karma yoga* has been described as an important factor to help individuals combating stress.
- *Samatva yoga*, (*equanimity*) balance state of mind and accepting reality helps enhance well-being of individuals helps in mitigating stress.
- *Jnan Yog* leads to the path of spirituality while relinquishing not only *karma phal* (fruits/rewards of an actions) but also the *karma* (action).
- With the divine understanding of nature as spirit, the illusion or *maya* vanishes and with this deep knowledge comes the realization that the universe is just a small reflection of infinite energy of God. This is described as *Vibhuti yoga* which has the potential reach to a higher consciousness.
- Human nature has been described as a combination of three natures in BG i.e. *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Sattva*. Yogas have been segregated as *Karma*, *Jnana* and *Bhakti*. Once the nature transcends from *rajas* to *sattva*, an individual begins his journey towards *yoga*, *alignment with the Supreme*.
- BG describes a wise man as one who is committed to his or her duty in the society. The motive is to attain wisdom which comprises the components such as commitment to work and maintaining discipline with respect to work. According to the BG, a wise person works in order to discharge his/her responsibilities to the society, and not for the sake of material rewards.
- Relevance of BG has been provided in the context of modern society where in the world of cut-throat competition of reaching to the heights, people often forget the essence of living a comfortable, stress-free and meaningful life.
- The essential part of living is not to accumulate wealth by increasing stress but to accumulate happiness by giving a vision to life.

In the business world the learnings are often modulated in the form of stress management sessions. But the real impact lies in imbibing the preaching of BG and leading a meaningful, happy and stress-free personal life along with effective professional life.

### Reflection Questions

1. What do you understand about human nature—Tamas, Rajas and Sattava from BG?
2. In this world of materialism people pursue extrinsic rewards, do you think karma yoga can help one get over frustrations and disappointments.
3. What is samatva? How could this be achieved using BG principles?
4. Lack of emotional control and anger lead to many social and interpersonal problems, how can yoga and meditation help in dealing with these problems?
5. What concepts of BG are similar to management concepts? Please discuss in small groups.

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# Ethics of Enlightened Leaders

# 8

Dennis Heaton

## Introduction

In business and in government, managers set the tone for ethical conduct throughout their organizations. Shocked by repeated scandals of fraud and irresponsible self-interest, business educators have sought to strengthen ethical training in management education (Phillips et al., 2004). The major conceptual approaches which have guided business ethics training have been from ethical theories from western philosophy and models of Western developmental psychology (Treviño & Nelson, 2011). While these approaches provide some perspectives for guiding managers in ethical decisions, the overall effectiveness of ethical education has been limited.

The view of the present chapter is that ethical performance by leaders depends upon the development of an enlightened consciousness, which manifests as personal character which will resist opportunities for selfish gain through fraud, theft, or poor corporate citizenship (Heaton & Subramaniam, 2012). This development of enlightenment is beyond what education can convey merely on an intellectual level. It requires experiential exploration of the depths of one's own consciousness. The timeless wisdom of the Bhagavad-Gītā presents not just a philosophical understanding but also practical tools for experience of a state in which a manager can become independent of possessions (II.45) and balanced in gain and loss (II.48) by living fulfillment in Self-realization. The result, as portrayed in the Gītā, is wise leaders who act without personal attachment, “desiring the welfare of the world” (Chapter III, verse 25).

The presentation in this chapter is informed by the translation and commentary by His Holiness Maharishi (2015/1967) and aims to highlight selected key points from Maharishi's explanations. A main idea is that ethics is the result of enlightenment.

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Enlightenment will be explained in terms of Transcendental Consciousness, inner experience of one's unbounded Self, and Cosmic Consciousness, a constant state in which realization of the transcendental Self is lived in the midst of dynamic activity. While the names of these states of consciousness may make them seem overly distant or idealistic, the realistic nature of these experiences will be illustrated in this chapter through evidence from the lives of managers.

Chapter II, verse 45, Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to leave the field of relativity and experience the Absolute Self in Transcendental Consciousness—"Be without the three Guṇas". Then in Chapter II, verse 48, Kṛṣṇa gives the formula—"Established in Yoga, perform actions". "Established in Yoga" signifies that one is constantly awake in the Absolute Self, so that one can naturally "perform action having abandoned attachment" (Chapter II, verse 48). Application of these two key verses the Gītā will result in skill in action—action which is ethical, effective, efficient, and emancipating.

Ideally management education aims to cultivate leaders who cannot be corrupted. Incorruptibility has been defined as "a firm resistance to all the enormous temptations of power, a continuing and inflexible dedication to the public good rather than benefits for oneself or one's group (Dahl, 1998, p. 73, cited in Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2009)." The Bhagavad-Gītā portrays such a state of incorruptibility in Chapter II, verse 45 in the word *niryogakshema*. Maharishi explains that the word *niryogakshema*, translated as independent of possessions, "carries the meaning that in this state one is not required to think of gaining what one does not have or of preserving what one has". This independence is the consequence of being possessed of one's Self—*atmavan*—a state of fulfillment which is not depending on impermanent possessions or circumstances. Lack of Self-realization is the root of ethical failings—"the tendency to possess that tempts a man to go the wrong way (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 93)." Realization of the Self is gained when one knows pure absolute Being "without the three Guṇas (II, 45)". Then one can "perform actions, having abandoned attachment (II, 48)" and being "satisfied in the Self", maintain "steady intellect (II. 55)." Such a person can be called a sage (*muni*), "a man of calm, far-seeing prudence and wisdom (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 122)."

Expressions in the Gītā such as "independent of possessions (Chapter II, verse 45)", "balanced in success and failure (Chapter II, verse 48)", and "casts off all desires" (Chapter II, 55)" are descriptions of the lived experience of enlightenment. And the key to progressively realizing these qualities in the character of a leader is to consciously realize the Higher Self which is inherent in each of us. Such development is facilitated by a technique to repeatedly experience the inner fulfillment of Transcendental Consciousness.

At Maharishi University of Management, we have endeavored to explore findings of modern science which correlate with the wisdom of the Bhagavad-Gītā—particularly physiological and psychological measurement of the growth of higher states of consciousness through systematic experience of transcendence. This research has focused on the effects of the Transcendental Meditation technique, which is described by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as an effortless procedure to enable the conscious mind to settle down to experience the absolute Self.

The concepts of enlightenment and related findings from modern science research will be further explained in the sections below. This research will include psychological evidence of moral development, physiological evidence of brain integration, and qualitative findings of growing experiences of enlightenment in meditating managers. The chapter concludes with questions to encourage the reader to review, consider, and apply concepts concerning leadership ethics in relation to growth of higher states of consciousness.

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## Arjuna's Ethical Dilemma

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa imparts timeless wisdom to Arjuna right on the battlefield where two armies, the Kauravas and the Pandavas have gathered to battle for control of the kingdom. Arjuna is a warrior-leader of the Pandava side. Arjuna asks Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his charioteer, to take him forward to survey the opposing army, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: “Partha (Arjuna)! “Behold these Kurus gathered together “(Chapter 1, verse 25). These words remind Arjuna that those with whom he is about to do battle are his own relatives. At this point Arjuna’s fully developed mind knows it is his duty to fight for the side of righteousness; but his fully developed heart feels deep love for his enemies, his very own kinsmen. “His heart and mind were at the height of alertness, but they could not show him a line of action to fulfill their contradictory aspirations” (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 77). Arjuna’s dilemma was such that “having explored all the avenues of his mind and heart, Arjuna could not find any practical solution, could not decide on any line of action” (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 127). To resolve this dilemma requires that he transcend the duality of heart and mind.

In his commentary, Maharishi notes the archetypal nature of this dilemma: “The seed of suffering in life is located in the duality inherent in the characteristic differences between heart and mind (Maharishi, 2015/1967, pp. 50–51).” Looking beyond the specific situation of Arjuna to the lives of leaders in general, the duality of heart and mind is a universal human experience. Leaders look to find a basis for ethical action in the dictates of the mind, which can apply principled moral reasoning to choose a course of action. And leaders can be inspired toward right action by the compassionate dictates of the heart. But ultimately heart is different from mind and mind is different from heart and this—this is duality which leaders face.

Facing an irresolvable dilemma, Arjuna surrenders himself to learn profound wisdom from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To transcend this duality, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna: “Be without the three Guṇas, O Arjuna, freed from duality, ever firm in purity, independent of possessions, possessed of the Self (Chapter II, verse 45).” Śrī Kṛṣṇa promises Arjuna that by gaining possession of the Self which is transcendental to the world of relative existence (the world composed of the three Guṇas), he will achieve the result of being “ever firm in purity”, ethical in his conduct, which is of great importance to Arjuna.

## Transcending for Enlightened Ethics

The thesis of this chapter is that ethical leadership can be realized as a consequence of the experience of transcendence. As depicted in the *Gītā*, realization of the Self is gained “when a man withdraws his senses from their objects (II, 58)” and knows his pure absolute Being “without the three *Guṇas* (II, 45)”. Then he can “perform actions, having abandoned attachment (II, 48)” and being “satisfied in the Self” maintain “steady intellect (II, 55).” Such a person can be called a sage (*muni*), “a man of calm, far-seeing prudence and wisdom (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 122).”

How is it that gaining the status of being “possessed of the Self” provides a foundation for ethical action and reconciles the duality of the heart and mind? Let us first explore what is meant in the *Gītā* by the word Self, spelled with capital “S”. Maharishi’s commentary explains:

Self has two connotations: lower self and higher Self. The lower self is that aspect of the personality which deals only with the relative aspect of existence. It comprises the mind that thinks, the intellect that decides, the ego that experiences. This lower self functions only in the relative states of existence – waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Remaining always within the field of relativity, it has no chance of experiencing the real freedom of absolute Being. That is why it is in the sphere of bondage. The higher Self is that aspect of the personality which never changes, absolute Being, which is the very basis of the entire field of relativity, including the lower self. (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 339)

The higher Self is an aspect of our lives which is deeper than our thinking or our feelings. It is not any relative characteristics of our individuality, such as I am a male or I am a professor of management. Rather, it is absolute Being—simply, “I am”. Even though at our core we always are absolute Being, we fail to realize that, because in the waking state of consciousness we are normally engaged in and identified with the objects or thought and perception. The higher Self is consciousness itself, yet most people remain ignorant of it in their ordinary waking experiences: “Since the mind ordinarily remains attuned to the senses, projecting outwards towards the manifested realms of creation, it misses or fails to appreciate its own essential nature [as Transcendental Consciousness], just as the eyes are unable to see themselves” (Maharishi, 1963, p. 30).

We become aware of this higher Self in the experience of Transcendental Consciousness, “a state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, just pure consciousness aware of its own unbounded nature” (Maharishi, 1976, p. 123). Transcendental Consciousness transcends time, space, and all relative, changing experience. It is the spiritual essence of life—“eternal silence, which is pure wakefulness, absolute alertness, pure subjectivity, pure spirituality” (Maharishi, 1995, p. 271 fn).

The concepts Transcendental Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness, and the further higher states of Refined Cosmic Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness are regarded as developmental advances which inherent in human potential in Maharishi’s model of seven states of consciousness (Alexander et al., 1990). Cosmic Consciousness is characterized by stable realization of this transcendental Self.



Being established in the higher Self, “established in Yoga” (Chapter II, verse 48), is the key to enlightened ethics. As depicted in Chapter II, verse 45 of the *Gītā*, at the same time that one is “possessed of the Self”, one is “independent of possessions” and “ever firm in purity”. This is the quality of character which will resist wrong action for selfish gain. Maharishi ((2015/1967, p. 130) explains in his commentary on the words “independent of possessions” that it is the tendency to possess that tempts a man toward unethical behavior. Indeed, the impending battle which Arjuna facing has arisen because of Duryodhana’s (the instigator of the Kauravas) desire to possess and preserve possessions. An enlightened ethical leader is one who has become truly independent of possessions by virtue of being possessed of the Self—a state of fulfillment which is not dependent on “gaining what one does not have or preserving what one has” (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 130). Such an independent soul can spontaneously afford to be a leader working for the welfare of the world.

A further explanation of how transcendence is the key to ethics, is understanding the Self to be the unified field of natural law. Enlightenment brings “the natural ability to think and act in accordance with natural law” (Maharishi, 1994, pp. 113–115). Realization of the higher Self connects individual awareness to cosmic intelligence, the laws of nature. *Rk Ved* declares that the transcendental field is where the wholeness of natural law can be known and can be harnessed:

... the transcendental field, in which reside all the Devas, the impulses of Creative Intelligence, the Laws of Nature responsible for the whole manifest universe. ... Those who know this level of reality are established in evenness, wholeness of life. (*Rk Ved* 1.164.39, translated in Maharishi, 1996, p. 138).

By becoming more fully established in this transcendental Self, a manager’s mind spontaneously becomes more “all-directional” and “all-encompassing” (Maharishi, 1995, p. 10), like the integrated functioning of natural law. The key to wholeness in management is to establish the consciousness of the manager is alliance with the managing intelligence of natural law, “that infinite organizing power which sustains existence and promotes the evolution of everything in the universe, automatically maintaining the well-coordinated relationship of everything with everything else” (Maharishi, 1995, p. 8). A consequence of this is that “our thoughts and actions spontaneously begin to be as orderly and evolutionary as all the activity of nature” (Maharishi, 1986, p. 97).

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## Meditate and Then Act

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna: “Established in Yoga, perform actions”. “Established in Yoga” refers to that state of Cosmic Consciousness which evolves through the integration of inner silence and outward actions:

Yoga, or Union of the mind with the divine intelligence, begins when the mind gains transcendental consciousness; Yoga achieves maturity when this transcendental bliss-consciousness, or divine Being, has gained ground in the mind to such an extent that, in

whatever state the mind finds itself, whether waking or sleeping, it remains established in the state of Being. It is to this state of perfect enlightenment that the Lord refers in the beginning of the verse when He says: ‘Established in Yoga.’ (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 135)

Maharishi explains that cosmic consciousness gradually develops through a balanced routine of meditation and action:

When the state of Yoga, the state of transcendental consciousness, becomes permanent so that it maintains itself throughout all activity, one has reached the state of cosmic consciousness. Such perfect infusion of the Absolute into relativity takes place by degrees, through the regular practice of going to the Transcendent and coming back to the field of action in daily life. A balanced alternation of meditation and activity results in full realization. (Maharishi, 2015/1967, pp. 312–313)

Cosmic Consciousness is that state of consciousness in which Transcendental Consciousness, Being, is an all-time reality coexisting with the changing experiences of waking, dreaming and sleeping. It is in this state of Cosmic Consciousness that one naturally “perform actions having abandoned attachment and having become balanced in success and failure” (Chapter 2, verse 48). By repeatedly transcending and then stabilizing transcendental Being in activity, the ethical quality of a manager’s actions is rooted in the wholeness of natural law:

When, after meditation, the mind comes out infused with the transcendental divine nature, the individual acts in the world, and this action is quite naturally free from the narrowness of petty individuality, from the shortsightedness of selfish attachment, which previously held him imprisoned. Everything moves according to the cosmic plan, and although the individual ego continues to function, the action is that of divine intelligence working through the individual who is living cosmic existence. (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 172)

Qualitative evidence in the section below called “Enlightened Leadership”, shows how managers describe the growth of higher states of consciousness in terms of real, practical experiences.

## Transcendental Meditation

The Bhagavad Gītā exhorts that the leader transcends and then acts grounded in Yoga, grounded in cosmic natural law. These principles are operationalized in the Transcendental Meditation® (TM) program<sup>1</sup>. The TM technique is practiced for 20 min two times per day, sitting quietly with the eyes closed. These periods of meditation in the morning and evening are alternated with the activity of going about one’s life throughout the day. TM is described as a simple, natural practice which is said to be “independent of all matters of belief and affiliation (Shear, 2006, p. 47).” Transcendental Meditation involves a specific sound or mantra—utilized for its sound value without reference to meaning. During meditation the mantra is

<sup>1</sup>The Transcendental Meditation® is a protected trademark and is used in the U.S. under license or with permission.

experienced at progressively deeper and finer levels of thinking until thought is transcended in “a state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, just pure consciousness aware of its own unbounded nature” (Maharishi, 1976, p. 123).

The TM technique is not practiced just for some peaceful moments during meditation but for the cumulative effects of regular twice-daily practice. Daily cycles of meditating and then coming out into activity, cultivate the nervous system to more and more maintain the restful silence of Transcendental Consciousness even outside of meditation. Meditation and action both play a role in personal evolution to Cosmic Consciousness. Maharishi explains:

Integration of life depends upon the mind passing in a cycle between the field of the Absolute and the field of activity. The mind goes to the unmanifest and comes back to the manifest, thus experiencing both fields of life, absolute and relative. This is the state of an integrated man in Cosmic Consciousness. (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 213)

## Indicators of Transcending

TM technique belongs to class of meditation practices which automatically transcend their own activity to give rise to experiences of pure consciousness, a state of peaceful relaxation for the mind and body. This meditation is fundamentally different in aim, procedure, experience, and brain activity from meditation practices involving focused attention or open monitoring (Travis & Shear, 2010). Transcendental Meditation been taught in a consistent manner around the world and thus has lent itself to extensive scientific study of effects on mind and body during meditation and on the enduring effects outside of meditation as the result of repeated practice. This body of research includes randomized clinical trials and studies in which the experimenter was blind to group membership.

The calm settled state of awareness during the practice of the TM technique has correlates in the physiology: reductions in heart rate and oxygen consumption, and increased electroencephalographic (EEG) coherence indicative of a state of profound restful alertness, distinct from eyes-closed relaxation or sleep (Alexander, Cranson, Boyer, & Orme-Johnson, 1986). Repeated studies have found higher levels of frontal electroencephalographic (EEG) coherence during TM practice (Travis et al., 2009; Travis & Arenander, 2006; Travis, Tecce, Arenander, & Wallace, 2002; Yamamoto, Kitamura, Yamada, Nakashima, & Kuroda, 2006). The state of restfulness gained during the practice of the TM technique is said to dissolve the stress in the mind and the body. TM practice is reported to decrease effects of previous stressors and help an individual function better in stressful situations. This dissolution of stress has positive consequence for cognitive functioning, health, and personality development.

## Indicators of Development of Consciousness

Research on the effects of Transcendental Meditation has been interpreted as correlating with specific verses of the *Bhagavad Gītā* (Maharishi Ved Vigyan Vishwa Vidyapeetham, 2003). Chapter II, verse 48 declares “Balance of mind is called yoga.” Empirical evidence of balanced mind is increasing EEG coherence (Travis et al., 2002; Travis & Orme-Johnson, 1990). EEG coherence means that electroencephalographic signals from different parts of the brain—left and right, front and back—are highly correlated with each other, indicating more unified or integrated brain functioning. Research has also explored the neurophysiological indicators of the integration of Transcendental Consciousness and the active waking state and have constructed a brain integration scale (Travis et al., 2002). This research indicates that aspects of brain functioning which are observed during meditation for beginning practitioners of TM, are then seen in the analysis of brainwaves during task performance outside of meditation, for subjects who have been practicing regularly for a number of years.

Chapter III, verse 25 says: “As the unwise act out of their attachment to action, O Bharat, so should he wise act, but without any attachment, desiring the welfare of the world.” An indicator of growing self-sufficient, or freedom from attachment, is increased field independence through TM (Pelletier, 1974). Related to this, Chapter II, verse 45 speaks of being “independent of possessions”. Findings of growing stability of the autonomic nervous system through Transcendental Meditation indicates increased independence from circumstances outside oneself. In this research autonomic stability was measured as faster habituation of skin resistance response to stressful stimuli, fewer multiple responses, and fewer spontaneous skin resistance responses.

Chapter II, verse 56 describes a highly mature and stable personality: “He whose mind is unshaken in the midst of sorrows, who amongst pleasures is free from longing, from whom attachment, fear and anger have departed, he is said to be a sage of steady intellect”. An indication of the growth of these qualities is increasing self-actualization (Alexander, Rainforth, & Gelderloos, 1991). A meta-analysis of 42 independent study results indicated that TM practice increased self-actualization, as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory, by about three times as much as procedures of contemplation, concentration, or other techniques.

Other indicators of the holistic effects of daily TM practice include improvements in creative thinking (Travis, 1979), fluid intelligence, constructive thinking, and reaction time (Cranson et al., 1991; So & Orme-Johnson, 2001), and a cognitive orientation towards positive values (Gelderloos, Goddard III, Ahlström, & Jacoby, 1987). The TM technique has been associated with health improvements such as decreased anxiety (Eppley, Abrams, & Shear, 1989), reduced health insurance utilization (Herron, Hillis, Mandarin, Orme-Johnson, & Walton, 1996; Orme-Johnson, 1987), decreases in overall incidence of diseases (Orme-Johnson & Herron, 1997).

Research on the effects of the TM program in the workplace has found that business people practicing the TM technique report improved health, decreased anxiety, increased productivity and improved relations (Alexander et al., 1993; Alexander,

DeArmond, Heaton, Stevens, & Schmidt-Wilk, 2004; Frew, 1974; Schmidt-Wilk, Alexander, & Swanson, 1996; Schmidt-Wilk, 2000). In an 8-month pretest-posttest control group study in one company (McCollum, 1999), subjects who learned the Transcendental Meditation technique grew significantly more than controls in their expression of leadership behaviors, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

## **The Transcendental Meditation Technique and Moral Development**

Of particular interest for this chapter is evidence that the repeated experience of transcending fosters advances in moral development. The field of business ethics and ethics education has emphasized cognitive structural theories of moral development (Kohlberg, 1984; Treviño & Nelson, 2011). Higher stages of development have been associated with greater integrity and independence in moral judgments (Arnold & Ponemon, 1991). But reliable educational practices to promote higher stages of moral development have not been widely understood or practiced.

Research reviewed by Orme-Johnson (2000) provides evidence that TM practice is associated with developmental advances in the direction of what developmental psychologists call post-conventional, autonomous and integrated. In Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development, post-conventional development is characterized by internal, self-chosen principles of moral reasoning, as opposed to external, societally determined criteria and controls for morality. Chandler, Alexander, and Heaton (2005) reported longitudinal effects of the TM technique on moral development from the incorporation of TM in university education. Their longitudinal study compared graduates from Maharishi University of Management (MUM) with graduates from three standard universities. The MUM sample increased significantly in ego development, intimacy motivation and principled moral reasoning over a 10-year period, compared to comparison groups of alumni of three other universities over that period. Instrument scoring was performed by experts who were blind to treatment categories. The proportion of M.U.M. subjects achieving postconventional development in this study is the highest observed compared to prior samples from decades of published studies using Loevinger's (1976) ego development test.

Additional research on personality development examined changes in ego development in prisoners who had learned the TM technique in prison (Alexander, 1982; Alexander & Orme-Johnson, 2003; Alexander, Walton, & Goodman, 2003). This research was the doctoral dissertation of Charles Alexander at Harvard University. Prison inmates practicing the TM technique for 20 months scored a full level higher in ego development, as measured by Loevinger's test of psychological maturity, than did non-meditating inmates interested in learning the TM technique or inmates in other treatment programs. After 17 months, this initial TM group increased another level, and a new group that learned the TM technique grew one full level from Conformist to Self-Aware on the scale of ego development stages. No

longitudinal increases were found in other treatment groups or demographically similar controls wait-listed to learn the TM technique.

A 59-month follow up study of recidivism among these same maximum-security inmates provides evidence that reduced psychopathology and accelerated psychological development resulting from the TM program are responsible for reductions in criminal behavior (Alexander et al., 2003; Rainforth, Alexander, & Cavanaugh, 2003). Reduced criminal behavior and reduced recidivism are concrete behavioral indicators of moral outcomes from experiencing transcendence.

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## Enlightened Leadership

The timeless wisdom of the Bhagavad Gītā has always been meant to be learned and practiced by leaders. According to the Gītā itself, its timeless wisdom was passed down through the leaders of society. Chapter 4, verse 2 says: “Thus having received it one from another, the royal sages knew it.” Maharishi commented on this verse: “The Lord says that this technique of integration of life was handed on to the philosopher-kings, men who led active lives and had great responsibilities in the world” (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 255).

“Meditate and act” is a formula for integrated life that has borne fruit in the lives of contemporary business managers. This can be seen in the findings of several qualitative interview research studies of managers who had been practicing the Transcendental Meditation program of twice-daily meditation alternated with activity in responsible roles.

## Experiences of Consciousness Development in Meditating Entrepreneurs

One qualitative study explored features of personal development in a group of 21 successful entrepreneurs who were long-term practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program (Herriott, 2000; Herriott, Schmidt-Wilk, & Heaton, 2009). The TM-Sidhi program is an advanced meditation practice. The companies represented in this research were at least 5 years old, were leaders or innovators in their respective fields or had been recognized with one or more awards of excellence. Subjects in this study were interviewed about elements of inner development that had played a role in their business performance.

One theme found in this qualitative study was the growth of being unshakeable. Subjects reported greater awareness of a transcendental Self, which brought “more inner strength and silence within me, no matter what’s going on” (Herriott, 2000, p. 256). This finding resembles what the Gita says about being “Established in Yoga”—that it enables one to “become balanced in success and failure” (Chapter II, verse 48). One subject described having an “inner anchor”, a connection to “that is far broader or deeper or meaningful than I am” (Herriott, 2000, p. 245). Another subject reported:

I feel that as I've become more conscious, I'm more tied into who I really am, more tied into my inner. . . immovable nature. And so, so being more established in that I feel I'm able to be in my activity and not be so overshadowed by all the changes and the rapid pace of activity that I experience on a daily basis (Herriott, 2000, p. 245)

These entrepreneurs described their business performance in terms of growing intuition, holistic perspective, fortunate coincidences, and a pervasive sense of being part of a larger wholeness.

Intuition was described by interviewees as a hunch or subtle impulse from within, and as a knowing-ness that does not require intellectual analysis. They also described an association between instances of things “organizing themselves” and feelings of settledness.

Another qualitative study explored effects of TM in three European top management teams that introduced TM as a management development program. In these interviews, top managers reported increased clarity of thinking, increased energy, greater resiliency in stressful situations, improvements in physical and mental health, as well as improved trust, communication, and team relations (Schmidt-Wilk, 2000). Respondents described resiliency in stressful situations and new abilities to resolve conflicts. A case study of teamwork in one of these top management teams reported that executives developed self-awareness, comprehension of the viewpoints of others, systemic thinking, innovative problem-solving, and proactive behaviors (Schmidt-Wilk, 2003). After practicing the TM program for some months, this team reported that it could more readily solve cross-functional problems collaboratively.

## **Experience of Higher States of Consciousness in Leadership Research**

An association between higher states of consciousness and excellence in action is implied by the Gītā's words “Yoga is skill in action” (Chapter II, verses 48, 50). Support for this association is not just found in research on meditating managers. There has been a series of studies of experiences of higher states of consciousness in top performing leaders who were selected for their performance excellence, regardless of any meditation practice.

Harung and Travis (2012) have found that performance excellence correlated with an index comprised of higher states of consciousness, brain integration, and moral development.

Subjects selected for this study were all top-level managers who successful leadership over 10 years or longer and had a broader perspective than just earning money, that is, exemplifying corporate social responsibility. Twenty top-level Norwegian managers took part in the study. A comparison group was matched for age, gender, level of education and type of organization, but had limited organizational responsibility (for example, senior engineer, and product manager, and programmer).

The measure of higher states of consciousness in the research by Harung and Travis (2012) and in prior research by Harung, Heaton, and Alexander (1995) was the Survey of Peak Experiences. This questionnaire has been refined over 25 years based on glimpses of peak experiences in criterion-rich subject populations. One question asked about peak experiences during waking activity. “Have you experienced that while performing activity there was an even state of silence within you, underlying and coexisting with activity, yet untouched by activity? This could be experienced as detached witnessing even while acting with intense focus.” Another question was about peak experiences during eyes closed rest. “During practice of relaxation, meditation, prayer, or any other technique—or when you have relaxed or had a quiet moment—have you then experienced a completely peaceful state; a state when the mind is very awake, but quiet; a state when consciousness seems to be expanded beyond the limitations of thought, beyond the limitations of time and space?” For each question, the subject indicated frequency of the experience—ranging from “never to my knowledge” (0) to “all the time” (11).

Experiences of higher states of consciousness are also implied in Herriott’s (2000) qualitative study of meditating entrepreneurs, which has been introduced above. The managers described feelings of connectedness and love, as a sense of being part of the whole process of existence. This experience became an integral part of their value system, and expressed itself as going beyond individual interests to consider the wider interests of employees, community, or environment as a whole. This broadened perspective, “where you’re not getting too caught in your own boundaries” (Herriott, 2000, p. 301). enabled managers to be open to “impulses of what is really right action” (Herriott, 2000, p. 301). These business leaders described broadened awareness that embraces the wider interests of employees, the community and environment (Herriott et al., 2009).

Being awake in the Self mean being attuned to natural law. One of Herriott’s subjects described this attunement as a feeling of connection with truth, with “the way nature is moving” (Herriott, 2000, p. 291). Another subject described his sense of being in tune laws of nature in these words, “You can feel inside what’s the right thing to say” (Herriott, 2000, p. 292).

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## Spontaneous Right Action

Expressions in the Gītā such as “independent of possessions (Chapter II, verse 45)”, “balanced in success and failure (Chapter II, verse 48)”, and “casts off all desires” (Chapter II, 55)” are descriptions of the lived experience of enlightenment. In Cosmic Consciousness one can naturally “perform actions having abandoned attachment and having become balanced in success and failure” (Bhagavad Gītā, Chapter 2, verse 48). This is because in this enlightened state, one enjoys the eternal contentment which comes with being established in the Self.

These descriptions are to be understood as the results of enlightened, but not taken as instructions about how one becomes enlightened. Maharishi (2015/1967, p. 135) points out in his commentary, this balanced state “cannot be gained by



creating a mood of equanimity in loss and gain, as commentators have generally thought.” Enlightenment, life in higher states of consciousness, is the cause, and balance of mind is one of its results. But, trying to abandon attachment, trying to be even in gain and loss, is not the means to realization of enlightenment; the effect cannot produce the cause. Maharishi explains:

A man cannot remain balanced in loss and gain unless he is in a state of lasting contentment. Here the Lord is asking Arjuna to get to that state of lasting contentment by a direct experience of transcendental eternal bliss. He is not advising a mere mood of equanimity (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 137)

Trying to imitate the results of enlightenment without having a deep awareness of the transcendental Self is unnatural and can be weakening. According to Maharishi’s commentary: “trying to make a mood of equanimity in pleasure and pain only puts unnatural, undue stress on the mind”; this leads to “dullness, artificiality and tension to life in the name of spiritual growth” (Maharishi, 2015/1967, p. 156). Abandonment of attachment is, however, a spontaneous consequence of living in Cosmic Consciousness. Therefore, in order to live these qualities in a natural way, rather than trying to unnaturally imitate them, one can progressively grow in the direction of enlightenment through systematic experience of transcending—daily cycles of meditation and action.

I have personal insight from my experience of giving up smoking within one year of starting the practice of Transcendental Meditation. Prior to learning this meditation practice I had some knowledge of the concept of enlightenment and I intellectually understood that if I were to become more Self-realized, I would not be dependent on a smoking habit to try to make me feel fulfilled by something from outside myself. I experienced that the craving to smoke fell off as the feelings of calmness and contentment from daily transcending got gradually more established in my physiology.

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## Conclusion

The Bhagavad-Gītā offers timeless wisdom that has contemporary relevance for business ethics. The Gītā presents not just a philosophical understanding but practical tools for experience of a transcendent state in which a manager can become independent of possessions (II, 45) and balanced in gain and loss (II, 48) by living fulfillment in Self-realization. The Gītā’s depiction of an Enlightened Sage is not merely a normative ideal to be intellectually applied in deliberations of ethical challenges, but is a real state of enlightenment that can be progressively lived with the help of practices from the Gītā.

Spirituality in management is described by some in terms of its manifestations as virtuous values and behaviors. In the analysis of Schmidt-Wilk, Heaton, and Steingard (2000), these applied aspects of spirituality have their foundation in pure spirituality, the silent level of Transcendental Consciousness. The Transcendental Meditation technique enables awareness to turn inward until the subtlest level of

thinking is transcended and consciousness is awake only to its own unbounded nature. Evidence from quantitative and qualitative research suggests that this experience of pure spirituality fosters moral development—becoming aware and conscientious about the range of effects of one’s actions. Through such growth of enlightenment, managers become less inclined toward corrupt conduct for selfish gain, and spontaneously lead society in the creation of positive value for employees, owners, the community and the environment.

The Gītā’s conception of ethics based on living a state of inner fulfillment which is independent of possessions is a major contribution to the field to the field of business ethics, which has largely relied on concepts from Western philosophy and from Western developmental psychology. Research on practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique bridges the Eastern spiritual tradition of the Bhagavad Gītā with the tools and theories of Western science. This research includes physiological correlates of higher states of consciousness, tests of moral development, and qualitative studies about the leadership approaches of long-term meditators. Such research provides support for the proposition that growth of higher states of consciousness provides a practical means to realizing ethical leadership.

## Chapter Summary Points

- Ethical performance by leaders depends upon the development of an enlightened consciousness.
- In this chapter, enlightenment is discussed with reference to two higher states of consciousness: Transcendental Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness.
- Transcendental Consciousness is inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, beyond the duality of subject and object, just pure Being or pure spirituality. That ground state of consciousness is the ground of the orderly intelligence of natural law which pervades the cosmos.
- A consequence of repeatedly gaining Transcendental Consciousness, according to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s theory of management, is that one’ thinking and action begin to be as orderly and evolutionary as the activity of nature.
- When Transcendental Consciousness is maintained along with the changing states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, then one is said to be in Cosmic Consciousness, or in Vedic terms, “Established in Yoga”. This enlightened state of consciousness is the firm based for ethical leadership.
- Transcendental Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness are gained through repeated practice of daily cycles of meditation and action.
- Expressions in the Gītā such as “independent of possessions (Chapter II, verse 45)”, “balanced in success and failure (Chapter II, verse 48)”, and “casts off all desires” (Chapter II, 55)” are descriptions of the lived experience of enlightenment. They are not lived by trying to make a mood of indifference.
- Research findings suggest that offering the Transcendental Meditation technique in management education can foster growing values of autonomous personality, principled moral reasoning, and personal caring.

- Qualitative research on a sample of business leaders who were long-term practitioners of the TM and TM-Sidhi programs found evidence of becoming more deeply established in the higher Self and realizing greater unshakability and wholeness while dynamically engaged with business responsibilities.

### Chapter Questions

1. Arjuna's heart and mind were at the height of alertness, but they could not show him a line of action to fulfill their contradictory aspirations. The duality of heart and mind is a universal experience. Think of a time when you personally faced a decision about what was the right course of action and you felt a contradiction between your mind and your heart. How did that feel? What did you do?
2. This chapter contends that trying to feel unattached or trying to make a mood of equanimity in pleasure and pain leads to artificiality and tension in life. Does the Gita prescribe that one can be enlightened by assuming a mood of being "balanced in gain and loss: (Chapter II, verse 48), or does it describe being balanced in gain and loss as a consequence of being established in Yoga? What are differences between these two understandings?
3. The word *niryogakshema* is translated as independent of possessions (Chapter II, verse 45). It means a state in which one is not required to think of gaining what one does not have or of preserving what one has. Not being independent of possession tempts one to go the wrong way. In your own life, can you think of an occasion in which gaining or preserving something for yourself influenced your decisions, tempted you to act for personal gain?
4. Have you then experienced a completely peaceful state; a state when the mind is very awake, but quiet; a state when consciousness seems to be expanded beyond the limitations of thought, beyond the limitations of time and space (Transcendental Consciousness)? What effect did this experience have on your life? Did it effect any ethical decisions that you have made?
5. What is some empirical evidence supporting the proposition that daily TM practice, alternating with activity, promotes growth toward integration of inner peace and outer dynamism.

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# Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā and Knowledge Management with Special Focus on Jñāna Yoga

9

Chandan Medatwal

## Introduction

Knowledge takes centuries and years to develop and ensure the decent life to the people. Way back from the ancient history from various holy Scriptures in the world and the eras, the meaning of life was distinctly changed. Starting from the Yugas viz., Satyuga, Tretayuga, Dwaparyuga and kaliyuga, the origination emerged with the destruction of the earlier. Every new creation leads to destruction of older one and gives the knowledge and insights to develop understanding for better doings.

Today is the era, where people are more likely to become empowered. Nevertheless, the parameters for empowerment are change in its true sense as the livelihood, access to resources and techno-advanced era. It can be said that we are sustaining with the pace of sustainable development.

If we talk about world practices, development leads to experiments, experiments lead to destruction of earlier inventions and inventions are the sources of unveiling the better versions of anything. The failure of giants like Lehman Bros, AIG, Bank of America, General Motors, Circuit City, etc. is raising doubts about the sustainability of the management practices in these institutions (Bhattacharjee, 2011). The flip side of the coin, in the midst of the global financial crisis, we have seen aggressive inorganic growth in the Indian corporate sector. Companies like Tata, Bharat Forge, Ranbaxy, etc. have rather taken the opportunity for boosting their M&A activities, expanding business through buying some firms in Europe, UK, US, etc. at a much lower valuation.

We have experienced to survive in the tough times also with the keen knowledge and insights of our corporate practitioners. Nevertheless, values, ethics and ancient quests were the best balance creators in the tough times too. For a leader, a manager

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or a worker the hierarchical flow and its synchronization could convert even the failures into the opportunities.

The answers of varied results of actions lie in the ancient scriptures. Corporate practitioners, managers themselves have strong belief on karma and fruits generated after it. The rule in the real world sense is exaggerated with the initial capital investment and then to receive (Return on Investment) ROI with the holy practice of OCTAPACE work culture. The acculturation and its mitigation are largely adopted from ancient and rich Indian ethics (Rao, 1926) which is more than 35 centuries ago. These were largely derived from the ancient Indian scriptures like the Srimad Bhagavad Gītā (Eknath, 2011), Arthashastra, Vedas, Upanishads, Sri Ramcharitmanas, Manusmriti etc. These enlighten and awaken the path for one's true knowledge give torch to exemplify the sense of transforming from perplexities to the right actions.

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## Revisiting Srimad Bhagavad Gītā

In the holy Bhagavad Gītā, *Jñāna yoga* also referred to as *buddhi yoga* and its goal is self-realization. (Nadkarni, 2016, p. 266) The text considers *Jñāna marga* as the most difficult, slow, confusing for those who prefer it because it deals with “formless reality”, the *avyakta*. It is the path that intellectually oriented people tend to prefer.

In the ancient times, the Dvaitadvaita philosophies explain the true knowledge in terms of becoming subtle. Advaita philosopher Adishankara explains *jñāna yoga* for the “knowledge of the absolute” i.e. Brahman, while the Vishishtadvaita commentator Ramanuja refers ‘knowledge’ as a condition of devotion towards a context (Flood, 1996).

From the Chapter Three of Bhagavad Gītā, in the verse three, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that he is looking at *Jñāna yoga* and *karma yoga* as two independent paths, stating that both yoga actions can give unsullied devotion to the ultimate truth. Through these, one can attain desired results. The one is superior or subordinate but the matter of fact is that these possess equal importance. One can adapt as per the suitability, any power of wisdom to reach to their destination. In the Chapter 2, Lord Krishna, explained very clearly the two classes of aspirants in the human race being the sinless of pure mind and the sinful of impure mind. Lord Krishna further explained that for purified minds *Jñāna yoga* or the yoga of knowledge is appropriate as in chapter two verse 61 states: the self controlled one sits in meditation on Him. But for minds not yet purified *karma yoga* (the yoga of action) is more suitable as in chapter 2 verse 31 states there is no greater fortune for a ‘kshatriya’ warrior than a righteous war.

Therefore in respect to the two paths viz., *Jñāna yoga* and *Karma Yoga*, these are two stages separated by purity and impurity of mind.

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna (Partha) that he has not clearly understood what has been previously spoken by him. He tells Arjuna these two paths for two types of humans. *Jñāna yoga* the path of knowledge and *karma yoga* the path of actions



each suited to the capacities and qualifications of the type concerned amongst human beings.

A creature or a human being is still not aware to opt for the ‘*Moksha*’ or liberation because of lack of knowledge and hence they are not able to practice the same for the attainment. Neither are all humans able to embark upon the path of knowledge directly. But all humans must engage in actions at all times they cannot stop but they must perform these actions unattached without desiring any reward, perfecting them in the process as factual activities of divine worship.

Performing actions in this way human evaporate the inauspicious qualities lurking in their minds and hearts and the senses give up their turbulence and become calm and peaceful. (Chapter 18, verse 46). There must be no anticipation of rewards as the reason for performing activities. (Chapter 2, verse 47).

When the aforesaid actions accomplished, one has made the proper base of *Jñāna yoga* for spiritual knowledge. One of the important pursuits of knowledge is the *Sankhya* philosophy. *Sankhya* refers to spiritual knowledge or spiritual wisdom. Those who possess this are called *sankhyas* as real spiritual knowledge that leads to realization of the soul and it firmly resides within them.

Those who are ineligible, not fit for this course due to their own inherent qualities are the *yogis* who are eligible for *karma yoga* i.e. the path of actions. It is observed that for one who is captivated by the objects and distractions of the phenomenal world, is *karma yogis*, and for those who are not captivated and able to renounce these objects and distractions is suited for *Jñāna yoga* the cultivation of spiritual knowledge.

Chapter 4 of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is dedicated to the general exposition of *Jñāna yoga*, while Chapters 7 and 16 discuss its theological and axiological aspects (Fowler, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Sargeant, 2009). *Jñāna* is the purest, and a discovery of one’s Atman (Soul) as narrated by Lord Krishna, in holy Bhagavad Gītā. Knowledge is subtle and pure. In time, he who is perfected in yoga finds that in his own Atman (Fowler, 2002).

Classical Advaita Vedanta emphasises the path of *Jñāna Yoga* to attain ‘*Moksha*’ It consists of fourfold attitudes (Maharaj, 2014), or behavioural qualifications. (Puligandla, 1997 and 1985, Davis, 2010)

1. Discrimination (*Nityānityavastuviveka*, or simply *viveka*)—the ability (*viveka*) to correctly discriminate between the unchanging, permanent, eternal (*nitya*) and the changing, transitory, temporary (*anitya*).
2. Dispassion of fruits (*Ihāmutrārthaphala bhogavirāga*, or simply *viraga*)—the dispassionate indifference (*virāga*) to the fruits, to enjoyments of objects (*arthaphalabhoga*) or to the other worlds (*amutra*) after rebirth.
3. Six virtues (*Śamādiṣatka sampatti*, or simply *satsampat*)—
  - (a) *Śama*, temperance of mind
  - (b) *Dama*, temperance of sense organs (voluntary self-restraints)
  - (c) *Uparati*, withdrawal of mind from sensory objects (*nivartitānāmeteṣāṃtadvy atiriktaviṣayebhyauparamaṇamuparatirathavāvīhitānāṃkarmaṇāmvidhināp arityāgaḥ* [Vedāntasāra, 21])

- (d) *Titiksha*, forbearance
  - (e) *Śhraddhā*, faith
  - (f) *Samādhāna*, concentration of mind for solutions of critical problems
4. Drive, longing (*Mumukṣutva*)—intense yearning for *moksha* from the state of ignorance (Maharaj, 2014)

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### **Conversation Between Lord Krishna and Arjuna Revealed: The Chapter 4 (in Special Reference to Jñāna Yoga)**

Chapter 4 of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā shows Yoga, with an adjective suitable to the subject matter. Chapter 2 is called Sankhya yoga or the way of discrimination, and the chapter 3 ‘Karma Yoga’ or the way of Action. The first chapter is called ‘Arjuna Vishada Yoga’ which also shows ‘The Grief of Arjuna’. While this is justified, it can be argued that even grief and despondency can ultimately lead to liberation, as they did in the case of Arjuna. Thus every chapter of the holy Gītā is rightly called a Yoga which can further be elaborated as – ‘Yearning Oneness and Gaining Advanceness’ (YOGA). According to Shakara, Jñāna Yoga is all about renunciation and attained through the performance of duty which rightly directs and lays anybody to perform responsibilities towards the holy task.

Chapter 4 is the crux of all about wisdom sharing by Lord Krishna to warrior Arjuna. In the professional environment, organizational setting has got the crunch of talent who are responsible to perform short term as well as long term duties. A small motivation can enthrall the scenario even in the tough times. Grappling with the righteous decisions at any point of career of in solving the hurdles of life, the balance spectrum and lessons from Bhagavad Gītā enlighten the people. In the current VUCA environment which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, the solutions can be reckoning after the right practices of the VUCA solutions only. As per the lessons from holy Gītā, VUCA solutions contain – values, understandings, continuity and agility. Arjuna was able to learn such aspects with the divine lessons from Lord Krishna. Arjuna could become able to get back functional his weapon Gandiva (Arjuna’s bow) which would provide inexhaustible number of arrows. Many a times, a knowledge worker, earlier with the full of enthusiasm, knowledge, attitude and grit, forgets his or her awesome working styles as the new environmental challenges they meet. The Jñāna yoga lifts the mental attitude and comes out from all stigmas through which an employee holds the knowledge empowerment aspects for long term in any organizational setting. This envisages the Jñāna yoga and usefulness to concur workplace wisdom and decorum. It is based on renunciation and attained through the performance on duty, thus comprehending both the life of activity till the retirement from organization.

The holy conversations in the form of questions and answers between Lord Krishna and Arjuna are briefly carved with the crux of lessons in reference to Knowledge management. Lord Krishna enlightens Arjuna with the life lessons through unbeatable learning.

**Lord Krishna:** I taught this imperishable Karma-yoga to (King) Vivasvaan. Vivasvaan taught it to Manu and Manu taught it to Ikshavaaku. But after eras and centuries, these lessons have lost the worth. Again, today, I am sharing the crux of knowledge as you are my mate and a determined one which you are forgetting to adhere here in your practical Warfield. We have taken many births. I remember them all, but you do not. Though I am eternal, imperishable, and the Lord of all beings; yet I manifest by controlling my own material nature using my Yoga-Maya. I manifest myself when there is sin ('Adharma' overpowers the goodness (Sacred things and Dharma)). My incarnation is here for protecting the good, for transforming the wicked.

**Management Lesson:** This saying directly reflects the best understanding towards transcendental birth and activities. When a person is detached from the badly practices and transformed purified with the self-knowledge, they can attain me. This divine lesson directly gives us insights to get our responsibilities done at our workplace without fear and unethical practices. Truly to the concept helps to achieve the life and career goals.

**Lord Krishna:** With whatever motive people worship Me, I reward them accordingly. People worship me with different motives. Those who long for success in their work here worship the demigods. Success in work comes quickly in this human world. The four Varna or divisions of human society, based on aptitude and vocation, were created by me. Though I am the author of this system, one should know that I do nothing and I am eternal. Works do not bind me, because I have no desire for the fruits of work. The one who understands this truth is not bound by *Karma*.

**Management Lesson:** A managers' and a workers task must be cohesive and towards contributing to the organisation. The workplace is to be worshipped and the work with the devotion. No matter what pace they have adopted the rewards system usually quite fair with reference to what they have contributed to the job. Success is subtle. As you sow, so shall you reap. In the current contemporary world, knowledge matters. Work responsibility and persistence increases the moral off individuals to attain positive potential appraisal quickly. An utter concentration over work during probation, truly generates positive results.

**Lord Krishna:** The ancient seekers of liberation also performed their duties with this understanding. Therefore, you should do your duty as the ancients did. Even the wise are confused about what is action and what is inaction. Therefore, I shall clearly explain what action is, knowing that one shall be liberated from the evil. The true nature of action is very difficult to understand.

**Management Lesson:** It is strengthened from ancient practices and literature that respect begets respect to the person who performs this towards their job. Many a times there are perplexities while performing job responsibilities and a knowledge worker gets confused which would be the right decision. It is rightly conceived from the literature to remain active. Inaction is capricious. Lord Krishna teaches to Arjuna the varied meanings and uses of action and inaction. One should know the nature of attached action, the nature of detached action, and also the nature of forbidden action. Attached action is selfish work that produces Karmic bondage, detached action is unselfish work that leads to nirvana, and forbidden action is harmful to

society. The one, who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is a wise person. Such a person is a yogi and has accomplished everything. A person whose all works are free from selfish desires and motives, and whose all *Karma* is burned up in the fire of self-knowledge, is called a 'sage by the wise'. Here it directly focuses onto the strategic decisions, a manager make while planning and implementation in any organisation.

**Lord Krishna:** Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of work, ever content, and dependent on no one; though engaged in activity, one does nothing at all. Free from desires, Mind and senses under control, renouncing all proprietorship, doing mere bodily action, and one does not incur sin. Content with whatever gain comes naturally by his will, unaffected by dualities, free from envy in success and failure; though engaged in work such a person is not bound. Those who are devoid of attachment, whose mind is fixed in knowledge and who does work with dedication to the Lord, all *Karma* of such liberated persons dissolve away.

**Management Lesson:** With the inception of the work at any new work settings, one should learn, respects what to be taught, attain a conceptual knowledge and training to shape the career firmly helps then to attain desired fruits. This expectation must be referred as a detachment once and to be persistent to perform and learn the duties.

**Lord Krishna:** The oblation is poured by *Brahman* into the fire of *Brahman*. *Brahman* shall be realized by the one who considers everything as an act of *Brahman*. Some yogis perform the *Yajna* (also called *Yagya*) of worship to *Devas* (diety) alone, while others offer *Yajna* itself.

**Management Lesson:** One must work as worship. Notwithstanding the job position, one submits the quality. A knowledge worker must rely on the system with the utter commitment and authenticity. Functions of the senses and the functions of 'Prana' (Soul) are sacrifice as time devoted to the work is the key to success. Practice of yoga as sacrifice, while the ascetics with strict vows offer their study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice.

**Lord Krishna:** Those who are engaged in yogic practice, reach the breathless state by offering inhalation into exhalation and exhalation into inhalation as sacrifice. All these are the knower of sacrifice, and become pure. The wise who have realized the truth will teach you.

**Management Lesson:** The knowledge sacrifice is superior to any material sacrifice because, all actions in their entirety conclude in knowledge. Acquire this transcendental knowledge by humble veneration, by sincere inquiry, and by service. Those who perform *Yajna* obtain the nectar of knowledge. As a result, devoting precious time helps to attain eternal peace. Many types of sacrifice are described in the *Vedas*. Know them all to be born from *Karma* or the action of body, mind, and senses. Knowing this, you shall attain *nirvana*.

**Lord Krishna:** Knowing that, O Arjuna, You shall not again get deceived like this. By this knowledge you shall behold the entire creation in your own Self/ Lord, or in *Brahman*. Even if one is the most sinful of all sinners, yet one shall cross over the ocean of sin by the raft of knowledge alone. As the blazing fire reduces wood to

ashes, similarly, the fire of self-knowledge reduces all *Karma* to ashes. One who becomes purified by *Karma-yoga* discovers this knowledge within course of time.

**Management Lesson:** In the career path, there are variations and challenges around. Be it a same workplace or varied, a true practitioner can succeed. The one who has faith, sincerity and mastery over his senses, gains this knowledge. They will be able to perform, behave and balance themselves in a right way. Having gained this, a knowledge worker attains the job satisfaction and supreme peace. There are situations which deviates the path of an individual, making them ignorant, which has no faith and is full of doubt, perishes. There is neither this world nor the world beyond nor happiness for the one who doubts.

**Lord Krishna:** Karma does not bind one who has renounced work through *Karma-yoga*; whose doubt is completely destroyed by knowledge; and who is self-realized. Therefore, resort to *karma-yoga* and cut the ignorance-born doubt abiding in your heart by the sword of self-knowledge, and get up (to fight).

**Management Lesson:** In the quest of knowledge, actions decides the results. To attain ultimate knowledge is not yet granted for all. It's not the degree or level that gives the complete chunk of knowledge as it is inherent and absolutely based on Karma (actions). An individual takes time while deciding the right or wrong or to choose the one out the several options. The learning is the myth stands many a times true and false as well. Experience matters but again with the complexities of the aspects, gives the truth to an individual. Somewhere down the line, the knowledge quest unveils paths to make new horizons and leads an individual towards the stage of self-realisation.

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## Yoga as the Way of Concentration

In reference to practices of Yoga of Knowledge- *Jñānayoga* for Advaitins consists of three practices (Davis, 2010): *shravana* (hearing), *manana* (thinking) and *nididhyasana* (meditation). (Mayeda, 1992) This three-step methodology is rooted in the teachings of chapter 4 of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (Grimes, 1996; Ramakrishna Rao & Paranjpe, 2015).

Wisdom never goes along. It inherits in itself the experiences and communications of multifold aspects which an individual has subscribed earlier. In any organizational hierarchy, the structure is the best example with the ladder to the pinnacle. Everyone can see the difference amongst the people holding positions in their respective responsibilities. Irony is the acute analytical acceptance to give worth to the aspect which is generator and more oriented towards growth.

The holy Gītā is the composition of great lessons with the wisdom to be applied at the right time and right place. The knowledge people have their own diligent attribute to comment the success and they start riding on the ladder. The *Jñāna* yoga or the art of knowing is the solution to cut the rough edges and let them step up for the next possible scenario.

The sixth chapter of holy Gītā earnestly gives the right meaning of 'yoga' i.e., the sense of meditation or concentration of mind. Bringing thoughts to a point while

sitting in a right posture usually is the way beginners try to practice. In reality, it's a concentration. Be it any point, anything, any activity that must handle the ethical integrity rather than turbulence. Arjuna doubts- 'The Mind is turbulent, restless, powerful and obstinate. To control, it is as hard, it seems to me, as the control of wind.' Unlike Arjuna, It is hard for any employee per se to practice *Jñāna yoga* in the beginning. Still the holy Gītā teaches the salient feature of this Yoga here- To live alone in solitude and practice chastity and non-covetousness; selecting a clean spot and spreading a three layered seat, to sit subduing the senses, to concentrate at the tip of the nose or between the eyebrows; there to meditate on self; and to practice moderation in food and in sleep. Success is achieved by constant practice combined with detachment.

In the corporate world, it has been observed that limiting the access to resources and find the best way to get our work done on deadlines is sometimes seems to a red hot stove rule. The perseverance by any employee on rules either make them utter committed and futuristic towards the job or the troublesome. For both the organizational and individual perspective the world is about decisions is to go parallel with flow, but the matter of prudence whether getting aligned in the same track or in the another track.

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## The Path of Wisdom

*Jñāna* means "knowledge" (Apte, 1965, p. 457). The root *jñā-* is cognate to English *know*, as well as to the Greek *γνώ* (as in *γνώσις gnosis*). *Jñāna* is knowledge, and refers to any cognitive event that is correct and true over time. It particularly refers to knowledge inseparable from the total experience of its object, especially about reality (non-theistic schools) or Supreme Being (theistic schools) (Jnana- Indian religion, Britannica Online Encyclopedia).

According to Bimal Matilal, *Jñāna yoga* in *Advaita Vedanta*, connotes both primary and secondary sense of its meaning, that is "self-consciousness, awareness" in the absolute sense and relative "intellectual understanding" respectively.

*Jñāna yoga* emphasizes the "path of knowledge" (Flood, 1996, p. 127) which is also known as the "path of self-realization" *Jñāna yoga* is a spiritual practice that pursues knowledge with questions such as "who am I, what am I" among others. (Dykema, 2011; Espín & Nickoloff, 2007; Mann, 1984).

Of the three different paths to liberation, *Jñāna marga* and *karma marga* are the more ancient, traceable to Vedic era literature (Klostermaier, 2007). All three paths are available to any *Hindu*, chosen based on inclination, aptitude and personal preference (Fowler, 2002; Nadkarni, 2016).

The classical yoga emphasizes the practice of *dhyana* (meditation), and this is a part of all three classical paths in Hinduism, including *jñāna yoga* (Jones & Ryan, 2006, p.73; Matilal, 2005). The path of knowledge is intended for those who prefer philosophical reflection and it requires study and meditation (Fowler, 2002; Krishan, 1997; Nadkarni, 2016). The *Jñāna marga* ideas are discussed in ancient and medieval era Hindu scriptures and texts such as the *Upanishads* and the holy

Gītā (b; Lochtefeld, 2002a; Perrett, 2012; Varenne, 1989). Wisdom is the key to success. To achieve the ultimate goal of the material life and to concrete it to the immaterial or a real one, is the main objective of any individual. The holy Gītā scriptures well explains the secrets through Jñāna Yoga. The wisdom and knowledge is not just the information gathering.

To really understand self, managers need to cultivate their thoughts. They need to constantly seek knowledge to make more informed decisions. All this happens through Knowledge creation (Jñāna Sṛiṣṭi) and Knowledge acquisition (Jñāna Prāpti).

Successful and reputed organizations with revered corporate leaders can follow this wisdom of Arthashastra, as this *Rajarshi* (King) paradigm clearly advocates a leadership which is both responsible and ethical. It not just advocates self-abnegation of senses but also instructs the leader to nurture his intellect. The process of *Jñāna parivahana* (Knowledge transfer) and *Jñāna sahabhājana* (Knowledge sharing) can be instrumental in making this *Rajarshi* paradigm a reality in today's corporate leadership. Modern wisdom can integrate with *Rajarshi* paradigm in enormous ways: *Jñāna parivahana* through continuous learning and development (L&D) programs for the various levels of managers. From mythology to management the wisdom world inculcated with the sustainable paradigm shift. Here plays an important role of supervision and peer learning. Mentorship of the newly inducted employees and interns, Implementation of proper knowledge sharing (*Jñāna sahabhājana*) platforms enable managers to take effective decisions.

Continuous acknowledgement of the role of the various employees and managers in the overall organizational development and its achievements is worth. It's always good as per holy Gītā and adapted practices by organization to:

1. Create effective management development programs to accelerate the emergence of responsible leadership at various levels of management,
2. Creating an ethical code of conduct (the company credo) which should promote a culture of ethics and transparency.
3. Enact stringent policy measures to counter any possible unethical practice at various levels of the organization.
4. Apart from these three major practices, an organization must adhere the policy to continuously update the knowledge of its knowledge workers in reference to the expectations of the top hierarchy.

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## Discussion

After reading such an important holy scripture one can realise it to judge and see the facts in the personal and professional life. While knowing the relevance of lessons from holy Gītā, one might not directly able to understand the depth of what is to be disseminated. People are often with the belief to know and take things right when they have examined and authenticated the fact.

Here the question comes with the belief how one can follow the lessons from holy Gītā as the utter truth so as to adapt it as principles to their personal and professional life. Few of the qualitative statements can be derived here for the purpose of introspection and relevance. Major qualitative statements and discussions are framed here in, with the help of a set of questions.

- Are you thoroughly acquainted to the Holy Scripture Srimad Bhagavad Gītā?
- What do you think on the part of Knowledge and wisdom?
- Is there the relevance of holy Gītā to the knowledge attainment?
- At what extent you do agree with the concept of knowledge empowerment?
- Would you state few of the words of wisdom which you do understand and implement at your workplace?
- Please state any one conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna which you think the most applicable for knowledge empowerment in any organisation.
- Would you please mention the secret ladder of success from the Holy Scripture Gītā.
- Do you think in the contemporary scenario, the yoga of knowledge from Holy Gītā enlighten us.
- In what way you can exactly define the *Jñāna yoga*?

Small efforts can lead to the right and will be carried over the perplexities. The focus of this review is to benefit the knowledge workers and management through *Jñāna yoga*. Though, the insights from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā are mostly actuated with *Karma, Dhyana and Jñāna yoga* that outline a state of highest realization to all distinguished persons across the Globe. A workplace wisdom then directly or indirectly taken as an important aspect while HR handling. Nevertheless, perfect control of senses and mind, freedom from high greed, peace, and same sightedness are the characteristics to be implemented for productivity at workplace with sound intellectual people. To check *Jñāna yoga*'s importance in knowing and imparting capabilities to knowledge workers at all levels.

The ultimate truth in holy Gītā is the focus on 'Knowledge'. Knowledge lesson by Lord Krishna is the powerful tool which leads over the money, strength and huge army of Duryodhna (Opponent of Arjuna in Mahabharata battle). Be it a life battle, the corporate battle or the battle to fight with the own evil thoughts, the enlightening way is to have knowledge. The power of knowledge is the biggest and wide. It concretes the world of an individual on many career development stages of the life.

The light of knowledge and holy lessons by Lord Krishna enlightened Arjuna after the all attachment of materialistic world. The holy Gītā never denies participating in worldly affairs but this gives path to choose and to move with the right and wrong decisions. The karma and yoga are the important factors in life where holding the true knowledge is the concrete one. The lessons throughout all the 18 chapters of holy Gītā provide continuous learning. With very assembled and settled one, all chapters' follows the structured approach which gives step by step lessons unlike we start from our basic grammatical education towards the maturity with the right intellectual intake.



One can question here why to follow lessons only from Gītā and not from other sources. The holy Gītā declares the fact that every lesson covers the fact from all walks of life and supported with the principles beyond the time, place and circumstances.

Lord Krishna says the knowledge comes and reflects with the will power and gives the strength to the organization and individual to maintain, survive and grow towards success. Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is a guide which gives lessons step by step in all 18 chapters. Lessons from chapter One enlightens Arjuna to be strong and chapter Two reminds him to have strength to know his duties and not to back out from his responsibilities. As Lord Krishna always says that do your Karma and perform. Victory and failure is not in our hand. The thing is in our hand is the performance. Chapter Three lessons again explain the theory of karma and not to sacrifice everything. Your action leads to your perfections. It's really important to think about society and not only for self. Chapter Four again explains the theories of incarnation. Lord Krishna reminds Arjuna to focus on one thing and be a Karma Yogi. Chapter Five enlightens Arjuna to become knowledgeable and to remove all confusions. Trust and commitment is the important factor towards success. Chapter Six says to be a yogi and to have a control on *Mana*, *buddhi* and *Ahamkar* by making our life balances. Chapter Seven explained to Arjuna, the strong determination towards our work and becoming ethical. There is energy always while available everywhere in everything. Chapter Eight enlightened Arjuna to have control over senses and to have a deep connect with almighty. Chapter Nine submit to Arjuna the extension of the almighty is infinite. Yet to know where it ends hence to just adapt the notion that there is something which is everywhere and we must know the fact. Chapter Ten says that Lord Krishna is everywhere in living and non-living. Chapter Eleven gives Arjuna the cosmic vision to be a believer of God and to follow the path directed by Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna blesses Arjuna by providing him that position to see the real world which is not even possible to revisit by anybody in the worldly affairs. Lord Krishna makes him (Arjuna) feel a great person. Chapter Twelve shows the *Bhakti Marga* to find the God. Chapter thirteen says that it's not possible to see everything. The creator has himself become a creation and available everywhere. Chapter Fourteen removes the confusion in depth that every work is done by us which is lead by energy but decision is always in our hand. Chapter fifteen derives the detachment concept and to have faith on almighty. Chapter Sixteen says to follow right habits in daily life. Chapter Seventeen allows us intake *Satvik* (Pure vegetarian) food. This also focuses on what is your food for thought. Chapter eighteen enlightens Arjuna again to follow our path and to be benign while performing our responsibilities.

To gain the highest market shares in the corporate world to grab the blue ocean strategy. Holy Gītā is a complete motivational manual that provides us the notion of being knowledgeable. Inheriting the lessons from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā entitled with the philosophy of *Karma* (Deed), *Dharma* (Responsibilities) and to have a clear cur idea on decision making path. Bhagavad Gītā says: *sattvāsañjāyate jñānamrajasolobhaeva ca pramāda-mohautamasobhavato 'jñānameva ca* (14.17, The Bhagavadgītā) which means that it is from ethical and moral conduct and

wisdom (Sattwa); passion leads to greed (Rajas); ignorance and inactivity lead to illusion.

In *jñāna yoga* knowledge is, at best, the bone around which the flesh and blood of wisdom takes shape. Concrete is the wisdom, which is taken as the solution to any problem or handling doubts in our deed. In other words, Wisdom is an “understanding of what is true, right, or lasting; the intellectual power to decide wisely.” One would surely take it as a vision for life. The ultimate attainment of knowledge is the main purpose of people through which they will be the balanced one in any hurdle situation met while performing. The decision making here is the utter truth which lays any individual to draw an opportunity to deal with various situations in life. When it comes to the scenario of making our life goal, one must understand the fact that nothing left behind but the work is. There is the true observation and lessons on Karma, Dharma and *Jñāna yoga* which must kept through the life for better performance. Deciding the career goal is the faith and determination which leads one who is the opportunity seeker. Right judgment, common sense, wise outlook, learning applications and wise teachings are the reflections of wisdom which are hugely covered in holy ancient scriptures. This gives the directions to a knowledge worker irrespective of any diversity in diverse institutions to work with devotion. ‘*Nishkama Karma*’ as the self control and creating a shield for our own self is to gain foresights and reducing the negativities. In a yogic context *jñāna* is the wisdom derived from direct acquaintance with the Self.

The Greek mystic philosopher, Socrates defines wisdom and meaning of life in his last days of life. He held the conviction that life is meant for sharpening the eye of the soul, a better and more permanent instrument with which to see truth than the eyes of the body, and he believed that an escape would believe the fundamental premise of his teaching.

The discussion on the lessons from Srimad Bhagavad Gītā is always meeting almost every purpose of life and derived with the wisdom for resolution the hardships. Above discussions reflects that modern management practices in VUCA environment are made for dealing the situations with wisdom and relevance. It would be right to portray that principles existing today are derived from the knowledge of the ancient Indian scriptures. However, an organization functions in a dubious framework that faces the various stages of business and product life cycle.

Through the wisdom of ancient Indian scriptures and taking the six-fold path of “*Jñāna*” or knowledge, we can make the existing modern management acculturation. Through spirituality wisdoms of the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gītā, etc. we can not only promote a more ethical and responsible leadership on an individual or institutional level but also move towards the direction of restoring World peace and a better world economic order through coupling globalization with spiritual congruence. In the three *Gunās* (viz., Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas) we can understand the reasons for decision-making failures on an individual level which ultimately leads to organizational or institutional failures. Knowledge of these *Gunās* can give insights to analyze right *Gunās* that drives us towards positive deeds. Some of the recent failures of companies which were revered in their industry can be explained through this Guna theory. At the top level strategies can lead rest of the

pyramid and drive it to attain organizational objectives with the high rated performance of knowledge worker. Notwithstanding, the significance of Sattva Guna that completely detached from worldly greed is to get results. The "result first" concept might deviate the learner and turns into a disaster. The 'Deed First' concept whereas enhances the focus. Contrary here is to maintain the belief how the things can go right while there is no focus on results. Nevertheless, people usually take the concept of holy Gītā as a holy notion and mere book that is decorated at spiritual columns at workplaces or home. This shows *Sattva* among people that hold then even in tough times to have faith though. Again the *Guna* associated here to know the holy word and lessons that is to be inherited among people and can spread the dedication among workers. A balance can drive workforce when the focus of employees as well as the employer hold the importance of their brand with the utter faith and creation of an environment in the holy place to gain control over atrocities. Non-performance is never derived here and hence the '*Tamas*' has never been appreciated among people in any organization. It is time that modern management thinkers (Goel, 2008) should embrace the importance of ancient Indian ethos in filling the gaps that exist in the existing paradigms of leadership and management.

It is worth to understand the contemplative life. When mind develops the capacity of getting concentrated on any object at will, it becomes one, as it were, with the object of meditation. Concentrated mind gains a special type of knowledge which is called knowledge filled with truth. Amongst all fruits of contemplative life viz., development of an introspective mode, Mental Peace and Joy, Capacity to become one with the object of meditation and special type of knowledge, the forth one is the most important to reckon as a path for finding the final destination. Though, people have knowledge their deed they have already performed. Here important is the fruit of contemplative life which is acquired through knowledge with the help of sense experiences and inference based on such sense knowledge. The faculty by which spiritual truths are directly experienced is intuition. This is one of the important fruits of leading a contemplative life. Animals like dogs, cats and birds etc. have got sixth sense to impend dangers so that they can escape themselves from threatening situations before the event. This is also called *Prajna* (*Pragya* i.e. Wisdom). Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā lights on performing without any expectations or fruit. The fruit is here is comprises of right values, behavior, culture and wisdom.

The concept of wisdom implies that there are things to be wise about. Krishna earnestly describes two such "things": first, an individual's relationship with a "field," a living body/mind, and second, that same individual's relationship with the ultimate knower of all fields, the supreme Spirit.

We'll start with the field with reference to the body and mind. Here is Krishna's list of its components viz., *The five elements* (earth, water, fire, air, and ether (or pure space), *the ego, the intellect, unmanifest nature, the five cognitive senses, the five active senses, the lower mind which coordinates the senses, the five fields of sense perception; desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, the aggregate of the body/mind, sentience, and courage: this is the field and its modifications.* (*Bhagavad Gītā*, 3:6–7).

These five elements are constituents of the body that are also reflected in psychological functioning. Ego is the sense of self-identity whereas the intellect is the higher mind, the part of the mind that is capable of decision-making and self-observation (the *buddhi*). Unmanifest nature is composed of three *Gunas*, three attributes of energy which are interwoven to form the substrate of all manifest things.

In lieu of knowledge it is must to adhere right learning attitude and patience. Krishna lists seven more dimensions of personality: likes and dislikes the experiences of pleasure and pain, the sense of oneself as a whole being (an aggregate of elements contained under one roof of personal awareness), the awareness of oneself as a living, feeling organism, and the presence of states of mind, such as courage. Within the human personality it alone is the “knower of the field,” called *purusha* in the *Sankhya* system. Every human being, then, is an aggregate of a field (*prakriti*) and a field-knower (*purusha*), a body/mind and a consciousness that is woven within it. In the following verse Krishna summarizes the two: *Prakriti is the cause of activity: the doer, the means of doing, and the thing done. Purusha [alone, in its relationship with prakriti] is the cause of the apperception of experience as pleasurable and painful.* (13:20) Thus, while nature weaves an unending fabric of action and reaction, only the life-force (consciousness) senses this experience as pleasant or painful, and thus gives it the semblance of life.

After the lessons from holy *Gītā* by Lord Krishna, many of the questions to the knowledge worker can be answered in the current parlance. In a random horizons, it can be observed from the environment directly or indirectly the practices in the companies to fight with the atrocities through the help of its talent management. Human resources are the life blood of any organization. The system is dead if there is no blood circulation. Hence, retention, rotation and upgradation is always needed. Be it a career or in the form of employee engagement, techniques that an employer adapt is, worth.

The path of *Jñāna* Yoga is suited for those who are gifted with strong mental and intellectual faculties. This path emphasis on the true knowledge regarding the nature of the self, and requires sharp intellect coupled with intense spiritual longing. Since ignorance (*Avidya*) obscures the self from achieving salvation, the aim of this path is to destroy ignorance by discrimination and contemplation on Truth.

Listening and understanding the holy lessons and ethical practices in spiritual discourse from spiritual teachers (*gurus*) are required to well-established in Truth. The company of truly awakened souls strengthens the power of right discrimination and accelerates the unfolding of the true self. Thoughtful contemplation gradually weakens the ego and frees the soul from its wrong identification with the body and mind.

Practice of shifting the focus of attention from the mortal aspect of one’s being to the immortal aspect of being, and intense contemplation therein. *Jñāna* is the highest teaching of the Upanishads and the central theme of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. As stated in the following verses of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Jñāna* is considered a supreme purifier.

‘Nothing indeed purifies in this world like wisdom. He who lives in self-harmony finds it (wisdom) in time within himself, by himself.’ (Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, 4.38).

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## Relevance of *Jñāna* Yoga in Knowledge Management

The *Advaita* philosopher Adishankara gave primary importance to *jñāna* yoga for the “knowledge of the absolute” (Brahmana), while the *Vishishtadvaita* commentator Ramanuja regarded knowledge only as a condition of devotion. (Flood, 1996).

There is, however, a lot of skepticism about knowledge management (KM). There is an urgent need to develop measures for KM for a CEO to realize if KM is working for an organization, to determine what value is being added to its processes and products, and to determine what implications there are for competition by enhanced sharing and collaboration. We conclude with a quote from Bhagavad Gītā, “The wise see knowledge and action as one.” Intelligent organizations are recognizing that knowledge is an asset, perhaps the only one that grows with time that harnessed properly can provide them with the ability to continuously compete and innovate into the next millennium.

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## Reflections on Knowledge Management in Spiritual Congruence

In the Upanishads, ‘*Jñāna yoga* aims at the realization of the oneness of the individual self (Atman) and the ultimate Self (Brahman) (Jones & Ryan, 2006, p.51). According to Chambliss, the mystical teachings within these Upanishads discuss “the way of knowledge of the Self”, a union, the realization that the Self (Atman) and the Brahman are identical (Chambliss, 2013). Holy Scriptures across the globe has significance in terms of following the spirituality and decorum in all walks of life (Dharam, 2011). A well saying—‘*Gyanam vina na kimapi sadhyam*’ enlighten the people at any place, any hierarchy and position to follow a right path that add values while performing with their competencies. It is essential for an entrepreneur too, to keep the pace on learning and maintaining the holy attitude while applying their own established principles to their war places. The holy Gītā directly assimilates that fact through lessons by Lord Krishna to Arjuna to be a doer than to back out from performing his Dharma.

Other ancient scriptures viz., Vedas, *upnishads*, Ramayana too focuses on the path of introspection and meditation for the correct knowledge (*Jñāna*) of self. A *Jñāna yogi* may also practice *Karma yoga* or *Bhakti yoga* or both, and differing levels of emphasis (Horosz & Clements, 2012; Perrett, 2012). According to Robert Roeser (2005), the precepts of *Jñāna yoga* in Hinduism were likely systematized by about 500 BCE, earlier than *Karma yoga* and *Bhakti yoga*.

An exhaustive exposition of the inner and outer life of the ‘man of steady wisdom’ or the ‘man of Self-realization’ follows now. Current practices in any organization clearly reflect in terms of what holy Gītā enumerates. An organization talks

about values, ethics, culture, wisdom, employee retention, visionary approaches, and ethical leadership that follows the constructive approaches while making the right strategic HRM approaches to run the system. Gītā reduces the mental stigma. The one irrespective of any hierarchy acquires the knowledge skills and attitude. This demeanor adapts several types of values and mental attitudes to adhere for overall growth and decorum of any organization. The employee of steady wisdom does not long for external possessions for he enjoys the supreme bliss of self-knowledge that reflects in job satisfaction, performance, commitment and dedication towards the job.

Spiritual dimensions can never be undermined even if in case of professionals. A spiritually ignorant or immature person hangs on to unnecessary desires, because that person depends on the fulfillment of such desires for his happiness. When a person grows into maturity, and naturally and completely casts off one's dependence on the fulfillment of one's desires for one's happiness, one then becomes a wise person. Right attitude describes the right person with wisdom and they contribute to the workplace harmony with diligence. They become more aware in terms of self knowledge and takes ownership of the organization by creating a harmonious culture. When that knowledge takes place, there is no craving for any object or experience external to one's own self, to be happy. At that time all desires have no hold on oneself and they naturally fall from one's *mana* (Heart) and *buddhi* (intellect), which is same as telling that one naturally and completely grows out of one's dependence on the fulfillment of one's desires for one's happiness.

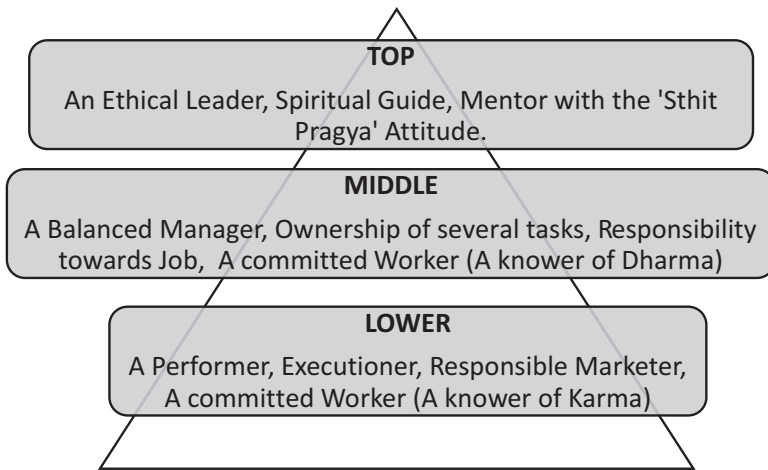
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## Abilities for Knowledge Worker in the Strategic, Managerial and Operational Levels

As describes the holy Gītā, *Karma, Dharma and Jñāna* are the important aspects of this worldly life. A knowledge worker must possess the competencies in reference to organizational requirement. The system requires changes and modifications over time but that doesn't mean to change the workforce but to upgrade, train and develop its people in several aspects so as to perform even if the job rotation or job enrichment happen. One must understand the holy lessons from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā and has to adapt the sense of responsibility which is required in times (Fig. 9.1).

Lord Krishna gives the lessons to Arjuna to perform and not to stand idle. There might be a huge loss in sitting idle. One has to perform.

As like the situation of Arjuna, he supposed to choose leaving the Warfield. The battle is nowhere in the hands of anyone else. Once you have got the position with your skills, this automatically comes in your hand to perform now. Upto certain extent, the mode of performance may change, even than they have to perform. There is no any condition, only dharma matters. Unlike struggling in any battle in the Warfield, an organization survives with the autonomy and competence with the help of knowledge workers. An organization establishes the sound system, levels and positions categorically defined in its virtue.



**Fig. 9.1** Characteristics of knowledge workers at various levels in organisations (Source: Author)

The role of entrepreneur, Manager and executives follows the same concept which highlights the responsibilities and deeds. An entrepreneur must be 'sthit pragyā' i.e. the balanced one, as 'What he says he does'. Top level must be a great leader who understand the situations and take decision out of it. Every right decision may help an organization towards sustainability whereas a wrong decision ruins. It's the ultimate responsibility of a guide/mentor that holds at higher hierarchy to command, regulate and guide its workforce. Lord Krishna has given the lessons continuously to Arjuna till he understood what to do. Requisites here for any organization/employers to take decisions while induction and Learning & development (L&D).

A manager is the one who keeps the fact and commit to employer to work on their behalf. They are the great connector between upper and lower hierarchy. For a manager a system and deeds must be transparent to make a decision and to provide solutions to their subordinates.

The executioner must commit to the system to disseminate the information to the external environment to handle and support the bottom up approach. They too know their responsibilities and command their job with the devotion and care. Executioners' level can never be neglect as they create and build the future of any organization with their skills. They must know the concepts of holy Gītā and has to apply it to the work in the form of various roles and aspects viz., commitment, builder of market shares and followers of organizational vision and mission. These practices clearly reflect in any system that has adapted the culture with values and wisdom. This strengthens the image of any organization and helps in individual brand building too. From the side of employer and the employee, the Jñāna yoga knits a powerful bond which upholds the direction of healthy workplace environment. After developing the extensive understanding of Jñāna Yoga, few of the knowledge factors viz., determination, consistent knowledge, intellect to differentiate between right and wrong, an analytical perspective and career development path, were found.

## Conclusion

This has been clearly experienced and observed from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā lesson to acquire wisdom and to follow the right path. The holy Gītā is a science of Yoga that enlightens the 'Karmayogi', a knowledge worker to meet with the job responsibilities and to get the determined attitude with the perseverance and will to get the job done.

*Jñāna* yoga in the same context exemplifies the virtue to take right decisions to align ourselves with the goals of the organization which held possible only through the efforts and integrity with nurturing ethical congruence. *Jñāna* Yoga is the state of highest realization to attain that ability to use wisdom and freedom in which the soul is united in doing ethical deeds, with the mind is fully concentrated, calm and detached. This state can be reached by the yoga of knowledge. The path helps here are not exclusive but interdependent.

Lord Krishna did psychometric analysis of Arjuna. It's about Skilled Manpower and will. Arjuna lost his will and Lord Krishna enlightened. Krishna had given him the training of bounce back'. People are with the extraordinary power and they should know their capabilities. Success depends on 'will'. Many a times it happens when a knowledge worker get aloof from their will. The holy Gītā lessons remind/d it to them to follow the right path and stand up and perform. Sri Krishna taught it to Arjuna, and in the present age Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated it in his life and taught it to the world through Swami Vivekananda. As has been shown, the Swami has interpreted the teachings of the Gītā to suit modern times to disseminate knowledge.

It is worth to say in compendium that self knowledge leads to understand the worldly affairs. Six fold path towards attaining of this goal of connecting Self to the real wisdom or "*Jñāna*" is through six steps: (1) Knowledge creation (*Jñāna sriṣṭi*) (2) Knowledge acquisition (*Jñāna prāpti*) (3) Knowledge transfer (*Jñāna parivahana*) (4) Knowledge sharing (*Jñāna sahabhājana*) (5) Open innovation (*muktanavaracana*) (6) Spiritual Congruence (*ādhyātmikasāmanjasya*).

These can be understood in terms of developing the right perspectives and avenues for benefitting to the organizational development and knowledge empowerment for organizational as well as knowledge workers. Findings from the study strongly focus on the skills to undertake by knowledge workers consistently in any organization. In all the levels of an organization, an entrepreneur, a manager and an executive has to 'perform. Performance with ownership and responsibility ultimately wins. It can be said that Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā has specific and utter relevance towards knowledge management with specific reference to *Jñāna* yoga. These can be understood in terms of developing the right perspectives and avenues for benefitting to the organizational development and knowledge empowerment for organizational as well as knowledge workers. Findings from the study strongly focus on the skills to undertake by knowledge workers consistently in any organization.

While this great understanding from the wisdom from Srimad Bhagavad Gītā, jnana yoga is the path of knowledge that enlighten us for adapting better practices



for self and organizational development with the right attitude, and analytical skills which can be easily understood with the help of the poetic contribution- '*In the Path of Knowledge*'. *Enlighten- In the Path of Knowledge*

In the path of knowledge,  
I am out of that cage!  
It slowly gives light, holding me tight,  
The wisdom come again, stopped all fight!  
Cutting my, rough age, In the path of Knowledge.  
Sometimes it shies, like a hidden light in the sky,  
It blows touching up the sparkle, and magnify!  
It shines like it shines till the age, In the path of Knowledge.  
It's holy and divine, Indeed it benign.  
Unleashes the sphere, remain to shine!  
To uncover the next of the page, In the path of Knowledge.  
Creating a destiny alone, journey from unknown,  
It's the power to empower, by cutting rough ages of own!  
Turning you from perplex to a sage, In the path of Knowledge.  
In the path of Knowledge!

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## Discussion Questions

- Q. 1. Discuss the major lessons from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā with the relevance of Management.
- Q. 2. What are the major lessons from *Jnana* Yoga which can be adapted by a management professional in organizational settings? Briefly describe the major potentialities as per the hierarchy.
- Q. 3. How can manager manage themselves to compete with the ethical followings? Briefly explain the philosophy of *Karma Yogi* while performing.

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# The Bhagavad Gītā as an Antidote to Duality: A Challenge to the Orthodoxy of Current Decisions Theory

# 10

K. Sankaran and C. K. Manjunath

Decision sciences is an important branch of management with volumes written on it. It is a discipline that has absorbed ideas from various disciplines of science and social sciences. Operations Research, for instance, that traditionally dealt largely with optimization problems depends on algorithms developed by Physicists (see for instance, Morse, 1945) or Information Scientists (Pearl, 1995). Behavioral Finance has developed positive (as opposed to normative) models of human decision-making that counter-intuitively challenge traditional rational models based on ideas borrowed from neuroscience (Peterson, 2007; Reyna & Zayas, 2014) and anthropology (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Shiller, 1999). Despite these eclectic efforts, the basic foundations of current decision theory—even if questioned to some degree by brilliant minds like Herbert Simon or Daniel Kahneman—still mirror the Western scientific/industrial enterprise of the last 300 years, with its Aristotelian bias for two-valued logic (Kodish, 2003; Targ & Hurtak, 2006), what Aristotle himself called the law of the excluded middle (Targ & Hurtak, 2006).

Our readings of those who made significant inquiry in the field reveal much. These include Etzioni (1964), Simon (1972), and March (1994). March in his well known primer on decision making provides four basic premises that any decision-maker persistently roots his or her decision upon. The systematic and exhaustive exposition that March provides, and the four basic premises he identifies, subsume under them the paradigmatic position taken by Decision Sciences as a field.

The four premises are presented below as four points with a brief reframing of the same in line with the *Bhagavad Gītā's* philosophy. Please note that, in all the four descriptions, we first provide the premise as framed by March followed by the way the *Bhagavad Gītā* reframes the same. Later we expatiate the alternative position that the *Bhagavad Gītā* takes on all the four points followed by some

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representative questions for reflection by managers interested in the paradigm espoused by the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Finally, in as much as this paper provides a new perspective, we suggest in our conclusion, directions for further research.

1. The first premise is “Are decisions attributable to actions of autonomous actors or to the “systemic properties of an interacting ecology?” (March, 1994, p. ix). Is the identity of the decision maker that of a free agency or is it simply determined by its environment? This, we call the “**Identity**” issue; autonomous vs. deterministic. The same framed in terms of the inquiry that the *Bhagavad Gītā* undertakes, may be extended to include questions like, Who am I? Am I an independent decision-making person in opposition to the socio-psychological milieu in which I am situated in, or am I part of it? In the manner in which March seeks to view the issue, there is a clear subject-object opposition. This may be transcended by viewing the subject itself as an object as the *Bhagavad Gītā* urges us to do: a self-observing “higher” object.
2. March’s (1994) second premise is about the dialectic of constancy vs. variation. Are decision typified more by clarity and consistency or by the ambiguity and inconsistency that the situation presents to the a decision maker? Here too we reframe March’s position of how the decision maker views ambiguity and inconsistency in terms of the **Mental Dynamism** of the decision maker. Clarity and consistency are only for those who have a static mindset, avers the decision making scenario of March. Ambiguity and inconsistency are where the decision maker can “exploit” the situation. But this also creates a sense of separation. This too can and should be transcended. The “separative” is only a precursor to a unitive sense of communion that may at first appear static, but is active in a “silent” sort of way. The *Bhagavad Gītā* takes the position that a separative mindset is inherently violent and there is a way to dynamically seek unity while not forsaking the separative (*viveka*) function for (only) the phenomenal realm. The pursuit of unity is an active on-going dynamic process where a higher form of clarity and consistency emerge. The mental dynamism comes from a pursuit of unity with the faith that convergence would eventually emerge.
3. The third premise that March (1994) proposes is about decisions being either rule based or choice based. The underlying point here is that rules are mechanical instructions to be followed by the decision maker while choices are made by the autonomous individual with only instrumental considerations of the rules (such as avoiding being caught for rule-breaking driven by the fear punishment). March’s “choices” imply that decisions are selfishly derived which may conflict with socially-derived, socially desirable norms and rules. Here again, there is transcendence possible when viewed through the lens of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. A higher-order path may be discerned, the realization of which comes from **self-surrender**. Choosing to self-surrender, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, is about following a higher order path of “self-forgetfulness” whereby the decision maker is able to see beyond the narrow individual choice-based alternatives and start discerning the logic of Higher Powers.

4. Finally is decision making a instrumental activity or an interpretive activity? Here too, humans can go beyond the instrumental-interpretive dialectic that is too separative in *Bhagavad Gītā's* scheme and exhorts the seeker to search for one's own *dharma*. While suggesting such a view, we do recognize March's interpretive aspect of "seeking meaning" to be somewhat similar to *Bhagavad Gītā's* counsel to answer the existential question, "Can I discover my *Dharma* and act on it?" After all *dharma* is deeply about one's duty that is eminently meaningful to oneself.

While we went over the earlier literature on decision making to finally zero in on March's four premises, we also considered more recent literature to find out whether there has been any paradigmatic shifts. We discuss this effort in the next section.

## More Recent Literature on Decision Making

Earlier we pointed out that we had considered some of the early decision making literature [Etzioni, 1964; March, 1994; Simon, 1972 and others]. In addition we also considered scholarly writings of more recency on decision making to find out whether there have been any additions or challenges to March's position. The result of our "snowball" efforts are provided in the following Table 10.1. The Table shows

**Table 10.1** Sample issues addressed in recent literature on decision making

Decisions situations	Issue and ways to address the issues	Authors
Dynamic problems	Sudden changes catching decision makers unawares: Provide assessment of learning and improvements in performance to make mid-stream corrections	Spector (2008)
Dynamic problems	Sudden changes catching decision makers unawares: Use of buffering, dampening and smoothing techniques to predict breakdown of machinery, make decisions on ordering, sending information etc.	Lenny Koh (2008)
Behavioral basis for decision making	Bias and non-rational decision making by humans: Uncover use of effective heuristics	Benartzi and Thaler (2007)
Complex problems	Too many variable interacting in unpredictable ways: Use heuristics	Gigerenzer and Brighton (2011)
Complex problems	Resource-bounded agents: Innovative use of probability principles different from classical methods	Pollock (2006)
Sudden shocks from outside	Develop more sophisticated algorithms for decision making	Woodworth and Cunningham (2008)
High expertise required to make critical decisions	Situations where algorithms are not available: Naturalistic Decision Making with rapid categorization of situations	Klein (2008)

the issues or problems addressed by various researcher and the means suggested to address them.

The above analysis yielded the understanding that the more recent treatments of the subject mainly dealt with analytic ways to overcome specific difficulties faced by decision makers. We can easily deduce there is nothing in these efforts to challenge the four foundational premises pointed out by March (1994). It is also readily clear that the treatment of the studies are more “analytic” suggesting a preference for treating the situation as requiring autonomous action by the decision makers exercising rationality (or bounded rationality). Also germane to the conceptual treatments is the unyielding assumption that greater choices are desirable for better outcomes. This is not to say that we came across no attempts to build non-rational concepts of decision making. Even these were all restricted to the idea of intuitive decision making where analysis (or explanation) of why decisions are made cannot (or could not) be dis-aggregated to finer contributory points. In short, we aver that the ideas that March suggested still remain the foundational bedrock of the decisions literature.

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### ***Bhagavad Gītā's* Ontology and Epistemology**

Before we go further it is important to understand the prescriptive-descriptive divide seen in decision making literature. While March clearly frames the four issues as descriptions of how decision making is done (even as the main-stream literature on prescriptive decision making remains distinct from the descriptive stream), the epistemology of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is less dividing of the descriptive and the prescriptive. Even as it maintains that eternal truths remain eternal with no scope for humanly-formulated prescriptions, it advocates a process of spirally working up on oneself (based on the advise of the teacher, or *guru*, and students' faith in the teacher etc.) to perfection. In such a process, there is no clear demarcation between the prescriptive and the descriptive. The final liberatory understanding is not a scriptural reproduction but a reflexively-mediated deeper understanding as interpreted by the acolyte in the light of scriptural injunctions, own/others' experience, and the grace of the guru. The truth is deeply internalized which is in constant active awareness within, which is the result of a deep reflective process, what in *Sanskrit* is known as *nidhidhyasana*.

Just as the descriptive-prescriptive distinction is blurred in the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, so too the ontology-epistemology divide. In a relativist sense, *Bhagavat Gītā* maintains that epistemology drives reality (ontology); *Jnana* or knowledge would decide the way we perceive reality. This is similar to the quantum physicists' view that until something is observed it does not exist. In an absolutist sense the ontology of *Bhagavad Gītā* also says that the ultimate reality is too sublime for the human mind to comprehend (ontology becomes hopelessly tautological here). There are in between shades of gray with different levels of perceiving the world. Human evolution is about personal and collective consciousness going further and further up the “perception” scale to reach the zenith of truth.

Understanding of the absolutist-relativist schism is important in gainfully studying the *Bhagavad Gītā*. This understanding would help us make decisions but with a healthy dose of skepticism to be open to make mid-stream corrections, be not ideologically bound and avoid over-confidence in decision making models that we develop. *Krishna* exhorts *Arjuna* to challenge himself to be mindfully decisive but without taking egoistic ownership for the results of his actions, no matter what the results would turn out to be.

From an epistemological point of view the *Bhagavad Gītā* can be divided into two levels: the phenomenal and the transcendental (*Gītā*, 7:3-7)<sup>1</sup> The phenomenal manifestation, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, constitutes three *gunas* of *satvas-rajās-tamas* (elements) and is constituted as *maya* or pure ignorance (*Gītā*, 14:5-8). The transcendental essence consists of the true spirit or *Brahman* and exists on its own without any external or material base to stand on (*Gītā*, 7:12 & 24-26). In this sense, the *Bhagavad Gītā* gives primacy to the transcendental.

The phenomenal manifestation can further be subdivided into the conscious and the unconscious (roughly the *para* and the *apara* in *Sanskrit*). This distinction is more prominent in humans even if it exists in other living beings (*Gītā*, 7:6-9). The *Bhagavad Gītā* bridges the gap between the phenomenal and transcendental by postulating that conscious and the unconscious parts of the phenomenal carry with it a veiled mirror of the transcendental reality. Every individual is capable of removing this veil; this veil of illusion (*maya*). This then would be the realization of *Brahman*. This is indeed the final goal of all thoughts, words and actions (*manasa-vacha-karmana*).

In making the distinction between the phenomenal and the transcendental, a sharp distinction between the two should be avoided. They are not opposed to each other in an Aristotelian sense. In the ontology of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the phenomenal is the result of the transcendental. The cosmology of *Santana Dharma* gives primacy to the subtle, whereby the transcendental realm is the precursor to the phenomenal reality. Phenomenal reality is, all at once, a manifestation, a support and an impediment to the realization of the transcendental. The phenomenal is not to be avoided. What is to be avoided is the compulsive pull of the phenomenal that would come in the way of the transcendental realization even as the “child is the father of man”.

From the above discussion it is amply clear that the sharp distinctions that we see in Western philosophy whether between ontology and epistemology, or absolutist vs. relativist, or between the prescriptive and the descriptive are less definitive in the context of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. For the *Bhagavad Gītā* these distinctions are only for situational understanding. In the final vision, the unitive would override the contingent differences.

We now discuss the four fundamental aspects of Decision Sciences earlier identified, and suggest how the ontological view espoused by the *Bhagavad Gītā* departs

<sup>1</sup>Where we have referred to the *Gītā* followed by numbers, the first number refers to the Chapter and the second to the Stanza within the said chapter. Translation by Easwaran Easwaran (1985) is used for this purpose unless otherwise specified.

from the dominant Western view. As stated earlier, the departure is not so much in terms of diametrical opposites, in as much as it is an open and integral panorama that subsumes the Western atomistic views. Such a multi-layered position is consistent with Schumacher's (1977) levels of knowledge wherein he suggests that the same phenomena or idea could be viewed differently from different levels of consciousness. While dwelling on the four points, we have also provided at the end of the sections "Reflection Aids for Managers" which would help bring the theory propounded by the *Bhagavad Gītā* to the practical vision.

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## Decision Making Issues: What the Bhagavad Gītā Suggests

This section discusses each of the four issues identified by March in the light of the insights from the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

### Individual Identity: The Objective Subsuming the Subjective

In framing the identity of the decision maker as autonomous or as a systemic part of a mutually interacting ecology, March (1994) essentially frames the issue in terms of agency and determinism. Either the decision maker is the assertive ego or a mere "stimulus-response" organism. Neither of these are adequate enough to explain the transcendence of object-subject duality that the *Bhagavad Gītā* exhorts us to explore and achieve.

Individual identity in modern psychology is strongly tied up with the idea of ego. Freud's structural theory of the psyche that consists of the triad of id-ego-superego is one of the most dominant ideas in psychology during the last over hundred years. Even as Freud in his earlier writing assigned a passive role to the ego (Meissner, 2000), in his later writings, he assigned it the most important role for healthy human functioning. Id and superego simply came to be regulators of the ego to control emotions and actions that were agreeable to the outer and inner worlds. It is very clear that ego plays the most important role in this scheme. This has continued to be so even as psychoanalysis and Freudian theory have taken many turns following Analytic theory (Rapaport, 1960) or Ego Psychology (Hartmann, 1964) and other such variations. There is no doubt though about the continued hold of the triad of id-ego-superego with the dominance of ego.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* we find two types of references to one's identity or ego (*aham*); one in a subjective sense as "I am" and the other in an objective sense as a reference to the individual involved (Easwaran, 1985). For example, when Arjuna says, "*katham bhīṣmam aham sāṅkhye droṇam ca Madhusūdana,*" (2:4) translated by Easwaran as, "How I am going to attack *Bhishma* and *Drona* in the battlefield, *O Madhusudhana*?" (Easwaran, 1985, pp. 46–47), Arjuna is using *aham* in the subjective sense to refer to himself. However, when Krishna says, "*nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntim adhigacchati,*" which means, "those without the sense of ownership and egoism attain peace," (Easwaran, 1985, p. 54), he is referring to *aham* in an objective sense.



The objective-subjective understanding is important. The subjective is more prominent in the social-transactional sphere and it usually appears in *Sanskrit* writings in association with other words such as “*nigraham*,” (as pointed out by [www.hinduwebsite.com](http://www.hinduwebsite.com)) which means self-restraint or restraining the ego. This source rightly points out that the word, *aham*, “is also hidden as a suffix in many other words to denote subjectivity. For example, *agraham* (anger), *dukham* (sorrow), *sukham* (happiness), *graham* (grasping one), and *purusham* (individual self) etc.” It is amply clear that those aspects of the individual that give rise of *raga-dvesha* (attachment-aversion) are associated with the subjective form of the self.

As opposed to this, the objective self is a stoic witness. Here the self is distanced in a dignified manner from the emotions of the “indulgent” *raga-dvesha*. The objective self does not hanker after the results arising from actions while, no doubt, focused on the task on hand in a non-obsessive way; engaged, but unattached.

The distinction between the subjective and the objective selves is exemplified by the *upanishadic* story of a pair of inseparable birds; one (subjective self) indulging itself in eating the fruits that the tree bears while the other in simply observing (objective self) the first bird without any desire to eat nor in judgment of its furiously permissive companion. It is easy to see how egoism is characterized by the *Bhagavad Gītā*; indulgence coupled with entitlement, and as a metaphorical extension, taking ownership for the tree itself if planted and nurtured by the person concerned.

Being readily unaware of the role of the seed, soil, the nourishing rains, the wind and the pollinating birds and butterflies are all part of the egoistic ignorance. In *Sanskrit* this lack of awareness would be *avidya* (or ignorance). The ego makes us believe that we are the doers of our actions and responsible for the results that ensue. Because of this lapse of awareness we engage in desire-ridden actions and hanker after results. Clearly, these are sure signs of incurring *karmic* imprints and bindings us to the mortal world.

Another way to explain the above is by considering the human being, or the self, as consisting of two types; the “real self” and the “projected self”. The latter is the sum of the persons’ name and form. The world knows the person by the person’s “projected self.” It does not know the “real person” because it is hidden. In human interactions what is readily seen and felt are the projections. As if actors on a stage, humans also wear masks of various hues and colors keeping the truth in hiding.

“The subjective and the objective selves are represented in the *Bhagavad Gītā* by *Krishna* and *Arjuna*” ([www.hinduwebsite.com](http://www.hinduwebsite.com)). *Arjuna*’s suffering is “on account of his limited knowledge, his sense of separateness, his identification with his body rather than his soul, his belief that he is the doer of his actions and his anxiety about the results of his actions”. These result in *Arjuna*’s suffering and his doubts and anxieties about going all out and fighting the battle.

Deluded by the ego, the being, thus thinks, “I am the doer.” Thus, ego is in a deluded belief that “I am responsible for everything... From the scriptural and spiritual perspective, it is a form of impudence or arrogance” ([www.hinduwebsite.com](http://www.hinduwebsite.com)). The *Bhagavad Gītā* exhorts us to expand our consciousness and in that moment realize that one is indeed the eternal universal self. This would render our

actions unattached. We will then be engaged in undertaking the *karmic* actions without them binding us with *karmic* imprints. There is seamless flow of the individual self into the universal self. What emerges is the spirit universal, emergent yet unchanging as ever. In the heightened state of awareness or union (*yoga*) with the original cause, the *summum bonum*, the individual transcends his or her limited view, and performs desireless actions, without struggling and striving to be anything but be the eternal self.

The problem of ego or bondage is self-evident in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. A *yogi*—a person who has “merged” in a psychological sense with the Higher Power—becomes absorbed in God, having surrendered to the higher nature unconditionally. He or she offers to the chosen deity his or her life and actions and merges the individual identity fully in that higher being. With ego thus gone, the person becomes whatever he or she touches and feels, and develops a unified awareness (*Gītā*, 6.29) in which what is seen is “Self in all and all in the Self” (Easwaran, 1985, p. 234). In this state the person worships Him (Krishna in the context of the *Bhagavad Gītā*) as the pervader of all (*Gītā*, 6.31).

#### Reflection Aid for Managers: Questioning Subject–Object Separation

1. In Japanese JIT inventory models, isn't there a collapse of boundaries with no clear demarcations drawn between the firm and the supplier, the subject and object?
2. Account executives in industrial marketing, who while are being paid by the company, act in the best interests of the client that challenges the traditional notions of organizational loyalty. Isn't that an interesting shift in roles leading to dual “citizenship”?
3. Why is the “us” vs. “them” mentality (that was so pervasive in traditional “Industrial Relations”) not as appropriate today as in the past?

### Mental Dynamism: From Separation to Communion

Behind March (1994) clarity-ambiguity dialectic lies a need to be “internally” consistent with clarity from within, while exploiting the ambiguity outside the organism's boundary (and even extending the ambiguity to exploit it further). It could also mean shifting the inside-outside boundary. Such a view is ridden with the sense of separation because the boundaries are held sacrosanct or even reinforced.

Not coincidentally, in traditional western psychology, separation-individuation is a fundamental principle of human growth with implications for proper functioning throughout the individual's lifespan. Individuation refers to a process “by which a person becomes increasingly differentiated from a past or present relational context” (Karpel, 1976, p. 66). In a narrower sense it could mean specific challenges at a given stage of the development of the individual, usually at the early growth phases. During infancy this process is likened by Margaret Mahler to a “psychological birth” (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). According to western psychology this is not the end of the development of the ego. Adolescence is the “second Phase of separation-individuation” (Blos, 1979). The adolescent must overcome the

dependencies over those who provide care early in childhood to assert own individuality. The child has to become an adult through the overcoming of the psychological dependencies. Self definition, standards of conduct, and self esteem would become increasingly self-mediated. While there is need for individuation, children on the threshold of becoming adults are also exhorted by elders to be socially alive and play the relationship roles effectively. What is interesting to note is that the tension between separation-individuation-differentiation and the relational aspect is not quite resolved. Theory has it that there is a need for balance. On the one hand the early childhood attachment and sense of enmeshment is expected to be overcome through separation-individuation-differentiation, but with a rider of healthy relationship at the adult stage. How the two—carried in childhood and practiced in adulthood—are different is unresolved.

In the psychology of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the pinnacle of human advancement is not individuation or differentiation (*Gītā*, 6.34), but the flowering of the unitive experience of the kind Buber (1971) identifies, where firstly “thou” is no longer “you” and secondly the differentiation between “I” and “thou” is *merely* corporeal. There is deep spiritual kinship between the “self” and the “thou” where differences melt away to harmonize into something higher. This is what *yoga* too is about. The very word, *yoga*, implies union; union or communion of the individual with the higher power leading to the realization of *Brahman*. The innumerable reference to *Brahman* in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is a testimony of the importance *Bhagavad Gītā* gives to overcome the schism and reach the unitive state. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is not so much about external control of the elements, but of the inner state of the human being represented by the mind (*Gītā*, 2.63). Mind is where the dynamism needs to be displayed. According to the *Bhagavad Gītā* uncontrolled speed of mind is lack of peace of mind. A mind uncontrolled is the worst enemy of oneself causing great sorrow and bondage (*Gītā*, 2.67). Mental dynamism here therefore is a return to the unitive. The early developmental phase requires separation-individuation which later is followed by a return to the unitive that completes the cycle. The entire process of human evolution is complete only with the “coming back home” (union), even as the earlier freedom (represented by separation-individuation-differentiation) is a step in the right direction.

#### Reflection Aid for Managers: Inner Mental Dynamism

1. Self fulfilling prophesy: By creating a mental picture in ourselves where the separation of the self vs. the other is transcended, won't we be able to create harmony between self and others in the organization?
2. While doing any job in the organization would it be good to think of the metaphorical story of the task of “keeping the bricks in place” be considered as any of the four a) laying bricks, b) making a wall, c) making a building and d) erecting a cathedral?
3. What is the harm in being a bit inconsistent? So long as my current self is more effective and more humane, isn't it legitimate for me to be different today when compared to what I were yesterday?

## Choosing to Consecrate: The Social-Self Tension to the Logic of Surrender

The third dialectic that March suggests is rule-based vs. choice-based. Here this may be deconstructed respectively as the “socially driven” vs. the “self driven”. Such a clear schism is problematic according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*. As humans moved from a tribal culture to a modern one, or even further (whether post-modern or post-industrial etc.), the fluidity of the roles that they have to assume has generated considerable confusion. The diverse roles to play, whether at home (father, son, breadwinner, homemaker), work (leader, manager, negotiator, stakeholder advocate etc.) or society (party worker, neighborhood activist, patriot) etc. demands more complex “internal” mediation by individuals. What is the way out? According to the *Bhagavad Gītā* the solution is not more and more micro-mediation based on the social-self schism but a transcendence to the higher level through surrender.

This movement to the highest level happens in three phases according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*; *Karma yoga*, *Bhakti yoga* and *Jnana yoga* represented by respectively by Chapters 1–6, Chapter 7–12 and Chapters 13–18. Aggregating the chapters into three sections as above and the suggestion that these sections belong to the three *yogas* mentioned above comes from the lineage of *Brahma Madhava Vaisnava Sampradaya* (<http://www.bhagavad-gita.org>).

*Karma yoga* dominates the first part with *Krishna* exhorting *Arjuna* to take up arms in the face of pain, hesitation and complete confusion arising from the situation *Arjuna* finds himself in. Here *Krishna*'s advice is to act nobly even if the results mean destruction. In the face of doubt *dharmic* action arises only when it is properly informed by *jnana* (Chapter 4 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*). Ethical action becomes possible with a calm mind when the doer forsakes the fruits of action (Chapter: 5). To achieve the equanimity arising from the calm mind the actor is all ready having prepared it with *dhyana* or meditation as prescribed by Chapter: 6. The first six chapters of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in a holistic sense is about *Karma yoga*. Within it is embedded adequate knowledge required for reconciling between action and inaction, means and ends, engagement and detachment, thinking and action etc.

The next section is about the fulfillment of *Bhakti yoga*. Once the mind is able to resolve apparent contradictions, true nature of work internalized, and the value of meditation established (Chapter 1–6), then there are more questions that emerge in the aspirant. Chapter 7–12 starts with experience and knowledge leading to wisdom and the emergence of the unitive experience that has its base on divine love. Such a disposition leads to the revelation of the divine (*viswaroopa*) to which the aspirant responds with complete divine love or *Bhakti yoga* (Chapter: 12). The communion with the divine is complete here.

Finally in the next section, the separation of the seeker and the divine itself is questioned. *Bhakti yoga* itself will have to be questioned! The practitioner is assailed by the simple yet profound question of whether he or she is completely in communion with God. Here the full force of the impersonal God (*Brahman*) comes in. Only complete unity with God is the answer. The result is the complete reconciliation of the differences between the social and self or the seeker and the sought. There is

complete surrender or *sanyasa*; complete annihilation of the self (Chapter 18). This then is complete surrender. The social (and the ecological too) becomes part of the self.

The three-phase process that leads to complete surrender reveals the extent of complexity and the vistas for transformation of human consciousness. It is a pilgrimage that removes all the blind spots. It is the ultimate form of self inquiry where the inquirer is completely transformed into the divine through surrender. This is in sharp contrast to the limited understanding available to the person who has not undertaken any serious self inquiry. According to the *Bhagavad Gītā* the person who has done deep inquiry would automatically stand in awe of the Designer's mind and behold the beauty of creation which is nothing but complete self-surrender. This is a grace (*Gītā*, 18.62) granted to the individual committed to the process.

Here we may speak of self-investigation and self-surrender as if they were two different entities, they are not actually so, but are merely two seemingly parallel approaches to the same practice, which is the practice of just being. In this state, the mind is simply clear of all the imperfections that it invests all love and devotion to the higher power and all its creations. This leads to the complete withering away of dualities and the emergence of the unitive experience.



### **The Impulse to Act: Maximizing Utility to Discovering Own *Dharma***

The last dialectic that March suggests is about decision making as an instrumental activity vs. decision making as an interpretive activity. Here Bhagavad Gītā is partly in resonance with March. After all any interpretive activity is meaning-making and if it involves reflection into one's deepest existential duty covering long duration of time and sweep, it would lead to one's *dharmā*. On the other hand, the idea of instrumentality which boils down to maximization of utility is too expedient with too much immediacy that will hardly lead to one's own *dharmic* fulfillment. It may also be noted that the idea of instrumentality may also militate against ecological sustainability.

Maximizing utility as the primary action principle of human beings (or Homo Economicus) can be traced to the principle of utility maximization. According to this idea man is essentially driven by the clarity in the utility function whereby between, say, two alternatives, there is complete clarity of which of the two is preferred (or of complete indifference to either of them). This kind of clarity of choice would also apply to more than two choices, wherein the principle of transitivity would hold. Such a logic assumes complete availability of information about the possible alternatives and clarity of the preference function that the person holds. The argument assumes single dimensionality of the preference function and availability of logical tools to negotiate the preference conundrum. These assumptions are at best highly restrictive.

The argument that the *Bhagavad Gītā* provides is not in clarifying how such questions of preferences can be logically settled but by asking whether humans might at once be an economic being as well as something higher.

Certainly it is problematic to attribute utilitarianism to the *Bhagavad Gītā* which seeks *nishkama karma* as the principal strategy to remain happy and productive while performing one's moral calling (Easwaran, 1985). *Nishkama karma* can be interpreted through the principle of *dharma*. Corresponding to the phenomenal and the transcendental realities, *dharma* too exists at different levels.

To reach the state of *nishkama karma*, the body, mind and the soul have to receive that requisite nourishment which in the normal course may be called training. This nourishment or training is not in the form of an external imposition, but an empowerment to respond in a wholesome manner to the inner call. This is achieved through ethical action (*karma*) accompanied with knowledge and wisdom (*jnana*) that emerges from not only the work performed but by the scriptural studies undertaken by the individual. At the end what emerges is a person who is rooted in *dharma*. What ensues will be different for different individuals and is explained by the *karmic* imprints that the individual carries on account of wholesome (or unwholesome) deeds done during this life or earlier lives. But in the end there is complete transformation possible for every human being.

As can be seen the *Bhagavad Gītā* goes much beyond utilitarianism. Its philosophy squarely removes conflicts of interest between well-intentioned individuals who, instead of following a set of rules "decided" by the principle of utility maximization, are simply following their own *dharma* as they deem appropriate. There would be minimal conflict when each person recognizes the limitation of argumentation and considers the other persons' *dharmic* compulsions. There will be adequate understanding why each person is behaving this or that way. The higher idea of *dharma* incorporates the idea of tolerance even for any ethical aberration by the "other" person. While the rules set by society have to be followed and aberrations punished as per the law of the land, there is no place for declaring anything as evil in the ontology of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The final *dharma* of the individual therefore not only involves the self himself or herself but others too. The social message of the *Bhagavad Gītā* cannot go unnoticed.

**Reflection Aid for Managers: Discovering *Dharma***

1. Who are the stakeholders I am responsible for and accountable to? Is it possible to play the game of organizational life in a detached manner while being engaged with different stakeholders in a “light” manner?
2. How can I mentally tune myself to “believe” that it is eminently possible to have work-life balance whereby there is really no tension between expectations at home and at work?
3. How do I avoid zero-sum games? Can management be about creating positive-sum games where one becomes a stakeholder himself or herself? What is the role of compassion in creation of positive-sum games?

**Conclusion**

Decision Making is a dominant topic in Management. We pointed out four major premises on which the dominant decision making theory today stands as outlined by March (1994). While each of the aspects dealt with a dialectic in extant literature there is no resolution on how to resolve the conflict. In a deeper sense, the unresolved conflict is symptomatic of the split between the “self” and the “other”. Here *Bhagavad Gītā* comes to the rescue. It is able to resolve the difficulty by transcending the duality and see oneness in everything. Along with non-duality the sense of social separation that Freudian psychology upholds withers away. We also explained how mental dynamism, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā* is a state of mind that is outwardly quiet but inwardly active in seeking a unitive experience. In such a scheme of things, surrender does not mean fatalism but a higher-level awareness of the complexity of interacting elements, events and realities with an abiding understanding of one’s station in life; or *dharma*. Finally, we also explained how the impulse to act arises from one’s *dharmic* considerations rather than from computations of utility maximization.

One of the outcomes of this paper is the uncovering of the connection between Decision Sciences and the perils of applying dualistic principles too divisively while trying to understand how and why decisions are made. While it a matter for another paper(s) to tease out the full implications of such a position, could it be that *Bhagavad Gītā* is perhaps pointing to possible application of alternative forms of logic such as tetralemma (Ferrari, Sparrer, & von Kibed, 2016), or what is known in Indian Buddhist philosophy as *catuskoti* (Gunaratne, 1986), to decisions theory? Or, even more expansively, is it that *Bhagavad Gītā* is founded on alternative logics such as tetralemma or *catuskoti*? These are possible areas for future research that have until now remained unexplored. Implications for Decisions Sciences cannot go unnoticed.

In questioning the dominant premises of Decision Sciences as they exist today, we also hope to kindle the spirit of inner adventure to seek a more unitive private self as well as a more unitive self-other interfusion while practicing decision

making. Such a view may perhaps hold answers to many problematic issues arising from the highly interconnected world today which is hopelessly polarized along so many fault lines. While the consequences of such a vision for social sustainability are quite obvious, it may also have important lessons for humanity on ecological sustainability.

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# Bhagavad Gita and Management: A New Perspective

# 11

Chandrashekhar alias Kiran V. Korhalkar

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## Human Life

The Bhagavad Gita says that, man is a believer (Bhagavad Gita, 17.3). He has devised specialized methods of administering the activities and business of his house and occupations. It resulted into the incredible existence of the human race on the planet for millions of years. Yet all is not well. We therefore need to view the concept of management of life as an organic whole, that too philosophically and not mathematically, professionally and commercially.

Still, we should not be content with our existent occupational skill alone. Catering only to the requirements of one's avocation does not suffice. It must be coupled with the management of personal and social life on its physical and psychological level. It is a common experience that, a man who efficiently performs his occupational duty or manages some other's occupation, cannot help his depression or problems of his pursuit and private and family life. But on the contrary, his failure to do so reflects on his efficiency in the vocational sector.

It is eminent to consider the concept of management in a larger perspective which should encompass development of the character of an individual who is the strongest or weakest link in the chain forming the life of the people. We should not view the idea of management only in relation to a business, company, industry, organization, any given occupation or alike. We unfailingly view the concept of management of a factory or a company to mean organization of resources, finance, raw material, deployment of labor, its maneuvering, increasing the productivity, marketing, earning profit, advertisement, outclassing rival companies and things of similar order. Everyone knows these principles of management. There is abundant literature regarding the same. The point is to strengthen human element in the process of management on which success or failure of every industry and sustenance of

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an individual depend. The Gita is therefore not a curriculum prescribed for the attainment of a skill in any trade or learning. We must proceed on presumption of existence of requisite academic knowledge and proficiency with everyone. The Gita helps us translate one's proficiency into efficiency. It can be achieved through man's escalation from his rudimentary nature to the highest level of development by means of knowledge of philosophy propounded by Lord Sri Krishna which provides for the process and methods for elimination of human vices and acquisition of virtues. These principles excel the trite ways of inducing the man for a better performance, such as, awarding him the best possible working environment, salary package, bonus, promotion, incentive, overtime, better conditions of living, facilities like health and maternity coverage, education to his children, concessional touring etc. The Gita transcends all such miniature considerations and takes us to an altogether fascinating sphere of thinking and living, free from stress and depression, which is full of happiness, that too, without abandoning the worldly life and without asking us to live the life of a recluse.

## **Lamentation**

The Bhagavad Gita begins on the note of lamentation. Lamentation operates as a resistance to action or change called inertia. It is difficult to attribute it to a singular reason. Although its occurrence may seem sudden, it may have a long, long back-drop and a checkered history.

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## **The Leader**

A leader must be a person who is near and dear to the man under guidance (Gita, 18.64, 65) and must enjoy his confidence. We must employ explosion of one's lamentation as a fuel for his propulsion into action. He should invoke his conscience to trust that, there are galaxies beyond the Milky-way. Acquisition of skills of management in every occupation is the fundamental requirement of a successful enterprise. Nevertheless, there are two aspects touching this issue. First is, such a skill has to be acquired by persons at the helm of undertaking and not everyone. Yet, this is only half the truth. Everyone, who is a part of the system, has also to manage his own occupational duty. Second, a person who is well versed in the management of his enterprise may not be equally competent to manage any other area. That is to say, a person who possesses excellence in hospital management may not be an equally good hand in hospitality management. Everyone cannot be a jack of all trades. It's not advisable. But, the common denominator of all the qualities which are required for managing different sectors of human life can be evolved. If a person is fundamentally groomed by imbuing with such basic qualities, he would be capable of managing not only the work he performs as a means of livelihood but his own life as a whole and it would gradually dispense with the necessity of someone else managing affairs of his occupation. A person should be led from darkness to light with

introspection as the starting point. A leader should inspire him to inculcate integrity, character and dedication and to harvest all resources at his disposal. Let him build will-power and determination. Give him an opportunity to open up and establish communication by granting reasonable time. These principles of management are reflected in the Gita. They can be used for unfolding meaningful human life and for managing any company, business, commercial or occupational organization as its natural fallout. It is the duty of a leader or the manager to support and collaborate with the workers of the organization to best manage themselves in body, mind, duty and action. The image of all such principles of management would be found in the Bhagavad Gita, spread throughout its length and breadth. It should go without saying that, a steersman must be qualified, knowledgeable and a maestro. He should take the listener in confidence, so that, the latter could overcome his diffidence. He must be apprised that, turning back on action is not the way out and the solution, but, it would only register a sin and attract life-time ridicule at the hands of the people. Sri Krishna has said to Arjuna in this regard that:

*If despite these facts  
You do not go to the righteous warfare  
By loss of duty-n-reputation you shall contract  
Sin or shall become its proprietor 2.33*

Unless otherwise stated, the translation of the verses of the Gita quoted in this chapter are author's adaptations and are taken from the book, 'An Indian Classic Shreemadbhagwadgeeta (Literal English Translation in Verse) (Korhalkar, 2012) and are listed in this format: 1.40-which refers to Chapter 1, Verse 40.

Lord Sri Krishna proceeds to say:  
*Your disrepute shall be sung by the people  
For all time to come  
Which, every righteous, noble  
Regrets more than extinction 2.34  
You fled from the field of war owing to timidity  
Shall be great warriors' appreciation  
Those proffer you great respectability  
Would subject you to undervaluation 2.35*

The teachings rendered by the Lord to Arjuna are so comprehensive and exhaustive that, it has become the immortal and timeless lesson and a lodestar for the humanity, which has every potential to reach to it sustainable welfare. Let us adopt and practice these ways to bring about reformation of the erring persons in the society and the organization as well, for the better management of their individual life and their occupational life too. Similar instances occurring in the human life, which call for persuading an emotionally sinking person, are not sprinkling. It is the best remedy for overcoming a hindrance. Invoking and not dictating or commanding is the paramount and inseparable part of the management. By actuation means stimulation, which is offered by one person to another. An advisor need not

be necessarily in a superior position. But he should be competent. However, by frequently reading the divine song, it is deducible that, a person can be his own pathfinder.

*Man should himself uplift, redeem or elevate  
Should not bring about his own ruin or devastation  
As you alone can be your comrade  
Enemy or opposition 6.5  
Who, himself conquers  
Becomes own brother  
Who, does not know his own image mirror  
To animosity for himself on his own he refers 6.6*

Moreover, a person of the same rank, but who is more mature, intelligent and gifted, may also advance a few words to a depressed man which may change the entire scene within a short awhile. The other requirements exhibited by the Lord are that, the coach must have a bona fide desire to befriend his colleague. He must be free from personal interest, must have love, affection, concern and care for the person at the other end. He should act without any reservation and hesitation. Arjuna is the icon of other requisites, such as, the man in need must have faith in the goodness, bona fide intention, wisdom and capabilities of the governor. It should go without saying, that, a man undergoing such a state of mind must be receptive to the instructions. He must open up his mind, ask and opt for counseling.

## **Parity Between Elevations**

The Gita reveals that, Lord Sri Krishna is piloting Arjuna's chariot. It indicates greatness of the Lord. He doesn't hesitate in being in the service of Arjuna who endears to Him. This should be the greatest illustration that, even God being not only a friend, metaphysician and an escort of a man but his factotum too. Thus, a commander should bring himself on a par with his friend, associate or any subordinate. There should not be any difference between their elevations although they are otherwise holding and occupying different rungs or positions in the system. It is also significant that, a counselor should not maintain any nexus to his position in the hierarchy. He should not delegate the idea of making such a harangue to any of his subordinates. He should do it himself directly. It makes not only a lot of difference but the whole difference. Moreover, he should address the other person from close vicinity, sitting across the table with him for a reasonable time and not while passing by in a manner callous, casual and cursory. Addressing the discouraged can be accomplished in a number of ways. It must be performed with the sense of intensity, intimacy and fervency. The Lord had called Arjuna singularly during the course of counseling as referred to earlier. A leader must invoke a faith and a feel in the mind of other person, that, he is really his well-wisher. It signifies the necessity of having a friend at one's disposal, who can alone point out your errors without causing injury to the sphere of your sentiments and bring about the amends.

The first chapter thoroughly speaks about lamentation of Arjuna. We find, the Lord listens to him sincerely and at length. He allows him to vent his emotions, raise his contentions and to justify his apprehensions. It's not a case of alleged hearing. The Lord's approach is not presumptive and judgmental. He gives and leaves an allowance to the possibility, that, there may be a grain of truth in the version of the other side. The Lord does not seem to have intercepted Arjuna even by way of an exception throughout the first chapter.

## Value of Display and Appearance

The countenance of the God, as we know, always bears and displays a smile. Lord Sri Krishna talks to Arjuna with a little smile on His face. He doesn't dictate him. He never speaks to him with a grim and grave face with wrinkles on His forehead. He hardly says anything which would apply only to Arjuna individually. The consultation extended by the Lord has universal application. The Lord condemns him only by way of an exception, that too, after giving him a long and sustained hearing. This is probably the foremost ever case in which the first principle of natural justice, that, 'No one shall be condemned unheard' is evolved and followed. It underlines the dire necessity of even condemnation at some points of time but only sparingly and not frequently and continuously, that too after fully lending ear to the other person.

## Knowledge and Learning

It is a great specimen to show that, even if a man is under depression, he can continue to learn, make amends, retrieve from the melancholy, rise above the situation and come out with glory, grandeur and sublimity. But, he should be fortunate enough to have a friend of the stature of the Lord Sri Krishna. Notwithstanding, it can be said with certainty that, even if one has a friend or companion or a superior, who is endowed with virtues referred to earlier and is knowledgeable, sincere, honest and truly solicitous for him, he would also deliver goods. What is required then is a bona fide attempt on the either side. A man who is suffering breakdown or disintegration should, on one's own and in all fairness, speak of and confess the state of mind he is passing through as Arjuna did not vacillate.

The Lord, in answer to the questionnaire posed by Arjuna, asked him to act in the discharge of his duty. This bears a testimony to the saying, that, doing is surely better than non-doing and there is no substitute or alternative to performance of one's assigned action. The Lord said:

*Perform the destined or assigned action  
Doing is surely higher than non-doing  
Again, sans discharging the obligation.  
You can never keep your life going 3.8*

## Meaning and Value of Knowledge

Emphasis must be laid on acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge does not mean only knowledge of the instruments of living. Such a paltry knowledge may be enough for physical sustenance but it would not provide an answer to every issue and situation. The Gita says there is no parallel to knowledge and erudition. It goes this way:

*As nothing is more sacred or holier  
Than knowledge on this earth  
Purifying heart and being a concatenation follower  
He acquires this knowledge at the time apropos, worth 4.38*

Lord Sri Krishna prescribes the way for acquisition of the knowledge and its benefits thus:

*The philosophers bestowed with savvy  
When, saluted and questioned with humility  
Served with propriety  
Remember, divulge the 'Knowledge of Self' or spirituality 4.34  
Once you acquire this knowledge or erudition  
Shall never be infatuated  
Shall behold whole nature in your person  
And then find the same with me also blended 4.35*

It must be understood that, while ignorance breeds infatuation and infatuation in turn entangles the man into ignorance, the knowledge leads to expulsion and extinction of both. The knower of the Supreme Divine sees the same spirit in all beings by virtue of which such a person goes endowed with indiscriminate vision and ceases to be vulnerable to lamentation and infatuation as proclaimed by the Ishavasyopnishad. 7 (Cited in Goyandka, 2011, p. 259). Lord Sri Krishna has elaborated this idea in the following terms:

*Arjuna, alike the well stoked-up salvo  
Turns the wood into ashes  
The knowledge bound inferno  
Destroys the actions' vassalage 4.37*

True knowledge lies in maintaining a vision which finds the God everywhere, in everything and in every action as professed by the Chandogya Upanishad. 3/14/1 (Cited in Goyandka, 2011, p. 240). It is good to know the Supreme-Spirit before a person dies, else, extreme loss would inevitably follow is heralded by the Kenopnishad. 2/5 (Cited in Goyandka, 2011, p. 299). Lord Sri Krishna says, a person who has no mind to listen and who is devoid of devotion never deserves this profound revelation (18.67). Gita reads that, faith is the fountainhead of knowledge (4.39). The Lord comes down heavily upon suspicion in the following terms:

*Ignorance and disbelief who suffers  
And is full of suspicion  
Faces nosedive, ruin and disaster  
Enjoys no pleasure, no berth in this world or heaven 4.40*

Lord Sri Krishna calls upon Arjuna to get rid of the suspicion at the end of Chapter 4. He says:

*Abridge the suspicion  
Born to ignorance and planted in your heart  
With the sword of knowledge and instruction  
Follow the 'concatenation' and be prepared for war 4.42*

Arjuna was ambidextrous, invincible and unbeatable at war. Yet, he is visited by grievous distress at the 11th hour while standing on the brink of the war. His love and respect for the elderly and masterly persons on the other side of the fence is found to be undue. (Gita, 1.35, 36, 37, 38, 39) They made him lily-livered. All such considerations which prevailed on Arjuna converged on meekness and cowardice. Lord Sri Krishna in the first place advises Arjuna to abandon and drop this cravenness in the following terms:

*Harbor not unmanliness  
Unbecoming to your person  
The scorcher of enemy cast aside heart's feebleness  
Arouse for war and confrontation 2.3*

One should be therefore introspective about his knowledge and ideology. He subject it to review and revaluation from time to time with an intention to verify its correctness, so that, we do not render ourselves over confident despite our undiscovered and unknown ignorance.

Man should never go by the extraneous considerations while deciding his course of action. One must be able to sift grain from the chaff and gold from the dross. Inertia may be an underlying cause of his inefficiency. It may also consist of aversion to work. Apprehensive and pessimistic philosophy is a delusion which has roots in infatuation based on ignorance and cowardice. These things, with a few more, result into refusal to work, lowered efficiency of the man, gradual waning away of interest in the assignment owing to the law of diminishing returns, for which a man innovates several lame excuses like Arjuna. One should stand only for the duty and action and not for the elders or superiors who are holding the brief for a wrong side, as Arjuna did finally. His vision was initially blurred with tears and he was hovered by the clouds of lamentation and infatuation. Still, we should not disbelieve one's lamentation and ridicule him on that score. Lord Sri Krishna did it never. The leader is also supposed to believe sentiments of other person. Here comes into picture the requirement of treating the sorrows, sufferings, pleasures and the difficulties of others as if they are your own and personal. It contemplates equality of thought and vision towards all. Lord Sri Krishna has said it to Arjuna in the following words:

*Who, appreciates pains and pleasures  
Of all beings same as those he suffers  
By looking to them with equality ocular  
Is, the greatest ascetic or a seer 6.32*



Lord Sri Krishna did never disbelieve Arjuna. He listened to him with faith and confidence. Faith should mean faith by everyone towards other and its unilateral exhibition is not contemplated. We must let a man feel sorry and to suffer even depression for some time until we aid and assist him to overcome it. Respect must be paid to his liberty of thought and expression and the leader should allow him to speak. An instructor is supposed to encourage the lamenting man to rise above the situation and not to discourage or embarrass him. We must boost the morale of the downcast and the dispirited so that he may change for better. Look at words of the Lord:

*If killed in the war-process  
To the heaven you shall soar  
If you win the war, you shall address  
To the earth's sovereignty and empire 2.37/1  
Kauntey (Arjuna), for that reason  
Spring, rise  
Rouse up, awaken  
With resolution to war or strife 2.37/2*

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## Duty or Action

The Lord says in unequivocal terms, that, there is no substitute for and parallel to duty or action. He says that, no one can remain without any action even for a moment and that one must do one thing or the other to keep his life going.

*As whoever may be one or other.  
Cannot even momentarily, remain without action.  
Being into subjection of qualities of Nature.  
By it is compelled to function 3.5.*

Non-commissioning of the action is also not a viable alternative.

*Neither by not commissioning the action.  
One enjoys freedom from religious obligation.  
Nor sacrificing duty, onus or burden.  
Brings home to him beatification 3.4.*

Even if a man declares, that, he would do no work at all and shall go on sitting at a given point forever, it follows that, he is engaged in an action, because, to sit also means to act and it connotes an action. The Lord defines unanimity and accord between doing and non-doing or action and inaction. He says that, doing should become so easy and effortless, that, the doer should not feel he is doing something. The extension of this idea also contains the same principle, that, if your action is so full of dedication and vigor, then you cease to beware of your action and lose the sense of doing and being a doer. This is what is meant by the theorem “action seems inaction and vice versa”. Thus:

*Doing one's own duty is itself inaction.  
 Going without an action again implies a duty.  
 Really intelligent of all who, knows this theorem.  
 Despite performing all duties is an ascetic truly 4.18.*

The Lord while emphasizing inevitability of performing one's duty, gives His own illustration as:

*For me nothing survives to be done.  
 In this three-tier universe.  
 There is nothing I couldn't get and I volunteer none.  
 Still my duty I continue to traverse 3.22.  
 If I fail to do so.  
 By going torpor.  
 People would totally follow.  
 My path in concert 3.23.  
 If I go without duty, action, vigor.  
 It shall perish the society.  
 I would be accountable for the class intermixture.  
 Causing people's perfidy 3.24.  
 Common men follow.  
 The footprints of the great.  
 Pursue like shadow.  
 The standard they set 3.21.*

There cannot be any better insistence on the mandatory nature of duty and responsibility of those, who are at the helm of affairs to lay down high standard of efficiency through their conduct, so that, they enjoy a legitimate right to inspire and lead their subordinates to a high water mark.

## **Dispassionate Performance of Duty**

Despite the inevitability of performing action, the Lord advises the man that, one should not be obsessed by his action or assigned duty. One should not over identify with any given action. It means addiction, attachment or obsession, which generates bondage or vassalage of action and the attending blemish. The Lord says in this respect that:

*Except the duty oriented towards 'sacrifice'  
 Man is bound by every action.  
 Even the duty aimed at the 'sacrificial' exercise.  
 You must do without obsession 3.9.  
 Hence following the men of erudition.  
 Always perform the duty without passion.  
 Such a person.  
 Attains the final emancipation 3.19*

The Lord proclaims that, it is only the knowledge which destroys the vassalage of action.

*Alike, the well stoked-up salvo  
Turns the wood into ashes  
The knowledge bound inferno  
Destroys of all the vassalage of action 4.37  
The ordained duty reflects the 'pious' or 'holy' action  
When, performed by a person  
Without aiming at fruition  
With heart free from love, hate and passion 18.23  
But a deed by a person  
Given to ego or sense of expectation  
Performed with exertion  
Underlines the 'passionate' action 18.24  
Overlooking consequences, loss or cost  
Injury to other and to one's own strength  
Action, embarked on with the remiss heart  
Subscribes to the 'ferocious' department 18.25*

It can be very well gathered as to what is the necessity of transforming the man from his 'ferocious' or 'passionate' nature to the 'pious' one from the Lord's words quoted below:

*Who, is dispassionate, noble  
Cheerful courageous  
By failure or success whose mind doesn't waver  
Such a doer is called the 'holy or pious' 18.26*

## **Duty Towards the Organization**

A man must look at the organization or the company he is employed with as the sub-supreme entity only next to the God, view its work and service as the work of the Lord and its welfare should be the motive of his action. Yet, he must be committed and accountable to his mother company or the organization. His personal well-being and prosperity would necessarily follow. The unity of such vision and action would bring about cessation of duality between an employee and the employer. The endeavor of an employee to manage himself by following the prescriptions of the Bhagavad Gita would reduce and minimize the task of management of the company by the persons at the helm of affairs, make it more sustainable, help it smoothly roll on, and realize the goals of the enterprise.

## Intellect-Concatenation

The words concatenation, intellectual concatenation and the unitary order imply the same concept or carry the same purport and meaning. They mean evenness of intellect which signifies both, equanimity towards success and failure and absence of obsession for fruition of action. It is only such persons, endowed with intellect-concatenation, who can get rid of the ideas of sin and meritorious deed and their fallout or fruition. It is also said that, such an equanimity based concatenation can be acquired while being in action and the real skill lies in acquisition of such intellect-concatenation although it is misinterpreted, misunderstood and misquoted, more often than not, to mean that concatenation denotes acquisition of excellence in any given action or duty.

*Who, is impregnated with equanimity  
Sacrifices both, sin and the meritorious deed  
To acquire the intellectual-concatenation be ready  
In its acquisition while in action lies the skill indeed 2.50*

The Lord now takes us into a rather different arena of thinking. He lays down two steps towards the concatenation. In the first place, one is supposed to crossover the infatuation. Let's see the following stanza:

*When, your intellect would get over  
The turbid cloak of infatuation  
Tedium you would suffer  
By the things heard and to be heard in expectation 2.52*

It is our extremely common experience that, we are told by our grandparents, parents, relatives, neighbors and the society at large the same things, repeatedly over the years and generations after generations, which have become stale, for distracting us from the philosophical and ideal way of thinking and action. We are mesmerized, infatuated by or rather made to believe such counseling and we are ultimately forced to fall in line with their advice only to miss the path to the glory. We continue to hear similar arguments all over the time even thereafter. Therefore, the Lord warns off us from such uncalled for indulgence to get over the infatuation and He expects us to suffer tedium by repeatedly hearing these things, because, infatuation barricades our access to the concentration of mind and determinative capacity which leads to decreased efficiency and skipping the excellence. Not only that, it works against the attainment of the intellect-concatenation which consists of acquisition of equanimity towards success and failure and redemption of the addiction for fruition of action leading to the elimination of the concepts of joy, sorrow and affliction which catapult him to the feat of the final emancipation or salvation. In the second place the Lord says:

*When, your intellect after suffering fluctuation  
Owing to hearing Vedas' proclaimed fruition of action*

*Shall stabilize in the state of profound, absolute concentration  
You would attain the intellect-concatenation 2.53*

Another reason for inculcating intellect-concatenation is that, if the Lord is the real doer and performer of each action, then the man through whom He acts, cannot have any right to the fruition of the action. As a natural corollary, the question of either bouncing with joy on the successful accomplishment of any action or suffering sag or depression on its failure should not arise at all. Moreover, when each action is supposed to be performed as the work of the God and is said to be returned and submitted at His lotus feet, there is no room left for the man to expect any fruition of the same and any right to the attending pleasure or the sorrow, but on the contrary, by going stoic, he ascends to the immortal status or position as envisaged by the stanzas 56 and 57 of Chapter XVIII. It is pertinent to notice that, stability of intellect, which is necessary for acquisition of concatenation, is slightly differentiable from the stability of mind. The Lord says:

*About everything who is dispassionate  
At any good or evil event  
Neither suffers rancor nor gladness  
Depict his stable intellect 2.57  
Without love-jealousy  
Who, with the senses under his domination  
Dwells amid pleasures bodily  
A man who rules his mind reaches satisfaction 2.64  
Post such satisfaction and placidity  
Comes removal of all sorrows and torment  
As whose mind is full of ecstasy  
Stabilization his intellect he attains 2.65*

It must be noted that, while to rein in one's mind is a condition precedent for attainment of the stability of intellect, the latter is a sine qua non of the concatenation which in turn is the fountainhead of all the ways prescribed by the Gita for reaching the highest goal of final emancipation. Then it goes without saying, that, by treading such a path it would be a cakewalk for the commons to reach a point of excellence in the domain of their calling which would mean prosperity of their mother organization along with thriving of their own fortune. Intellect-Concatenation is discussed by Lord Sri Krishna in Chapter X also (Gita, 10.10, 11).

## **Focused Intellect and Determination**

The next important aspect of the matter is the manner in which every work should be performed. For that purpose, the man is supposed to know many other things before he can be effectively apprised of in this regard. The Lord says in this respect that:

*In this path, intellect deciding work or action  
Requires a pointed manifestation  
Those short of determination  
Exhibit ramified intellect or infinite passions 2.41*

It means, one must select a proper action for which it is necessary to have a pointed manifestation of intellect. If intellect is ramified and a person is entangled in infinite passions, he cannot arrive at any determination. There is a class of persons about whom the Lord says in the following terms:

*Who, are allured and misled  
By recitals of Vedic rituals' fruition  
Ignoramuses assert it is ultimate  
Speak in exaggeration 2.42.*

Such persons, who are given to performance of religious rituals, are rendered inaction-oriented. Such men are condemned by the Lord as being idiots. They are quoted to assert that:

*As a fruition of multitude of rituals, rites  
The men are reborn  
Plunge into riches and pleasures right  
Followers of the heaven, hedonists plead and warn 2.43*

The Lord signifies importance of knowledge and wisdom as against the religious rituals as:

*Well water is worthy of nothing  
When, land is inundated with water  
Likewise, a man of wisdom and learning  
Assigns a meager value to rituals of the Vedic order 2.46  
Duty alone is your cup of tea  
Its fruition or no fruition is beyond your office  
For a given action, neither a defined result foresee  
Nor abstinence be your insistence or emphasis 2.47*

The Lord further says:

*Be dispassionate about result of the action  
With equanimity towards success or failure  
Perform duties going imbued by concatenation  
This intellectual poise is called the 'Unitary' order 2.48  
Without following in principle  
Who, engrosses in any preposterous mission  
Thinking it is ultimate, final  
uch puny knowledge meets the 'ferocious' description 18.22*

The man, while over celebrating his success, is given to overlook the possibility or probability of a failure in the offing, by which he may be surprised and horrified. It is equally stressed that, a man should not feel disheartened by the failure, because it is also momentary and may be quickly followed by success. The play between success and failure is akin to the one which may be described as the light somewhere, shadow next door, one shades faster into quick neighbor. Else, his depression may dissuade him from work or subject him to mistakes and errors leaving no opportunity for the success to embrace him. The Lord has said time and time, that, man is only an instrument of action and the God alone is the real doer and performer of every action. He has warned Arjuna and the mankind that, one should not make any claim to even blinking his eyes, because, it is not the man who performs it but it is the Lord at whose behest each and every thing or action goes on in the universe. The Lord categorically says as:

*While seeing, hearing.*

*Touching, smelling.*

*Eating, walking.*

*Sleeping, breathing 5.8.*

*Talking, sacrificing.*

*Receiving, eyelids opening.*

*Or closing, should the knower keep them thinking.*

*As organs' reflexes and not anything he is doing 5.9.*

Chapter XVIII describes five elements or ingredients which constitute each action:

*The causes of all action*

*Read or mean five parameters*

*As per the Spartan Vedic-philosophical version*

*From me listen to or gather 18.13*

*All the senses the organs*

*A doer, the body*

*Different kind of efforts or prosecution*

*Fifth and the last the destiny or supreme divinity 18.14*

One of them is therefore the supreme divinity. It is needless to say that, the last element is beyond the reach of the man. If it is deficient or wanting, a work would not succeed for which one should not blame himself, feel sorry and shed tears on his alleged failure despite his meritorious delivery and performance. It is for these reasons, it is postulated in the stanza 47 of Chapter II that, man is entitled to his duty alone and its fruition or no fruition is beyond his office, that, he cannot dream of an exclusive and the desired result of his given action and cannot assert abstinence from performing his duty if contemplated result is not to be reached. The ratio in the nutshell form is, to fill it and forget it, fire it and forget it or to do it and forget it.

## Kudos and Grandeur

The Lord Sri Krishna described in Chapter X, as to how He acutely manifests in unlimited and excellent forms obtaining in the universe which are called kudos or grandeur. The Lord has also appeared and presented Himself before Arjuna in His most explosive, colossal and gigantic universal form portrayed in Chapter XI. Arjuna thereby realizes his meagerness. It induces him to lay hand to his naturally assigned action and inspires him to attain excellence in his each and every deed or act. It must be noted that, mere monetary enticement would not serve the purpose of exciting a man to do and deliver his best in the discharge of his duty but he must be incited by the ideal of the highest order.

## On Cheerfulness

Cheerfulness of mind and heart is equally necessary for effectively delivering one's action. Concentration of mind is the next requirement. Arjuna vented his apprehension thus:

*The concatenation attainable with intellectual equanimity  
You addressed to me  
I am afraid would last in perpetuity  
Due to mind's unstable proclivity 6.33  
As mind is wavering and obstinate  
Powerful, determined, strong-willed  
Formidable to persuade  
Its regulation is as difficult as devising a bucket of wind 6.34*

The Lord, while conceding to the doubt raised by Arjuna, delivers that:

*Mind is slippery and formidable  
No doubt no question  
But Kauntey (Arjuna), to control it is amenable  
Through industry and asceticism 6.35  
For him, his mind who cannot master  
I think this concatenation is highly formidable  
But his mind who can conquer  
Through means and efforts, it's possible 6.36  
About everything who is dispassionate  
At any good or evil event  
Neither suffers rancor nor gladness  
Depict his stable intellect 2.57  
By controlling the senses  
Attain impregnation with concatenation  
On me only converge the mind or concentrate*



*Conqueror of senses enjoys intellectual stabilization 2.61*  
*Without love, jealousy*  
*Who, with the senses under his domination*  
*Dwells amid pleasures bodily*  
*A man who rules his mind reaches satisfaction 2.64*  
*Who, giving up all attachment*  
*With mind devoid of desires, expectations*  
*Going dispassionate, without lofty accent*  
*Performs duties, receives peace, conciliation 2.71*  
*Post such satisfaction and placidity*  
*Comes removal of all sorrows and torment*  
*As whose mind is full of ecstasy*  
*Stabilization his intelligence attains 2.65*

Man's diet and sleep have a direct bearing on his cheerfulness, determination, concentration and efficiency. The significance of the diet and sleep is highlighted by the Lord thus:

*This concatenation, the unitary way is neither attainable*  
*By a voracious eater nor who abstains eating*  
*By a somnolent it is unobtainable*  
*Or who is not at all sleeping 6.16*  
*Whose, diet is square, recreation moderate*  
*Actions fair, sleep and wakefulness appropriate*  
*Alone ever attains or gets*  
*This affliction erasing order dispassionate 6.17*

Everyone should be called upon to practice meditation regularly to curb fluctuations of mind. It leads to stabilization and empowerment of mind which ultimately result into attainment of concatenation or the unitary order. The Gita provides a mechanism in this regard as:

*Mustering intellect impregnated with courage*  
*Slowly, serially stabilize mind at the 'Self' inner*  
*Should not reflect or engage*  
*Mind in anything whatsoever 2.25*  
*Mind wavering by nature*  
*Wherever goes astray and rolls*  
*By seeking to rein up and recover*  
*Should be brought in control of the soul 2.26*  
*To him, who has triumphed mind and the senses*  
*Whose heart is unblemished, pure*  
*Who, deems as his spirit the spirit of living masses*  
*Oozing with concatenation, doing do not adhere 5.7*  
*When, his controlled mind*

*Stations and stabilizes at the soul*  
*Becomes disinterested, quitting all lust behind*  
*He as an ascetic himself enrolls 6.18*  
*Alike the steady flame*  
*Of a lamp in a silent quarter*  
*Mind he trims and tames*  
*Who, works for this 'Unitary' order 6.19*  
*In which state mind in the silence rolls*  
*Owing to the control due to 'Unitary' exercise*  
*In the same, sees with pure mind the soul*  
*In it satisfaction he harvests and enjoys 6.20*  
*The pleasure unreachable by the senses*  
*Intellect alone cherishes*  
*In such absolute pleasure he immerses*  
*From it never deviates or digresses 6.21*  
*Attaining which pass, state*  
*Deems nothing more profitable*  
*Once stabilized there to any sorrow, however great*  
*Ceases to be vulnerable 6.22*  
*Such a disjunction from sorrow*  
*Defines the state of 'Unison'*  
*Which, one is supposed to follow*  
*Without boredom, with resolution 6.23*

## Triangular Qualities

The basic feature of the document is that, man's constitution consists of triangular qualities of Nature he is born with. They are described as 'pious or holy', 'passionate' and 'ferocious'. One of these three qualities overpowers the other two and determines the personality, character and occupation of every person. Many times, a man is misplaced in an occupation against his propensity and natural orientation. It also leads to his inefficiency and vocational failure. Lord Sri Krishna has laid down the symptoms which indicate the aggravation of the 'ferocious' quality and the attending fallout in the words to follow:

*If the 'ferocious' is on the rise or ascent*  
*Ignorance, work aversion*  
*Dereliction of duty and allurements*  
*Catch one's hold or seize upon the person 14.13*

The indices of a person overwhelmed by the 'ferocious' quality are also described by the Lord at some other point in the document inasmuch as:

*With wavering intellect, a man of rustic nature  
A scuttle, stiffened with pride, shrewd and foxy  
With a lazy, melancholic and snail-paced character  
Indicate a doer of the 'ferocious' quality 18.28*

It is at this point that, we need to take a pragmatic view for resolving the issue and overcoming the barricade. Such a loss of interest of a person, which may be termed as suicidal, should be equated to the fall of a stream of water from a high cliff which is used for generation of energy, called the hydroelectric power. As such, we must use the failing and falling power and energy of the man for his own escalation or rather elevation, may be in the occupational sector, domestic or otherwise, is another precept of the Gita. We must also consider and find simile in an idea of converting static energy into kinetic energy. We must activate and stoke the diminishing and extinguishing fire which is ever lying at the core of one's heart. Mind of the man is a great powerhouse. We ought to unlock and commission it. We can and we must gun the engine of one's mind into life. There are ways and ways for dissuading the man from such an abstruse state of mind and heart. Sound is also a kind and form of energy. Its transmission by one to another through advocacy therefore works, arrests and averts his fall and the man who once seemed dejected and badly resigned from his duty arouses himself to meet the challenges and the requirements appurtenant to his office.

### **Man's Escalation from Ebb to the Zenith**

The remedy lies in making efforts for transforming the personality of the man which would be besides or rather sans the three qualities of Nature to which he owes his inception. Is it possible? Yes, answer is in the affirmative. We must make at least an endeavor to escalate the man from the lowest quality called the 'ferocious' to the best quality of Nature known as 'holy' or 'pious' The attributes of a man who transcends the three qualities, the things which constitute his conduct and the means and ways by which he crosses these three properties are widely described by the Lord in Chapter XIV.

*Who, is indifferent to the fruition of action  
Does not undergo tri-qualitative commotion  
Knowing, the qualities alone are at function  
Remains stable, suffers not fluctuation 14.23  
For whom joy and sorrow are equal  
Who, is stable in his place  
To whom same are gold, earth, metal  
Dear, disliked, criticism, flattery and is ever full of courage 14.24  
Who, is equally indifferent to insult and respect  
Looks evenly to friends and enemies  
Of fruition of all actions could himself divest.*

*Defines a person besides the three qualities 14.25*  
*Who, sincerely and intently persuades.*  
*Me along the path of devotion.*  
*All the three qualities transcends.*  
*Qualifies for the Marvel disposition 14.26*  
*Victory over his mind who celebrates*  
*The great soul of such a person extremely pacific*  
*Maintains equanimity for the things hot, cold, sorrow, happiness*  
*Insult and felicitation and their nature dialectic 6.7*  
*Whose, mind is impregnated*  
*With self-realization and knowledge of things many*  
*Goes indifferent, has triumph over the senses exhibited*  
*Treats clod, stone and gold equally is an ascetic truly 6.8*  
*He, who equally treats friends, well-wishers*  
*The neutrals, mediators, enviable, kith, enemy*  
*The pious and evil-doers*  
*Represents a man of extraordinary capability 6.9*  
*An ascetic should seek solitude and resolution*  
*Of mind and intellect*  
*Without any desire, avarice, obsession*  
*Mind to the industry of concatenation should ever direct 6.10*  
*On a ground pure and holy*  
*First hay then stag-leather laid*  
*Covering with a cloth duly*  
*Making a stable seat on the ground not much undulated 6.11*  
*By arranging such a stable seat, position*  
*Sitting on it, controlling heart's and sensual transactions*  
*By attempting mind's and organs' regulation.*  
*Should, with concentration study 'Unison' for heart's purification 6.12*  
*Sitting in a steady posture*  
*Keeping in a straight line back, neck and head*  
*Going still, looking neither here nor there*  
*With the eyes to the tip of the nose pointed 6.13*  
*An ascetic, continually this concatenation way practicing*  
*And goes on his mind controlling*  
*Gets peace, redemptive and emancipating*  
*Which extremely soothing peace in Me is dwelling 6.15*

## Cluster of Virtues

Disjunction from vices and acquisition of virtues are also the requirements of developing into a great personality who would be naturally a valuable asset of any organization and his family. It need not be stressed that, for being a good hand at every level in the house or an industry or a company, a person must develop, acquire and

maintain a bunch of virtues slowly and steadily. It is the duty of the elders and the superiors in the managerial capacity to facilitate him to develop and acquire the same. These are as follows:

*Absolutely pious temperament, fearlessness*  
*Towards knowledge and concatenation promptness*  
*Alms, 'Sacrifice', restraint on the senses*  
*Performing one's duty apropos, austerity and straightness 16.1*  
*Non violence, absence of rage, truthfulness*  
*Calmness, sacrifice, devoid of wickedness*  
*Compassion for the beings, non-greediness, politeness*  
*Social accountability, abstention from covetousness 16.2*

## Occupational Classes

The Lord says the humanity stands naturally divided into four occupational classes.

*Deeds or actions of different sections*  
*Of the knowledgeable, warrior, trader*  
*And nursing denomination*  
*Are governed by the 'nature' borne characters 18.41*

It would be interesting to know the characteristics of these four different classes which would support the hypothesis, as to how a man can be nurtured into an excellent personality by acquisition of the parameters or the characters which are otherwise applicable to each such class exclusively. The Lord has described the obligations of the knowledgeable, the warrior, the trader and the nursing class in the following order respectively:

*Holiness, pious mortification*  
*Subdued mind and passions*  
*Honesty of thought and action*  
*Forbearance and toleration 18.42/1*  
*The knowledge spiritual*  
*And of the science experimental*  
*To the God bound and loyal*  
*Natural obligations of the knower of the Marvel 18.42/2*  
*Valor, brilliance, courage or resolution*  
*Vigilance, never turning back on the field of warfare*  
*Charity, to wield domination*  
*Properties of the warrior class or the order 18.43*  
*Nourishing cowherd, husbandry or agriculture*  
*And commerce too*  
*The instincts of the trader*  
*Nursing the proclivity of the next class or crew 18.44*

It can be deduced that, every human being is a blend of the four classes laid down in Chapter XVIII, verse 41. One has to be knowledgeable, he should defend him against the vices which majorly consist of infatuation, lust, rage and envy, he must cultivate his mind like a farmer tills and husbands the land for raising and harvesting virtues and one must strive for advancing the cause of the people through their service. This would give rise to the ideal citizens of the world who would not need any kind of further training, monitoring and management.

## **Meditation and Deep Breathing**

It can be very well said that, the Lord has advised meditation as the way for reaching the intellect-concentration, also called concentration. It is only when the perturbation owing to the duality of success and failure and obsession for fruition of every action are overcome, that concentration and peace of mind are reached by the man, power of his mind is multiplied manifold and the man transcends the qualitative agitation and disorder which otherwise mar the human personality and hinder his way to his duty and action and his ascent to the excellence.

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## **Conclusion**

Ergo, management of life of a person, of an organization, a company, a business establishment, an enterprise or an industry should mean the appreciation of existence of these philosophical aspects of human personality and rearing and synthesizing them into an integral character and disposition by following prescriptions laid down by Lord Sri Krishna in the Gita. They consist of overcoming infatuation and lamentation, inculcating intellect-concentration, attaining concentration of mind, awakening and mustering its power, building confidence and optimizing the proficiency of the man. So, nourishment of man who would turn out with dispassionate action without obsession for fruition, performed as work of the God and its dedication to Him coupled with persuasion of the Lord would yield a complete, strong, brave, courageous and efficient yet a courteous, noble and a pious individual. Then no wonder, he would plunge into action from inaction, rise from aversion to dedication, take-off from depression to elevation, compassion to revelation, vassalage to redemption and from mortality to the final emancipation. Ruminating of the God, prosecution to seek the reflection of the Lord in every aspect of the world of beings and nonbeings, evolution of the sense of equality towards everyone, disjunction from envy, unflinching adherence to duty, charity, austerity and 'sacrifice', gradual transcendence of the tri-qualitative nature of the human being, service to the good of the people and all beings and aiming at the final emancipation or salvation in the ultimate analysis would dispense with the necessity of separately managing the individual and social life and the affairs of the company or an enterprise a man is engaged in. Lord Sri Krishna, while nearing the end of the discourse, narrates in the words to follow:

*Thus I disclosed to you  
The knowledge most profound  
Dwelling on its each facet and view  
Do whatever which may your will propound 18.63*

Yet, Lord Sri Krishna, by reason of his extreme love and compassion for Arjuna cannot rest contented. He proceeds to deliver that:

*Of all maxims most profound and secret  
Listen again the one, my best out of them  
To me being very dear and intimate  
I apprise you of a thing, your welfare's emblem 18.64  
Repose in me heart and concentration  
Engage your submission and devotion  
Worship and offer me alone salutation  
Shall merge with me only or attain unison 18.65/1  
To me you endear  
Hence I venture  
With all solemnity to offer  
All the things of this order 18.65/2*

The last verse of Chapter XVIII envelops the fruits which the man would enjoy if he zealously follows the entire philosophy enunciated by Lord Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita for managing his life and the affairs of the organization he works for. It reads as follows:

*On whichever side shall be  
Duo, Yogeshwar Krishna-n-Arjuna, super eminent archer  
I think shall alone receive stately wealth, eternal welfare, victory  
And the regal jurisprudence, all the Prowess four-square 18.78*

However, it is incumbent on everyone to read, appreciate and practice the Gita regularly, so that, we could best manage our life and all its ramifications right from personal, occupational and social to global. It marks the terminus of this literary journey led by the fluorescent Marvel.

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# Values Based Management: Guided by the Bhagavad Gītā

# 12

Paul Palmarozza

## Introduction to the Teaching of The Bhagavad Gītā

The guidance offered in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is designed to help one live a happy, productive and peaceful life as well as, at the same time, discovering our true nature. This essential nature, which is the same for all, can be reached through different paths. This view i.e. there are many paths to the same goal, is an inclusive approach, which differs from some religious and philosophic traditions who espouse exclusivity i.e. ours is the only right way; we are right-you are wrong. We are going to look at how this teaching applies to running a responsible and productive business, one which not only offers long term sustainable financial returns, but also a high degree of satisfaction for all that are involved.

Unless otherwise stated, the translation of the verses of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, quoted in this chapter are the author's adaptations of the texts from the version of the *Gītā* with the commentary of *Sri Sankaracharya* as translated by *Alladi Mahadeva Sastry*, Sastry (1981). All verses from the *Gītā* are listed in this format: 2.54 which refers to Chapter 2, Verse 54. The page number from the book is also provided e.g. (*Gita*, 2.54, p. 68).

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, addresses three main spiritual paths which reflect the inherent nature of the human being. They are the:

- Way of Selfless Action (*Karma Yoga*)
- Way of Love/Devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*)
- Way of Knowledge (*Jnana Yoga*)

In our approach to the practical application of the teachings of the *Gītā* to business we will examine the guidelines offered to help enhance:

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How We Think (Knowledge/Intellectual);  
 How We Relate to Others (Love/Emotional);  
 How We Act (Action/Physical)

The place where the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is revealed is a battlefield. The war being fought came at a time when discrimination and wisdom were in a decline, and according to the *Gītā* when this happens, an Avatar, a Divine Teacher, is born to remind the people of the main principles of life.

*Whenever there is a decay of religion and an ascendancy of irreligion, then I (the Lord) manifest Myself. (Gītā, 4.7, p. 121).*

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Krishna, the living embodiment of the omniscient, omnipresent Lord, fulfils this role. Representing all of us, the people of the society, is Arjuna; a great warrior who is confused and very uncertain about how to proceed. He has a lot of questions. In a business environment, this interaction is analogous to the conversations between an experienced ‘Coach’ (Krishna) and a confused ‘Manager’ (Arjuna).

The symbolism of the battlefield where a great war was being fought is taken as an analogy of the common human struggle. The specific choices/challenges we have in business and in life are:

Forces of darkness and ignorance	vs.	Forces of light and knowledge
Ego-centric decisions	vs.	Full discrimination
Habitual/mechanical action	vs.	Conscious action
Me against them	vs.	We, we are one
Duality of: pleasure and pain; like and dislike	vs.	Equanimity
Transient	vs.	Universal
Vices—lust, greed and anger	vs.	Values—love, justice and freedom
Untruth	vs.	Truth
Vengeful war	vs.	Harmlessness

Arjuna explores with Krishna the nature of the obstacles blocking his/our path and the different ways he/we can remove them and thus serve society more fully and realise his/our full potential. Remember, Arjuna represents all of us.

We are reminded on numerous occasions during their conversation that our essential nature is one of unity. The only reason that this is not recognised, accepted and lived is that the knowledge is covered over by ignorance, like the clouds that cover and block access to the ever-shining sun. We create our clouds through our ideas about the creation; the names and forms we impose on objects; the likes and dislikes which establishes our attitude towards people, things, events etc. We become attached and identified with these ideas taking them for reality. These are our ego-based ideas. The mind is therefore the cause of the ignorance, but once it becomes purified, it becomes the instrument for liberation. The mind becomes purified through letting go of the false and accepting that which is true and real. This can only be achieved when the mind is still, a topic that is returned to again, and again.

Let’s look more closely at the three major ways described in the *Gītā* to help us live a full and productive life.

## Karma Yoga: The Way of Action

Karma Yoga is essentially acting, or doing our duties in life, our Dharma, without concern of results. It is action done without thought of gain and without being affected by the nature of the result. As Arjuna is very active in his role as a warrior, Krishna concentrates initially on the guidelines for selfless action. This very important theme of Karma Yoga does not mean renouncing the work, but only the giving up of any claims on the action or its results. This approach is touched upon in the following verses:

*You are entitled only to actions and never to its fruits, do not consider yourself to be the cause of the fruits nor let your attachment be to inaction. (Gītā, 2.47, p. 63).*

*Perform actions dwelling in yoga, abandoning attachment, O Conqueror of Wealth (Arjuna), being alike to success and failure, Equanimity is called yoga. (Gītā, 2.48, p. 64).*

## Bhakti Yoga: The Way of Devotion

Bhakti is summed up as a mode of worship that consists of unceasing and loving remembrance of the Lord and service freely dedicated the will of the Lord. One gets a real sense of this freedom when one is doing work that one really loves, and it proceeds in an effortless manner.

Krishna sets out examples of actions performed with faith and devotion that produces fine results for all.

*He who is the same to foe and friend, also in honour and dishonour; who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain: who is free from attachment; to whom censure, and praise are equal; who is silent, content with anything, steady minded and full of devotion, such a man is dear to Me. (Gītā, 12.18–19, p. 313).*

## Jnana Yoga: The Way of Knowledge

Jnana Yoga is a process of learning to discriminate between what is right and wrong; between good and bad and ultimately between what is real and what is not, i.e. between what is eternal and what is transient and temporal. Through a steady advancement in realisation of the distinction between our ego-based ideas and that which is the reality facing us, one develops a clarity of mind, a wisdom that enables us to make the right decisions. Krishna's counsel is intended to alleviate the anxiety that Arjuna feels seeing a battle between two great armies about to commence. However, Arjuna is not initially ready for the full scope of knowledge. He is a warrior, a man of action, for whom the path of action is his main concern, so the initial advice is about right action- about doing your duty.

*Having regard for your own duty, you should not waver. For a warrior, to fight a just and necessary war is a great service. (Gītā, 2.31, p. 54).*

But later when Arjuna is ready for it then the way of knowledge is presented:

*Constancy in Self-Knowledge, perception of the end of the knowledge of truth. This is declared to be knowledge, and what is opposed to it is ignorance. (Gītā, 13.11, p. 342).*

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## Prominent Values Today and Their Impact on Business

In considering what ideas and values of the *Bhagavad Gītā* are relevant for business management today, we need to first assess the current state of our culture, the prevailing values, ideas and attitudes, as these very much influence how business is run.

There is clearly a need for greater self-awareness and a clearer, accurate and more objective assessment of the current state of our society. For example, the essential idea that individual freedom is fundamental and good. That is true, but if freedom and any of the other natural human values are taken beyond measure, it can cause serious difficulties for the individual and for society. Probably the best description of the effect of excess freedom in a democratic society is described by Plato in *The Republic*. In exploring the nature of a democracy he included in the analysis a description of the state of a society when freedom goes beyond a reasonable measure. It comes to mean that individuals are free to say and to do as they like without restraint; it is my personal freedom that is important. There is more focus on 'Me' than on 'We'. The main emphasis becomes my rights without considerations of their crucial complement, i.e. my duties. This emphasis on rights without reference to duties does seem to be quite characteristic of our current culture.

## The State of Business in Society Today

My observations of business practices over a business career spanning 54 years is that there has been a gradual shift away from the core values of hard work, honesty, loyalty and service in favour of intense efforts directed at obtaining short-term results that will benefit 'me', usually financially. The 'me' in most cases is the individual, but this sense of greed and excess quickly spreads within an organization, especially when the leaders are the ones setting the bad example. As standards slip, more people begin to think that the focus on short term gain, at any cost, is the normal and accepted way things are done in business; '*everyone is doing it*'. Accepting this error in judgement as the norm is the next step down the slippery slope. A current example of the slippery slope is the increased use of illegal drugs by sportsmen as exposed in recent years. Winning becomes more important than obeying the law; than playing fair.

One of the main problems is the poor example being set by business leaders. An analysis, from the UK Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD, the professional body for HR and People Development, and the High Pay Centre, an independent think tank), shows that the average FTSE 100 CEO now receives an annual pay package of £4.5 million a year which is 170 times the average earning

and more than 400 times the earnings of someone on the national living wage. ([www.highpaycentre.org](http://www.highpaycentre.org)) '*Everyone is doing it*' is the justification.

A report from Strategy & the Strategy Consulting unit of PwC has found that UK CEOs now have an average 5-year life-cycle. Consistent with trends in five of the last 8 years, according to the 2017 CEO Success Study, the median length of service at the top for the biggest 300 British businesses has shrunk to 4.8 years, down 73% from 2010's high of 8.3 years. ([www.consultancy.uk/news/13464/uk-ceos-unlikely-to-last-beyond-5-years-strategyand-finds](http://www.consultancy.uk/news/13464/uk-ceos-unlikely-to-last-beyond-5-years-strategyand-finds)).

This is hardly the kind of commitment which would encourage effective long-range planning. Maximise short term gains is the most likely strategy. CEOs are in their exalted position not even long enough to see the impact of some of their decisions. In 2015, the CEO of WPP, an advertising firm, was paid \$103 million. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/wpp-ceo-martin-sorrell-receives-103-million-in-compensation-for-2015-1461941572>) '*I deserve it*' is the typical justification. In 2018, the company was in big trouble and the CEO was dismissed. It just may be that had decisions taken 3 years before, which resulted in his huge compensation, been more concerned with a longer-term plan, including contingencies, then the current difficulties might have been avoided.

This excess on the part of the leaders gives full justification for others in an organization, like investment bank traders and others, to find ways to maximise their income in the short term, at any cost. This approach to business is best expressed as, '*Take the Money and Run.*'

You will also have noticed the growing public frustration with business leaders has resulted in a dramatic loss in public trust. In the 2017, the Ipsos MORI Veracity survey in the UK about members of society who were most trusted, business leaders were near the bottom at 36%, ahead of only estate agents (27%), professional footballers (26%) and politicians (17%). The verdict is that business people cannot be trusted. ([www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/politicians-remain-least-trusted-profession-britain](http://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/politicians-remain-least-trusted-profession-britain))

That same lack of trust is present within many companies, making working for such companies an unattractive proposition, especially for many young people. As a Guest Lecturer at Regents University Business School in London, I have had the opportunity to interact with many young people who are seeking a career in business. They would very much like to work in a company which acts responsibly in society with regard to such issues as pollution, poverty and care of their people, as opposed to an organization where the dominant concern is constantly driving its employees to achieve their short term financial targets. Seeing that the latter approach is quite dominant in big businesses, there is a growing interest by young people to start their own enterprise—to become entrepreneurs.

These are strong signals that it is time for company directors and management to turn their attention to changing the culture of their companies, so that the focus is on doing business in the right way and not simply aiming at financial gain at any cost. It is clear that the issue of corporate governance has reached a crossroads. Let's take a look at the choices for each route with emphasis on the direction offered by the

*Bhagavad Gītā* to help change the business culture so that management and employees are willing and able to make the right decisions.

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### **Direction Left: Maximize Short Term Financial Results**

This misguided route results in the following priorities, policies and programmes:

- The main performance criteria are short term business profits and if a listed company, the share price. For listed companies, this means meeting quarterly or half-year targets as these need to be reported and can have an impact on the share price.
- Highly leveraged bonus plans based on meeting short term targets, sometimes leading to severe cost cutting in order to make short term profit targets which is often at the expense of ability to deliver a quality product or service.
- A relaxed view on methods used to obtain business, especially from overseas markets e.g. *‘If you want to do business in that country, you have to bribe. Others are doing it.’*
- Heavy investment in external PR & marketing activities to promote the organisation’s commitment to corporate responsibility and to avoid any damaging negative publicity. This also requires employing a large team of very qualified (and expensive) lawyers to put in place industry and country approved legal policies to minimise legal and reputational risk and to demonstrate compliance. This legal team will also operate to vigorously defend any legal action taken against the company by individuals, organisations or the government.
- Well-articulated, marketing driven mission and corporate social responsibility statements and ethical codes, with little effort made to ensure that these ideals are lived. As stated in Enron’s Code of Ethics: *“We want to be proud of Enron and to know that it enjoys a reputation for fairness and honesty and that it is respected...”* (Alsop, 2005 p. 83)

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### **Direction Right: A Values Based Business Approach Guided by the *Bhagavad Gītā***

A most attractive source of values-based guidelines for business for this person is the *Bhagavad Gītā*. A great deal of time and fine energy has been expended in trying to understand its full meaning and then to apply them in the running of my business. The essential message that I received and had confirmed to a great degree in practice, is that to think, speak and act according to these values leads naturally to a more productive and happy life for the leader of the business, the employees, and everyone associated in any way with the offerings of the business. This is an important statement for us today given the mistaken view that wealth, power, fame and pleasure are the source of happiness.

These values, qualities or virtues as they are known, are presented in the Gita as aspects of our true nature. In Chapter 12 verses 7–11 and in Chapter 16 Verses 1–3 there are lists of these divine qualities, many of which are spoken of in the context of the Arjuna’s internal battle, as will be seen in the section that follows. The message is that when one acts according to the direction given by the values, they become agents of purification. They eliminate the obstacles and impediments to enable us to have a true view of life. They remove the clouds of ignorance so that the true light of knowledge can shine through.

## Management Functions Guided by the Fine Values

We are now going to look at the subject of the key management functions in running an enterprise and how these functions can be performed more effectively when guided by the natural human values offered by the *Bhagavad Gītā*. When these values are followed, i.e. lived, they lead to the achievement of desired Business Qualities/Values, such as efficiency, credibility and productivity which ultimately results in a profitable and sustainable business.<sup>1</sup> We are going to examine the practical application of the natural human values by focusing on the performance of nine core management functions in terms of:

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## How Managers Think, Relate to Others, and Act

### How We Think

1. *It is important to establish a stable and balanced state of mind when making decisions.*

There are many decisions that need to be made every day at different levels in an organization. There are usually several options, some with significant external pressures e.g. to meet investor expectations, and some with internal pressures, e.g. I want to win and to gain personal recognition. What is needed is a decision-making process based on a mindful awareness that enables you to remain steady, be clear about your motives and to apply relevant values as the basis for the decision. The values that help bring about that state of mind are: *(The Sanskrit name for the value, the chapter/verse and page number in the cited reference book are provided for each quote.)*

- **Stillness/Inner Silence**

*Little by little he should become still by the help of his reason firmly controlled, fixing his mind on the Self, let him not think of anything else.(Uparama 6.25, p. 96)*

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<sup>1</sup>This approach is partially based on this author’s *Ethical Entrepreneur* values app and E-book, produced as the CEO of If I Can...CIC, a not-for-profit Community Interest Company.

- **Calmness**

*Intelligence, wisdom, freedom from illusion, patience, truth, self-control, calmness... (Sama 10.4, p. 260)*

- **Mindful Awareness**

*He who is indifferent to praise or blame, who is silent, content with every fate, who has no fixed abode, is steady-minded and filled with devotion; such a man is dear to Me. (Sthiramatis 12.19, p. 313)*

*Making the mind one-pointed, with the actions of the mind and the senses controlled. Let him, seated there on a seat, practice Yoga for the purification of the self. (Ekagram 6.12, p. 190)*

As you are probably aware mindfulness and meditation are being used increasingly in schools as well as businesses to help relieve stress and tension and to help bring about a quieter, still state of mind. While we have all experienced such moments of stillness, the direction given is to go there more often, especially when making difficult decisions.

## 2. *There needs to be clarification regarding the vision, values and long term, sustainable objectives of the organization*

One of the defining traits of a good entrepreneur is clear vision; the ability to see a real need that can be met by the organization's capabilities; to see the way to serve that need efficiently and responsibly, and to communicate that vision effectively to customers, staff, and investors. The direction chosen needs to be sustainable over an extended period, which will happen if the vision is followed faithfully, without being diverted due to a fear of failure. Also required is continual review to assess the state of play in the moment, to see if there has been any change in the needs, or in the way they might be satisfied. The values that help satisfy these needs are:

- **Service**

*Therefore constantly unattached, perform that action which is thy duty. By performing action while unattached one attains the Supreme (Asaktas Karma 3.19, p. 104).*

- **Duty/Responsibility**

*Far better to do your own duty even imperfectly than to do the duty of another perfectly (Swadharmas 18.47, p. 476).*

- **Fearlessness/Courage**

*Governing senses, mind and intellect, intent on liberation, fearless, free from anger and desire; the sage is forever liberated (Abhaya 5.28, p. 177).*

Service, the heart of business, relates to assessing the need and then applying one's resources to the satisfaction of that need. We have already noted how selfishness and excessive concern for *me* are indicators of a weakened individual and if too prevalent in a society, then the quality and extent of service will also be weakened.

We are encouraged to focus, to give our full attention to our duty, avoiding the mental comparisons with the tasks and rewards of others, which distracts us from

doing what is needed. The *Bhagavad Gītā* stresses the importance of fulfilling our lawful duties and responsibilities in life i.e. our Dharma. Our duties are linked to our talents and when we make best use of our talents in the service of all, we are fulfilling the law of Dharma.

Those responsible for directing a business, needs to be clear about the vision for the enterprise and how this will be sustained in the long run. An example of a clear vision came to me in 1968 when I was working for an American computer company who made large, fast computers. We were visited by a team of Japanese engineers who observed what we were doing. I asked one of the groupmembers, ‘*What is your vision for computers in Japan?*’ He said, ‘*We are going to make the fastest computer in the world.*’ I was very surprised and said ‘*But there are many large US companies like IBM, Honeywell, Univac, Burroughs and our company in this field. How are you going to beat all of us?*’ ‘*Ah, we have 20 year plan. You people in the west think very short term.*’ He repeated, ‘*We have 20 year plan!*’ I can still hear his voice. In 1987, Fujitsu announced the fastest computer in the world. All the other competitors I noted were no longer in the game.

In Chapter 16 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where a list of 26 natural human values are presented, the first one is fearlessness, *Abhaya*. A person needs to be fearless from the outset, willing to step into the unknown. Anyone who has started up a business enterprise will have experienced that moment when the view of future was uncertain, but there was some inner power and strength, that made possible taking that step into the unknown. We all know how fear about what might happen in the future can mess up our mind, causing agitation such that good, clear decisions are impossible. Without fear we can remain balanced and poised in the present moment.

### 3. *To maintain clarity and balance, there needs to freedom from excessive desires, habitual reactions and claims for success/failure*

The agreed values, according to the *Gita*, should encourage moderation, creativity and detachment from personal, ego-driven motives; from mechanical reactions, e.g. ‘*we have always done it that way,*’ and from excessive claims for success or blaming others for failure. To maintain these qualities significant self-discipline is needed, and care taken that personal reward and recognition do not become the main motivators for one’s decisions. The important values are:

- **Detachment**

*He who is fully detached from the fruits of action is always satisfied and not dependent when acting, he does nothing at all (Tyaktvaa 4.20, p. 136).*

- **Temperance/Moderation**

*For him who is moderate in food and play, whose exertion in actions moderate, who is moderate in sleep and waking, all his sorrows are destroyed (Yukta 6.17, p. 193).*

- **Self-control**

*The self-controlled soul who moves amongst sense objects, free from either attachment or repulsion, he wins eternal Peace (Vidheya 2.64, p. 74).*



The *Gītā* describes desire as the enemy of the wise. The senses, mind, and intellect are the instruments called into action to satisfy desire. All this movement, this agitation, covers over the true knowledge.

*Desire is insatiable and breeds lust, greed and anger the 3 main gates to hell. The wise should abandon these three (Kaama, 16.21, p. 425).*

Desire therefore needs careful attention. When we are able to avoid being dominated by desires, then peace is near at hand.

*He attains peace, into whom all desires enter as waters enter the ocean which, filled from all sides, remains unaltered; but not he who desires objects (Shanti 2.70, p. 79).*

When these values are lived the desirable business qualities/values that result are:

**Adaptability, Decisiveness, Objectivity, Innovation, Self-Confidence, and Efficiency**

## How We Relate to Others

### 4. *It is important to establish and maintain a harmonious work environment.*

Crucial to the efficiency, motivation and satisfaction of all the staff is a positive work environment, where there are clear examples of mutual respect, tolerance and an active concern for the needs of others, i.e. more emphasis on *we* than on *me*. A business is most effective when there is full cooperation between those within the company and with external business partners, suppliers, customers and the community. The values needed to be able to provide the right conditions for all are:

- **Respect**

*He who is impartial to all; to friends, companions, foes; the indifferent or hostile; alien or relative; virtuous or sinful is to be respected among men (Visishya 6.9, p. 189).*

- **Tolerance**

*The sense contacts which cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain; they come and go and are not permanent. You must bravely tolerate them, O Bharata (Tītiksha 2.14, p. 32).*

- **Compassion/Kindness**

*He hates no single being, who is friendly and compassionate to all, free from attachment to possessions, free from egotism of 'me' and 'mine'. Indifferent to pleasure and pain, patient... (Karuna 12.13, p. 311).*

### 5. *It is crucial to be truthful and transparent in all dealings -internally and externally.*

Truth binds. The binding is called trust. It is essential to every kind of business. No trust, no business. Trust involves a confidence in the goodness, strength,

reliability of another, which is only possible when one is open, transparent and has consistently spoken and acted truthfully. It results in long-term business relationships which last through good times and bad, and therefore it is the basis of long lasting businesses. The related values:

- **Truth/Honesty**

*Speech that hurt no one, that is true, is pleasant to listen to and beneficial and the practice of repetition of the scriptures—this is austerity of speech (Satyam 17.15, p. 434).*

- **Integrity**

*Absence of pride, freedom from hypocrisy, non-violence, patience, honesty service of the Teacher, integrity, constancy, self-restraint... (Saucam 13.7, p. 339).*

- **Trust**

*He who does My work, depends on Me, is devoted to Me, abandons all attachment, and is free from enmity toward any being, comes to Me, O Son of Pandu (Matparamas 11.55, p. 301).*

Integrity and service are some of the most important aspects today, given the existing attitudes, experiences and conditions.<sup>2</sup> Integrity means that we speak truthfully and do what we said we would do. If we lived it and a firm trust would be established with our employees, suppliers and clients, which we were determine to maintain. It makes doing business easier and enables us to have long-term relationships with our clients, suppliers, and staff, many of whom choose to remain with the company for many years.

#### 6. *Energy and resources need to be invested in empowering staff to enable the full development of their talents*

It is one of the primary responsibilities of a leader to work patiently to provide people with guidance and sufficient freedom to enable them to discover their true talents and then to inspire and empower them to fulfil their true potential with enthusiasm. By generously granting this opportunity for development, both the individual and the organisation benefit. The key values:

- **Freedom**

*He who is without attachment, free, his mind is centred in wisdom, his actions undertaken only as a sacrifice, leaving no trace behind (Mukta 4.23, p. 140).*

- **Patience**

*Valour, patience, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of excessive pride; these are the Divine qualities of man, O Arjuna (Ksamaa 16.3, p. 416).*

- **Generosity**

*Practice of worship, generosity and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed to help purify the aspiring soul (Daanam 18.5, p. 446).*

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<sup>2</sup>In the e-learning company that this author founded, which grew and became a publicly listed company on the London AIM exchange, these were our two core values.

## A Story About Patience

*Matajuro Yagyū was the son of a famous swordsman. His father, believing that his son's work was too mediocre to anticipate mastership, disowned him.*

*So Matajuro went to Mount Futara and there found the famous swordsman Banzo. But Banzo confirmed the father's judgement. "You wish to learn swordmanship under my guidance?" asked Banzo. "You cannot fulfil the requirements."*

*"But if I work hard, how many years will it take me to become a master?" persisted the youth.*

*"The rest of your life," replied Banzo.*

*"I cannot wait that long," explained Matajuro. "I am willing to pass through any hardship if only you will teach me. If only I become your devoted servant, how long might it be?"*

*"Oh, maybe ten years," Banzo related.*

*"My father is getting old, and soon I must take care of him," continued Matajuro. "If I work far more intensively, how long would it take me?"*

*"Oh, maybe thirty years," said Banzo.*

*"Why is that?" asked Matajuro. "First you say ten and now thirty years. I will undergo any hardship to master this art in the shortest time!"*

*"Well," said Banzo, "In that case you will have to remain with me for seventy years. A man in such a hurry as you are to get results seldom quickly."*

*"Very well," declared the youth, understanding at last that he was being rebuked for impatience, "I agree."*

*Matajuro was told never to speak of fencing and never to touch a sword. He cooked for his master, washed the dishes, made the bed, cleaning the yard, cared for the garden, all without a word of swordmanship.*

*Three years passed. Still Matajuro laboured on. Thinking of his future, he was sad. He had not even begun to learn the art to which he had devoted his life.*

*But one day Banzo crept behind him and gave him a terrific blow with a wooden sword. The following day, when Matajuro was cooking rice, Banzo again sprang upon him unexpectedly.*

*After that, day and night, Matajuro had to defend himself from the unexpected thrusts. Not a moment passed in any day that he did not have to think about the taste of Banzo's sword.*

*He learned so rapidly he brought smiles to the face of his master.*

*Matajuro became the greatest swordsman in the world ([www.shotokai.com/matajuro-art-sword/](http://www.shotokai.com/matajuro-art-sword/)).*

When these values are lived the 'Desirable Business Qualities/Values' that result are a democratic community, freedom and equality, solidarity, diversity, collaboration, and credibility.

### **7. Energies need to be focused with the right priorities and in the right way to convert intentions and plans into effective actions**

What is important here is how to act correctly following a decision, i.e. the best way of transforming an idea into an action. This happens when there is fine

discernment concerning the conditions existing in the moment, memory of the guiding principles and a determination to do what is right. Among the important values here are lawfulness and harmlessness, reflecting a real concern for those who may be affected by the decision. Getting our priorities right is obviously important. What also needs to be addressed is following through in the right manner. The following are the key values.

- **Discrimination**

*To those who are constantly steadfast, who worship with affection, I give the Yoga of discrimination, by which they come to me (Buddhiyoga 10.10, p. 264).*

- **Justice/Lawfulness**

*For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the firm establishment of dharma, I am born in every age (Dharma 4.8, p. 122).*

- **Harmlessness**

*Harmlessness, equanimity, contentment, austerity, benevolence, fame and shame; all these characteristics of beings arise from Me alone (Ahimsaa 10.5, p. 260).*

Discrimination is the positive quality where one is able to discern the right from the wrong, good from bad and to make even finer decisions as to what of several valid choices is right for this moment. It is one of man's greatest resources, the power of reason. Reasonable decisions are made which are fair and just for all.

What does justice mean in a business context? The company needs to be fair to its employees and in return the employees need to be fair to their employer, delivering a full measure of work for the compensation they receive, not abusing trust by helping themselves to company property or cheating on their expenses. The company needs to be fair to its customers, delivering a valuable product or service, on time and for a fair price. When it makes a mistake, it needs to be fair about rectifying it as quickly and fully as it can. The customers need to be fair by not making unreasonable requests of the company and by paying their bills on time. All companies are customers of their suppliers, so these obligations of fairness rest with them in that role too. The company needs to be fair to its investors. This means being open and transparent in its reporting and paying its executives reasonably, an issue which as we have stated is mired in the world of excess.

### 8. *The inevitable challenges, mistakes and uncontrollable external factors need to be dealt with appropriately*

To launch and develop a new business, you will need to live with uncertainty. The way to respond to the inevitable challenges, be they self-imposed or from an external source, is to maintain a balanced and unattached state so that one's full faculties are available to discern the best response. Maintaining a balanced state is required as is a determined attitude to continue to work through the obstacles. To maintain clarity under such pressures we need to apply values such as:

- **Equanimity**

*Perform all your actions with mind concentrated on the Divine, abandoning attachment and looking upon success and failure with indifference. This is said to be equanimity, which is Yoga, union (Samatvam 2.48, p. 64).*

- **Determination/Steadfastness**

*The sage who is always contented, self-controlled, determined, whose mind and intellect are fixed on Me; such a devotee is dear to Me (Dridha 12.14, p. 311).*

- **Fortitude/Perseverance**

*Valour, patience, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of excessive pride; these are the Divine qualities of man, O Arjuna. (Dhrtis 12.4, p. 304).*

Equanimity implies a detachment from the results which is why it is so important today. One of the most penetrating lines of poetry citing the need and power of equanimity is from the poem 'If' by **Rudyard Kipling**, which was inspired by the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*If you can treat triumph and disaster, those two imposters, just the same ([www.poemhunter.com/poem/if/](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/if/)).*

9. ***Most importantly, inspiring leadership must be provided, one which sets the right example at all levels***

Inspiration comes naturally and is most powerful when the leader sets a fine example. It arises in full measure when a leader shows love through the care and service offered to the staff, when actions are selflessly and humbly performed, and when there is true integrity i.e. as one thinks, so one speaks and thus one acts. Such a fine example by the leader sets a high standard for everyone in the organization and is by far the most powerful influence.

Here is what the *Bhagavad Gītā* says about a strong stable leader- a man of steady wisdom:

*He whose mind is not agitated in misfortune, whose desire for pleasure has disappeared, who is free from attachment, fear and anger; he is a man of steady wisdom, he is said to be a wise sage. (2:56, p. 70).*

What is needed is to put aside the EGO driven ideas and live based on values such as:

- **Selflessness**

*Renunciation of the delights of the sense objects, selflessness, right understanding of the painful problems of birth and death, of old age, disease and pain...this is wisdom (Anahamkaara 13.8, p. 340).*

- **Energy/Strength**

*Energy, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride; these belong to one born for a divine role, O Bharata (Tejas 16.3, p. 416).*

- **Humility**

*Humility, modesty, harmlessness, forgiveness, service to the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control... this is wisdom (Amaanitvam 13.7, p. 339).*

Men and women with responsibility should have some idealism and a resolution to use their knowledge and position of authority to uplift their company, community and nation to progress and prosperity. Their knowledge, if based on fine principle and extensive practical experience, provides them with simplicity, precision and speed in all their activities. Whatever is their volition or vocation, the simplicity of their approach to any problem, the precision and resolution of their work, and speed with which they accomplish and complete the work in hand brings about success.

Such responsible people have enough knowledge of fine human values along with the practical knowledge of the world. Their idealism shines out and presents an example of goodness and efficiency for others in the company, for peers in business, and for the community; all of whom are in need of fine role models. A man of principle with no understanding of its practical use is of no consequence, nor is a practical and efficient man who works selfishly for personal gain without regard for principle. Our society should praise and honour those who have both idealism of spirit and action.

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## The Results

### **For all the Stakeholders: Employees, Customers, Suppliers, Investors, the Community, the Nation, the Universe and Yourself**

Success for a business is typically measured by quantifiable metrics such as sales, profits, share price etc. While financial targets need to be met, they need to be achieved without violating basic moral principles. What is really sought by everyone is happiness and a sense of contentment and peace, all of which naturally arise when you think, speak and act consistently, in the right way. In a company a sense of unity provides the greatest satisfaction. When the values highlighted are lived, then these results manifest, including profits, for all who have dealings with the organisation or who are affected by its work. This is real success.

- **Happiness**

*The person whose mind is composed, whose passions are calmed, who is free of evil and has experienced Brahman; he approaches the highest happiness (Sukham 6.27 p. 197).*

I am sure you would agree that we all want to be happy. The problem is that we often make mistakes about what will bring us happiness. True happiness is not dependent on any external person or thing, it exists within us all and when we connect with our inner happiness, it brings naturally with it a state of peace and contentment, i.e. no desires and a sense of unity. All are aspects of our true nature.

- **Love**

*To those who are always devout and who worship me with love, I give the power of discrimination which leads them to me. (Priiti 10.10, p. 264)*

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- **Peace/Contentment**

*He who is disciplined in Yoga, having abandoned the fruit of action, attains steady peace; the undisciplined one, attached to the fruit, is bound by actions prompted by desire (Shaanti 5.12, p. 166).*

*Content with what comes to him by chance, rising above the pairs of opposites, free from envy, constant in mind in either success or failure, though acting he is not bound. (Samtushtas 4.22, p. 139).*

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## Summary

What the world of business needs now are capable, responsible entrepreneurs and managers of small and medium sized firms, who by their efficient, caring and decisive actions will set a positive example for the entire business community. This will be a very powerful example. As stated in the Gītā:

*Whatever a great man does, that alone the other men do; whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world follows. (3.21, p. 106).*

The basis for the new direction are a firm resolution and a positive execution of one's management responsibilities that are guided by the natural human values which have been most clearly and comprehensively explained in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Such actions will help change the model that has become the norm and there will naturally be more respect and reverence offered to business leaders who serve with genuine humility; as opposed to those narcissistic leaders those who focus on short term results for 'me'. The new model will mean more WE than ME in business.

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# Distinguishing Revelation Politics from Salvation Theology in The Bhagavad Gita's Message for Leaders and Managers

# 13

Ajeet N. Mathur

## Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most enigmatic documents of enduring practical philosophy known to our civilization. Aldous Huxley, following Leibnitz, regarded the Bhagavad Gita as a Handbook of Perennial Philosophy (cited in Easwaran, 2015, p.17) for three reasons. First, beneath a world in constant change, evolution, and transformation, the Bhagavad Gita draws attention to an infinite, changeless reality. Secondly, its message assures us that the very same reality springs from the core of human existence and is available to all. Thirdly, there is the invitation to discover this reality experientially as the purpose of life. Countless numbers not limited to scholars and pundits, professionals, scientists and practitioners across a wide range of disciplines and endeavours and policymakers concerned with local, regional, national and international governance turn to the Bhagavad Gita to invoke its authority in faith for its abundant plurality of precepts and diversity in prescriptions.

In the introductory chapter, Dhiman (2018) has remarked that many Indians would regard the Gita as a scripture and that it is also possible to claim that the text fixed at 700 verses by Sankaracharya (ca. 788–820) is a unitary compilation in the tradition of discretely fixed texts termed '*smriti*' (remembered texts). The recurrent references to 'yoga' in the Bhagavad Gita are a poignant reminder that one of the most ancient forms of yoga based on *shruti* and experiential learning, '*Sri Vidya*' was learnt and practised in the '*shruti*' tradition at the time. According to Kanchipeeth seers, Sankaracharya brought '*Sri Vidya*' from Kashmir to Kanchi in South India where it was adapted, revised and fixed in form divesting it of some of its esoteric and tantric elements. The expunged parts can only be retrieved from Abhinavagupta's

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commentaries in the Sharda script many of which are still in the process of being translated into English although some of them are available in Italian and a few are available in the Harvard Oriental Series. Edgerton and Schrader (1932) have noted the variations in the Sankaracharya's version of the Bhagavad Gita from the version of the Sri Vidya practitioners in Kashmir. It is arguable that the Bhagavad Gita may have originally been a Sankhya-yoga treatise marking the transition to *Advaita Vedanta* and got mixed up with the Krishna-Vasudeva story later. Due to this admixture of the '*shruti*' and '*smriti*' traditions, the Bhagavad Gita presents us with the paradox that despite being '*smriti*' in form, its fundamental character and message is in the nature of a '*shruti*'. This Chapter relies on Goyandaka (1943) for the Gita Press Gorakhpur version of the Bhagwad Gita.

In '*shruti*' which comes from the vedic traditions, received knowing was required to be contemporarily re-verified and confirmed by the recipients on their own personal authority through experiential learning and not because a hierarchical superior dictated it as rote learning or gospel. The pedagogy in ashrams followed this principle whereby *Gurus* and *shishyas* co-created knowledge. The Indian traditions of experiential learning since the proto-historic period to the present times have been described and explained in detail elsewhere (Chattopadhyay & Mathur, 2012). Suffice to state here that the resolution of immanent phenomenal dualities through dialogic encounters was developed through yoga and experiential learning so that the abstractness of *Advaita Vedanta* could be concretely internalized, socially practised and culturally transmitted.

The word 'veda' itself signifies an approach towards comprehending the knowable infinite which cannot be bound. Everything inter-generationally passed on was supposed to be tested for relevance through what was experienced by, thought about, and revealed for each living generation before being further passed on, after suitable modifications. In this sense, Veda is the continuous process of inquiry into all kinds of phenomena and the reduction of any aspect of the inquiry to a fixed discrete form is no more than a text describing intermediate outcomes or routines or procedures noted or committed for convenience to memory as *smriti* at a discrete point in time. To fix it in form, and consider the form sacrosanct in meaning would be antithetical for the spirit of inquiry. In any exploration into the Spencerian question, "What knowledge is of most worth?", it is worthy of note this quest had been part of the Vedic traditions, and can eternally be elaborated upon for curricular design implications in education systems from this perspective (Mathur, 2003a, 2003b, 2004). The confusion with regard to interpreting the Bhagavad Gita arises from the schism whether to interpret it as a scripture promising salvation or as a source for guidance towards revelations of self-awareness. This paper focuses on this paradox in the context of the seven eternal phenomenal dualities of human living that have a tendency to push humanity into choices over dilemmas between this and that, between all or none, and between now or never. The Bhagavad Gita constantly draws attention to the functions of boundaries while urging that boundaries be treated as illusions. The distinguishing of revelation politics from salvation theology in the Gita illuminates the functions of boundaries in systems for generations of leaders and managers.

It is noteworthy that the Bhagavad Gita represents the traverse from *dvaita* to *advaita* without shunning the former and without assuming that the latter has replaced it or rendered the former redundant. The first of these phenomenal dualities that the Bhagavad Gita opens up is Figure and Background. This ‘either or’ problematique draws attention to internal struggles of the mind and spirit involving wish and will. It is crucial for how leaders and managers take up roles in groups and organizations. The toughest challenge for leaders and managers is to manage themselves as persons within role boundaries that involve unconsciously held “pictures of relatedness” alongside consciously and unconsciously enacted “politics of related-ness”. For addressing the first phenomenal duality discussed in the following section, the Bhagavad Gita proposes criteria for resolving role conflicts between a person’s degrees of freedom in any role in a role space and the person’s obligations in a role set that have implications for setting boundaries of organizations, institutions and communities.

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### The First Phenomenal Duality: Figure and Background

Attention to the phenomenal duality of ‘Figure and Background’ is often depicted in exercises created for demonstrating how the eye and the mind come together for connecting perception with cognition and how the mind can be tricked into getting fixated on illusions that focus on either the figure or the background. M.C. Escher’s drawings of optical illusions belong to this genre and show up how three dimensional impossibilities can be depicted as real in two dimensions- as a pictorial demonstration of the concept of ‘Maya’ and how illusions and reality can confront each other when we try to experientially unbundle what our senses bring to our awareness (Mathur, 2018a, 2018b).

The notion that the Bhagavad Gita is part of or embedded in the great Indian epic, the Mahabharata, is itself mind-boggling because it excites our imagination and challenges rational logic in several ways. If we regard the Bhagavad Gita as a continuous narrative occurring at a particular juncture in time, it would imply that two armies ready for battle remained suspended in their engagement with fighting and kept waiting for the entire duration that it would take for anyone to read aloud the Bhagavad Gita. If this be the truth, why would the Kauravas, not particularly renowned for disavowing treachery, keep waiting in a standstill instead of taking advantage of Arjuna’s anxiety neurosis to attack and win the war? Is it really conceivable that the complex dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna proceeded all at once in one long interactive session without any pause for rest or reflection? If we focus on the Bhagavad Gita as a processual narrative, the Mahabharata War becomes its contextual background into which the narrative is fitted, woven or embedded by design. If we focus on the Mahabharata War, the Bhagavad Gita becomes an event and turning point involving counseling, internal conflict resolution, relief from anxiety neurosis, spiritual solace and an introduction to life’s phenomenal dualities offering pathways for resolving everybody’s dilemmas advocating a perennial philosophy for living. Did the Mahabharata war require the Gita or did the Gita require

the Mahabharata war? The very idea of locating the Mahabharata War as a hook or hanger to cloak the Bhagavad Gita suggests that the Bhagavad Gita can be regarded as a metaphorical and allegorical narrative about human struggles that uses the war lurking in the background to draw attention to all kinds of conflicts and mysteries of the eternal dualities. The most critical decisions over life and death, prosperity or misery, fight or flight, resources and constraints, required in wartime are both important and urgent. This adds to the appeal of the Bhagavad Gita as a source for guidance over critical decision-making, hermeneutic discernment and boundary management for everyman represented by 'Arjuna' and generations of leaders and managers as protagonists caught up in whirlpools of their own making.

It is remarkable that unlike the epic Ramayana of Valmiki, the Mahabharata War can be historically dated. The received versions of the Mahabharata attributed to Veda Vyasa proclaim themselves to be records of the third rendering of the epic in the Naimish Forest and hence the antiquity of the Mahabharata and the timeline of its received texts should not be conflated. Archeological evidence exists in the Aihole temple, in Karnataka, in the form of a stone inscription dated Shaka 556 (634 CE) marking the victory of the Chalukyan King Pulkeshin II (610–642 CE) which states that 3735 years have elapsed since the Bharat war. This would make it to be around 3101 BCE. Astronomical markers in the Mahabharata have also been verified with tools and techniques of modern astronomy and provide some clues to when the Mahabharata War began and ended that would not have been possible to weave into the story without actual observations of that time. Yet, both Aryabhatta and Varahmira tried to calculate the date for the Mahabharata War and came up with different results. The Mathematician Aryabhatta placed it at 3137 B.C. whereas the Astronomer Varahmira placed it at 2449 B.C. The controversy over the dating is unimportant from the perspective of what the epic narrates and the message of the Bhagavad Gita but it is significant in one respect that it leaves us wondering whether the figure and background together constitute an imagined narrative or a historically observed and narrated one. If the latter, the correspondence with eternal phenomenal themes make its appeal and value not only timeless but also a valuable outcome in the action research tradition of counseling and consultation because the narrative has been co-created and concepts derived from an actual praxis.

From the description of the night skies of the time in the Mahabharata, scholars have now fixed the time of Bhishma's death as having occurred on the winter solstice day of that period (Panchwagh, 2011). According to the verse in the Mahabharata, Bhishma passed away at noon on the eighth lunar day of the bright half in the *Magh* (January) month, when the sun turned towards north (the winter solstice day, named as the Uttarayana which works out to be 14th January, 3125 B.C. in the Julian Calendar) on a day when the moon was in Rohini (Alderbaran) star constellation. This was 68 days after the Mahabharata war started since Bhishma was felled on the tenth day of the 18 day war and died 58 days after he was mortally wounded. There is mention of back to back solar and lunar eclipses in the epic as having occurred during the war period in November when "Saturn was piercing the cart-like constellation of Rohini Nakshatra (Alderberon)" (according to Vyasa's

verse in the Mahabharata). During the span 3140 B.C. to 3102 B.C. this kind of back to back eclipses in November happened only once and that was in 3126 B.C (a solar eclipse on 5–6 November solar and a lunar eclipse on 19–20 November). Also, Saturn hasn't been in that position piercing Rohini ever since. By this logic, the Mahabharata War started on November 6, 3126 B.C and the Bhagavad Gita finds a chronological and historical place.

Scholars are also now generally agreed that Krishna's death occurred on the new moon night of Thursday 18th- Friday 19th February, 3102 B.C as per the Julian Calendar. There was a grand conjunction of seven planets on this day as well as a solar eclipse on this day and a lunar eclipse 2 weeks later according to the verses. This date is also generally taken as the start of Kaliyuga although Yuktेश्वar Giri (Guru of Yogananda Paramhansa who is world famous for the book 'Autobiography of a Yogi') has proposed a different system of dating the Yugas in his book, 'The Holy Science'. However, there is general agreement that Sage Veda Vyas wrote the Mahabharata Epic after making visual observations and maintaining records because his descriptions match completely with the computer generated astronomical maps (Panchwagh, 2011). Since Vyasa's observations about the astronomical events are accurate, it is also likely that he chronicled true characters and events.

There is another envelope inside which the conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna is placed. And that is the narrative of Sanjaya in response to Dhritrashtra's question to Sanjaya inquiring what was happening between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Thus, the conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna figures as the background of that inquiry while that inquiry is the contextual background for the content of the Bhagavad Gita. In the context of the first phenomenal duality of figure and background, the Bhagavad Gita's message resonates with four maxims of *sankhya* philosophy that are rooted in cosmological pictures of the world and experiences for the living without any theological crutches that can be framed as four questions of deep relevance for leaders and managers:

1. How do I make the invisible visible?
2. How do I articulate the unarticulated?
3. How do I own the disowned?
4. How do I enact the withheld?

Roleholders in organizations tend to get caught with deeply etched and entrenched recipes because of the repetitive nature of numerous activities they undertake. For instance, a multinational firm introducing its products in a geographically new market for its products may develop and adopt what it considers perfected ways of doing so and execute the process mindlessly. In this way, the largest selling brand in India of a consumer product was introduced in neighbouring Nepal in a bright red packet as 'Naulo' (meaning 'new' in Nepali) within weeks of the firm arriving there and the leaders and managers were very surprised that consumers wouldn't buy it. The resistance was invisible, and the silent protest went unarticulated. It turned out

that red, a popular colour in India, reminded the Nepali consumers of blood and the name 'Naulo' was subliminally psychically experienced as a departure from continuity and stability. When the same product was relaunched after pondering over the disowned, the withheld, the unarticulated and the invisible in a white and blue packet with the Mount Everest silhouette and named 'Shikhar' (meaning, peak) it was a grand success and remains the largest selling brand in its category even 30 years later.

Grindlays Bank was the first international bank to open a branch in Kathmandu, Nepal and for customer interface recruited smart English-speaking girls and dressed them in uniforms of shirts, ties and short skirts. The bank failed to attract the number of customers it had expected based on pioneering technology and banking services such as ATM cards. The leaders of the bank had failed to own up their co-existence with the culture of the location and again the resistance remained unarticulated, the protest invisible and they could not get the withholding customers to engage with modern banking. Instead of the bank being viewed as bringing new technology for better banking services, the bank came across as an invader of Nepal's meta-culture because of the way it dressed its staff contrary to Nepali norms.

In Verse 2:39 Sri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to examine problems by studying the connection between knowing and doing and thereby to learn from doing and act from learning. If one examines one's internal logic in relation to the cultural environment in which one lives, the unrevealed can get revealed, the background can be ascertained, without getting preoccupied by the figure. In so doing, the canvas of *Jnanayoga* and the arena of *karmayoga* can both be connected. All action research is premised on this understanding and new insights can be co-created in groups and organizations by formulating working hypotheses about what is really happening. There is a dimension of this that belongs to the second phenomenal duality (of conscious and unconscious) because what people are aware of is a subset of what the same people can become aware of by tapping into the unconscious at the level of the individual and at the level of the group. Unthought knowns can be grasped to end the dichotomy between knowing and thinking because there can be thoughts in search of thinkers just as thinkers are in search of the unthought knowns and knowables (Bion, 1961, 1970; Lawrence, 1979; Mathur, 2006). Group Relations Conferences organized since 1957 enable the witnessing of this phenomena of how individuals get mobilized on behalf of groups, how leadership involves projections of followership, how and why splits occur in large groups (Turquet, 1974). The Bhagavad Gita also brings out these insights in its conversational narrative by focusing on the remedies and the diagnosis. It is remarkable that the Gita shows that these problems can be approached and resolved in three ways: by doing and task engagement requiring role clarity (*karmayoga*); through self-awareness by knowing I from not-I at the level of identity (*jnanayoga*); and through the grace that emerges from projective identification (*bhaktiyoga*). The efficacy of *Rajayoga* in harmonizing elements intrinsic to human nature comes across as a question of balance.

## The Second Phenomenal Duality: Conscious and Unconscious

Transparency is often valued as part of open-ness and candour and sharing that is part of discovering and shaping shared perspectives about the paradox concerning figure and background in the foregoing section. But when Arjuna in conversation with Sri Krishna experiences cognitive limitations in understanding the nature of the conflicts afflicting him and expresses fears, anxieties and other feelings from time to time, it is apparent that to walk in the light of knowing one needs to understand and accept what it means to lurk and suffer in the shadows and to find courage and means to come out of that. The search for methods for raising self-awareness to the highest levels of self-realisation gets *jnanayogis* caught in the inevitable dichotomies between thinking and knowing and between feeling and action. One who knows would not need to think and one who thinks has to acknowledge that there is more to be known that lies beyond conscious awareness. *Karmayogis* also get caught over relating the virtues of non-attachment to the results of one's actions, especially actions that ought to be engaged with because patterns of unmanifested potential can also remain awaiting discovery and recovery from the unconscious.

This is precisely where the pull of salvation theology can breed immature dependency. If we ascribe the locus of action to some form or property of hierarchy, then the search for supernatural God(s) becomes the overwhelming preoccupation and proselytization the preferred choice. A deep dive into the Bhagavad Gita requires attention to the lurking sub-liminal notion that humanity can be or surely would be rescued by 'avatars' or 'plenitudes of divinity'. *Shlokas* (verses) 4:7 and 4:8 seem to offer an assurance that 'avatars' or 'plenitudes of divinity' would invariably arrive in every *yuga* (era) when needed. However, since avatars would also be the product of 'maya', they would not be free of contemporary biases, prejudices, predilections. The divinity attributed to Sri Krishna can be interpreted as the common evolutionary state that can be reached by all earnest spiritual seekers. Else we would end up deifying Shri Krishna as a salvation provider guiding *karmayogis* and informing *jnanayogis*.

The poet John Keats captured the essence of the Bhagavad Gita's ideal of non-attachment by raising the notion of 'negative capability' as the equanimity to be cherished for tolerating ambiguity, uncertainty, even undecidability. The idea anchored in the Bhagavad Gita (2:38) suggests that leaders must be able to tolerate ambiguity and not feel rushed or compelled into deciding a course of action and for them to be able to do this they must be willing and able to separate what requires to be done from what requires to be contained. Were they to mirror every projection back to their followership they would end up magnifying toxicity without the possibility to dwell in uncertainty. Dwelling in uncertainty is the hallmark of non-attachment where what ought to be done is done or contained by treating joy or sadness that could result from outcomes as equal imposters. This implies that transience must be accepted in a world that is constantly undergoing changes and transformations even as the 'I' is changeless and eternal.

The acceptance of a state of transience is required because conscious and unconscious processes are both at work. Nobody in an organization, not even the Chief

Executive has any means of knowing everything that is happening despite everything being interdependent and interconnected. Advances in quantum mechanics have revealed that “all things in the universe that we see” are different configurations of elementary particles and that there is a quarkian inter-connectedness. Yet, we are not capable of actually seeing these dynamic configurations forming and dissolving because of perceptual limitations. The idea of transience is conveyed by the word ‘*maya*’ for reality, not necessarily only for illusion. *Maya* is the abbreviated form of the expression “*Mati Iti ma, Yati iti ya*” to describe the measurable reality that is passing away or disappearing even as it is measured, because it is transitory .

The Bhagawad Gita explains *Maya* in Chapter 18 by using metaphors. In 18:2, Sri Krishna contrasts between the two ways of dealing with ‘*maya*’: giving up of all actions motivated by desire (except sacrifice, charity and penance) as in *sannyasa* or in relinquishing the fruit of all actions as in *tyaga*. Some kind of suppressed notion about ‘*maya*’ resides in the unconscious of all persons and one of the defences against the anxiety of getting in touch with it is to treat it as an ephemeral untouchable. This conceals the frightening proposition that the only reason for sustaining illusory boundaries is to engage with tasks (Chattopadhyay, 1997).

The notion of transcending ‘bondage’ arising from feelings is the red herring. Even Radhakrishnan (1948) fell for it stating, “we may say that the self in its transcendental, cosmic and individual aspects answers to the Christian trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” (p. 24). The idea of emancipation from bondages is Judeo-Christian in origin and forms part of the politics of personal salvation that congregational religions offer supported by theology. It is arguable that bondages can be dissolved or broken but not transcended. The act of dissolving or breaking would require self-awareness to act and possibly the grace of facilitation but it cannot be brought about as a gesture of divine intervention. To imagine it so would require a retreat into the politics of salvation. To face the challenge would require an advance into the realm of self-actualising revelation.

The cosmic continuum can be considered as the *advaita atman* or *brahman* or *paramatman* to signify states of consciousness/awareness but there is no basis for *atman* to be translated as an individual’s proprietary ‘soul’. Doing that would involve erecting an illusory boundary between microcosm and macrocosm instead of acknowledging that they are identical. Nor should *Paramatman* be taken to mean ‘God’ when what it refers to is a self-actualised soul—an evolved state that any spiritual seeker can aspire to and strive towards. Similarly, the Sanskrit word ‘*Bhagaban*’ merely refers to one who has resources such as health, wealth, beauty, skills etc. Sri Krishna had at least six attributes—wealth, wisdom, bravery, fame, beauty and the ability to remain non-attached from these and other possessions. This is easily lost sight of when we imagine that *Bhagaban* refers to someone who possesses such attributes as part of being an omniscient, omnipotent Creator who is not only different from us but higher than us. The dynamics of hierarchy in modern organizations persist despite hierarchy being not only unnecessary but also counter-productive because it destroys the concept of role differentiations in engagement with common primary tasks (Chattopadhyay & Malhotra, 1991). What is counter to task or



irrelevant to task ought not to be left to be allowed at the discretion of either bureaucracy or hierarchy but often is in many organizations.

The Bhagavad Gita's message that knowledge of *atman* is knowing about the boundaryless cosmos which is beyond normal everyday consciousness has implications for leaders and managers. This is also of significance in organizations where knowing who we are, and what we do involves unconscious processes in the form of projections and introjections, transferences and counter-transferences and threats to identity in large group configurations. The dynamics are traceable to the interaction of the ego identity (*ahankara*) with *chitta* (mind's disposition), *manas* (memory), *buddhi* (intellect), and *vivek* (capacity for discrimination) which produces the sense of who I am and the 'not-I'. I distinguish between *buddhi* and *vivek* because *kairos* or cunning is not the same as discrimination although both involve intellect. All pride is some form of expression of neurosis that comes bundled with fears, anxieties, passions and aversions and therefore invites repressions, suppressions and oppressions.

In the Kathopanishad, Nachiketa and Yama were engaged in a dialogue over that which one can seek to acquire (*preya*) and that which one is or has within oneself (*sreya*). In 2:37, Sri Krishna points out to Arjuna that he is in a win-win situation because by engaging in '*dharma*', he would go to heaven if he were to die in the war and were he to win he would have sovereignty over an earthly kingdom. He thus offers Arjuna a remedy in both *preya* and *sreya* when it is not clear at that stage whether Arjuna's consciousness is oriented primarily to *preya* or whether he is ready to disengage with *preya* and to engage with *sreya*.

There is also the danger here that the word *dharma* or way of life of how life ought to be lived could get diluted in its meaning to connote 'religion' when there is no such intent anywhere in the Bhagavad Gita. Radhakrishnan (1948) states that the Bhagavad Gita did not include any doctrinal literature and there is no proclamation of any transcendent dogma of salvation. Rather, Arjuna was being counselled to prepare himself for engaging with *dharma* and *karma* with non-attachment. However, there are six known obstacles to the practice of *dharma* and Sri Krishna takes Arjuna round and round the proverbial mulberry bush in the Bhagavad Gita to draw his attention to them. The epic Mahabharata separately narrates how Arjuna had erred with one of the purusharthas, *kama*, when he succumbed to lust and turned polygamous in his pursuit of Subhadra, Ulupi and Chitrangada, while still married to Draupadi. The pursuit of *artha* would be legitimate but *lobha* (greed and avarice) is not. In this, the culprit was Duryodhana, and Arjuna, the victim got caught up in those dynamics. But *moha* (delusion from infatuation or attachment), the third of the obstacles was like the Achilles heel for Arjuna (as in 2:4) when he floundered between attachment to kith and kin and his duty. The fourth obstacle, *mada* (vanity) had been fuelled for Arjuna to the extent that Guru Drona had extracted an unjust *dakshina* (retribution) from Eklavya only to keep his promise to Arjuna that Arjuna would be the best archer in the world. The fifth obstacle, *matsarya* (envy) between the pandavas and the kauravas was legendary and unresolved. And the sixth obstacle, *krodha* (*hatred or anger*) was in any case being acted out in the war-to-be. This

makes the Bhagavad Gita quite remarkable because human nature hasn't changed and the same frailties that come in the way of Dharma were evident in the corporate world as when Volkswagen cheated on vehicle emissions, or when business rivals Pepsi and Coca Cola or UPM-Kymmene and Stora-Enso treat each other as enemies rather than as neutral objects or when Dunlop vainly believed that just because it had invented the pneumatic tyre no one would ever be able to make a better tyre.

After the departure of its highly celebrated Chief Executive Jack Welch, GE was required to restate its financial results for the previous decade because accounts had been fudged. Enron collapsed when the bubble burst over its hypothetical valuations that had misled investors. A common failing of leaders in both these cases was their hubris that as long as they can fool regulators, they have a right and obligation towards shareholder maximization by getting away with blue murder. Financial crises are cyclic because lessons learnt are largely about how not to get caught with the symptoms of the previous crisis and creativity is channeled to find new ways of continuing with bad practices. The banking crisis in India that is unfolding in 2018 has its genesis in departure from *dharma* in ways that were known and published in 2016 (Mathur, 2016). Credit appraisal was poor, bank leadership failed to exercise due diligence and in some cases actively departed from fiduciary responsibilities for personal gains, compromised on systems, destroyed processes and fiddled with structures to conceal the true position on liabilities and toxic assets from regulators. Can the Bhagavad Gita offer such leaders anything that would help them? Yes, it can. Will these leaders want to engage in *dharma*? Nobody knows. The critical feature is the relationship between individual, group, organizational and professional identities in much the same way as the illusion of separated-ness between microcosmic self and macrocosmic self that has been discussed in the Bhagavad Gita.

Yuktananda (1997) shuns the notion that the mahavakya 'Tat Twam Asi' (Thou Art That) in the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita would entertain any relation (underlining mine) between the microcosmic self and the macrocosmic one. Rather, according to Yuktananda, the whole purpose of the Bhagavad Gita is to establish the identity of the individual and the cosmic. So it's a Buberian 'thou' that pervades the first six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita by focusing on the individual self, role and identity. This is also the part which leaders and managers can identify with when they are torn between pulls of normative primary tasks and existential primary tasks in their respective organisations. In this context it is worth remembering that every organization created must have a primary purpose that fulfils stakeholder expectations and such a primary purpose as a *raison d'être* in the form of a normative primary task is capable of being designed and where unconsciously held could also be discovered as an unthought known (Mathur, 2006). In contrast, when roleholders, including leaders and managers populate organizations they do so in pursuit of a quality of life and work life and such an existential primary task is also a legitimate primary task of the organization, not of its employees (Lawrence, 1979).

According to Yuktanada (1997), the second six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita interpret what is meant by 'that'. The juxtaposition of the material world with the spiritual reality and its myriad complexities described in this part point to the pull of the phenomenal primary task (the *mool maya*) and how the introduction of hermeneutic primary tasks can dissolve the illusions which fuel passions by invoking the unconscious. The last six chapters establish the identity of 'Thou' and 'that' bringing out the full meaning of the sentence 'Thou art that'. The completeness that self-realisation requires comprises both conscious and unconscious elements concerning the same four Samkhya maxims discussed in the foregoing section with the addition of group relations, role spaces, and role sets. Social defences that operate unconsciously discussed in the Taitterya Upanishad come to the fore in the quest for the transcendent reality to surmount the illusory phenomenal world.

To take a concrete example, in a recent consultation for a textile engineering company, I was perplexed when I discovered that even if that firm were to operate at full capacity, it would make a loss because its scale of operations had not taken into consideration the point at which the operation could break even and begin to contribute to profit. Yet, the Founder of this family enterprise identified so strongly as the Chairman of a technology-intensive firm that they were unwilling to consider its closure and remained ready to lose millions every month over what came across now as a hobby but which had become so much a part of their professional identity. The phenomenal primary task was unconsciously held by the Founder and the top management team with the illusion that this wicked problem would soon be miraculously solved. This is where bringing to awareness what is buried in the unconscious as a social defence against the anxiety made a difference.

In an insurance firm I consulted to, the phenomenal primary task had become the collection of insurance premia and the disbursement of salaries and there was the belief that as long as they could keep doing this the business would thrive. The normative primary task of intermediating in the syndication of risk had been pushed to the deep recesses of the unconscious. The *dharma* of insurance had to be restated and rediscovered by drawing attention to the *mool maya* or phenomenal primary task by instituting a hermeneutic primary task to interpret how the illusions that had overtaken the reality and that any form of interconnectedness would have to factor in benefits for customers without which insurance premia would stop coming in. The key insight here was that the neurotic anxieties over syndication of risk had magnified manifold to the point that social defenses against those anxieties had substituted the real purpose of the system with a make-belief illusion that could have irretrievably destroyed the organization over time. This brings us to the third phenomenal duality, Life and Death, because the notion that a going concern would carry on forever is often so strongly held as part of the illusions by leaders and managers that they may fail to notice imminent collapse, approaching mortality or how they are unconsciously inviting finality in the form of death of an organization or its imminent takeover by others in an attempt to reincarnate where its 'death' would be a temporary event.

## The Third Phenomenal Duality: Life and Death

The idea that the self was never born and will never die is at the heart of the belief that the self is indestructible in the Bhagavad Gita (2:23 and 2:24). The core of this concerns renewal. This is also an eternal challenge for organizations that require to change, grow, shrink, diversify, innovate, transform in order to continue remaining relevant to their proximate environment for sustaining the nexus of treaties that make up stakeholder relations. The Indian Companies Act made no provision for closure of a company because of an unconsciously held belief that a company once created would go on forever through some kind of reincarnation because death is only an event, not a finality. To keep up this illusion, failing enterprises used to be nationalized and when they continued to fail they were re-privatised. Its only recently, that the law has changed and introduced ways of unlocking capital in sick enterprises through asset reconstruction, insolvency, bankruptcy, and closure.

In the Bhagavad Gita, the word '*karma*' refers to both task and to actions. The English word, 'work' has a rather narrow and limited scope because it would not include activities related to fun, pleasure, emotional and social satisfactions. An important aspect of continuity for a householder concerns *dharma* for creating 'progeny' without which the family as an institution would perish. And notwithstanding so much evidence from ancient India including the Mahabharata about how sages were invited to households when married women could not be impregnated by their husbands, the celibacy *dharma* of the *sannyasin* (renunciate) also entails mental resolve, discipline and work. Recognising this, the Bhagavad Gita connects *dharma* and *karma* in a way similar to how corporates have extended their engagement with normative primary tasks to embrace corporate social responsibility (CSR).

There has been a growing worldwide concern that many of the jobs have become meaningless (there is even talk of "bullshit jobs" that don't collect even bovine excreta), that drudgery or subterfuge has become one of the elements of work in many workplaces and that what was termed by ILO as 'decent work' is giving way to precarious working conditions for "working non-employees" who have no nexus of employment with anyone. Could we still speak of work as *karma* or *dharma* when a vast majority are engaged in insecure work at rates of pay that are just at or even below statutory minimum wages? And especially when full employment is a hopeless dream in most countries and the numbers of unemployed are rising? When work becomes akin to chattel slavery and its compensation is incapable of supporting any semblance of human dignity, does it make any sense to speak of choice, freedom, dignity of labour and countervailing power?

Since the predominant concern of Sri Krishna in his Bhagavad Gita dialogue with Arjuna is about *dharma* and *karma*, it is possible to interpret the central message of the Bhagavad Gita in terms of what ought to be done for righteous engagement with *dharma* and *karma* and in that context to consider the Bhagavad Gita as a source for guidance on managerial decision-making, on judgement calls required of leadership in a diversity of roles, and for discernment of policy choices that entail allocation of scarce resources that have alternative uses. The emphasis on *dharma*

in the Bhagavad Gita requires Arjuna to discover his personal authority and to figure out what gets revealed by a process but there was no gospel preached by Sri Krishna to compel Arjuna to dwell on guilt or sin and undertake acts of repentance or seek forgiveness from any divine power. In a similar vein, neither Buddhism, nor Jainism and not even the Sikh Khalsa are salvation oriented. Instead, the focus is on freedom from cravings and desires to engage with tasks of the systems to which people belong. The centrality of spiritual endeavour is faith that survives and grows with questioning rather than unquestioned or unquestionable belief. Aspects of both *dharma* and *karma* can change because the environment changes. So one of the main messages of the Bhagavad Gita for leaders and managers is how important it is to discern that which is changeless from what is changing and will always change. By doing so, the attachments that come in the way of *dharma* and *karma* can be dissolved. This concerns distinguishing the changeless, formless 'I' from the 'not I' that has form which concerns the fourth phenomenal duality of 'I and the Other'.

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### The Fourth Phenomenal Duality: I and The Other

When Sri Krishna states that "Delivered from passion, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, many purified by the austerity of wisdom have attained to my state of being" (4:10 and 15:5), he takes Arjuna through the phenomenal duality of 'I and the Other' by pointing to the identity of I and the other which is actualisable if delivered from passion, fear and anger. Radhakrishnan (1948, p. 38) noted that there is no antithesis between eternity and time in the Bhagavad Gita and unity between the eternal and the historical is indicated. Thus, the spirit that can transcend all dualities and the eternal 'I' can confront the pseudo-eternal 'not-I' from the perspective of how the manifested *moola prakriti* (original nature) and unmanifested potentiality (*avyakta*) are actually one and the same. In the world of true becoming, the being and the non-being belong together because the first product of the interaction between being and non-being is the cosmic egg (*brahmanda*) which contains within itself the totality of manifested being, including in germinal form potentiality for later developments.

It is a travesty that competitive thinking overrides collaborative potential in the trajectories of nations as well as business enterprises. It is well known that if the world's nations were to collaborate, everyone can be more prosperous and this is amply demonstrated through customs unions, free trade zones, economic areas and monetary unions. Then why is it that nations compete and such conglomerations are limited to small numbers of countries instead of embracing more, even all? Is globalization a meaningless rhetoric, a wishful intent, a fanciful hope, a circus of beliefs, a medley of talk-shops and conferences, or simply a geographical expression? Does the Bhagavad Gita have anything to offer to world leaders engaged in international economic and political relations?

There is abundant incendiary material around to ensure that there is no difficulty in exterminating everyone down to the last person, and also destroy other life on earth. The therapeutic dictums such as "*Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*" and "*Love they*

*neighbor as thyself*" have failed to mitigate 'krodha' or 'lobha'. The idea of sanatan dharma on a planetary scale is still-born despite lip-service to non-violence in the form of non-proliferation. This problem belongs to the 'I and not-I' dichotomy underlying phenomenal duality covered in the Bhagavad Gita. Its about the location of self-awareness whether its roots and triggers lie in conscious awareness of oneself or one's group in terms of role set and role space or in the depths of the individual or group unconscious at the level of identity. The unconscious has an instinctual unconscious (rooted in anxiety) and a spiritual unconscious (rooted in wonder) and so unconscious instinctuality (what psychoanalysts term Id) and unconscious spirituality need to be distinguished. The failure to distinguish them has caused much of the confusion between claims of psychologists and of philosophers and scientists and that gap has been fertile ground for theologians.

The theological appeal of *Deus Absconditus* (the God that is beyond grasp or reach) constitutes part of the religious allure. It is around such a conception of "God as an echo of a rumour" produced by a computer analysis in Columbia University (Chattopadhyay, 1997, p. 1) that salvation politics has conjured the notion of what I would term *Deus salvatus* (the God that provides salvation). Such a social defence against anxieties by narrowly structuring recipes for insider groups that adhere or belong to a common faith has been the usual civilizational response.

Right and might have an obvious antinomy and phenomenally, justice is the will of the strong (reminiscent of the Indian saying "*Jiski Lathi Uski bhains*" meaning He who has the clout of the stick claims ownership of the buffalo) and that the victor is usually the one with deadlier means of organized violence. This is why communities invented laws to uphold right through the might of the community but even that exercise of community authority depends on a monopoly of organized violence. This involves voluntary renunciation of the personal might to right a perceived wrong unilaterally which is possible only in a equipollent society. It is the common experience in every society that elites try to seek exemptions from general laws placing themselves above it or try to extend their rights by bending or changing laws. The exercise of such force can cause laws to go into abeyance and violence to prevail within supposedly homogenous groups and also between groups. The Bhagavad Gita values non-violence but it does not eschew violence on the premise that dharma overrides, and that the soul is indestructible.

The not-I that contaminates I is why do social defenses against anxieties manifest in narrow walls and arouse hatreds and ruling classes of any society like to keep schools, the media and organized religion under their thumb. Two factors of cohesion cement a community: violent compulsion and ties of sentiment ("identifications," in technical parlance) between the members of a group. If one of these factors is missing, the other may still suffice to hold the group together but only if there prevails a deeply rooted sense of unity, shared by all. If right can be founded only by brute force, that would require continued violence also to sustain it. A living being is genetically programmed to defend its existence (the life instinct or the *eros* impulse) through aggressive actions (the death instinct or *thanatos* impulse). Sabina Spielrein who discovered the *thanatos* impulse pointed out that life biologically begins with the union of male and female cell during reproduction when the unity

of each cell (male as well as female) is destroyed in an act of creative destruction (Spielrein, 1912). Under what conditions would those identifying with groups, communities, sects be ready or become willing for dissolving the walls between themselves and other collectivities?

Preventing inter-group animosities is tough because the very process of identity formation in early childhood requires aggressive feelings to be aroused for projective identification by drawing a boundary between those with whom I identify as “us” and those who are others, “them”. The Bhagavad Gita urges us to focus on dharma as a belief for action from inside outwards with the idea that our karma is shaped from within ourselves outward, never from without inwards.

In classical Freudian analysis (Freud, 1917), a person is helped to become aware of his/her instinctual unconscious and its limitation is that neither id, nor ego and not even superego can mobilize the self as a whole or any of these three parts. Ultimately, it is the self that requires restructuring, rediscovering and reuniting as a whole by working with and resolving the transference that binds an analyst with an analysand. This is precisely the situation in which Sri Krishna as an analyst and Arjuna as an analysand find themselves in Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita. What enables the transformation is the realization of the spiritual unconscious to distinguish what can be called revelation cosmology from salvation theology. Sri Krishna urges Arjuna to be the master of his will and the servant of his conscience as to the righteous path.

When we turn to world leaders engaged in international relations, all of them wish to be the masters of their will and a few have also been willing to be the servants of their conscience as to the righteous path. It is with such an approach to leadership, that France and Germany were able to bury their long-held animosities and lay the foundations of European Unity. There are infinite flash points in the world that can get triggered with ignition around fractured identities but are the modalities of healing by distinguishing I from not-I and seeking identity of purpose in the valued I-ness finite or infinite? People speak of gods in the plural as well as of God in the singular in the same vein as plurality of any kind can approach infinity whereas its meta-nature may remain unitary or finite. This is the next phenomenal duality considered.

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## **The Fifth Phenomenal Duality: Finite and Infinite**

The Bhagavad Gita steps aside from the controversy about nirguna and saguna by postulating that the infinite is manifested in finite existence through the assumption that every single human nature represents the free fulfillment of the same phenomenon by which an avatar or a plenitude of divinity fulfils itself in moving between its infinite nature and its finite form. The only variable is the degree of self-awareness or self-consciousness.

The conscious mind carries many irreconcilable thoughts, ideas and emotions. And the unconscious mind may carry even more of these. The Bhagavad Gita does not attempt to reconcile all of these. Rather, the assumption made is that even if these

irreconcilable thoughts, ideas, emotions are left as they are, it should be possible to use resources and make responses for problem-solving. This is why in interpreting the Bhagavad Gita's message for leaders and managers, it would be useful to distinguish leadership from management. Leadership is the process by which what is contained inside an open system coheres and relates to what is outside of it and what sustains it or constrains it. The word 'management', in contrast, has four connotations, each of which can claim to be concerned with decision-making with foundations in human behavior as a function of motives and powerbases. The word management has four connotations in usage that I have elaborated upon elsewhere (Mathur, 2018a):

1. to signify a body of knowledge and skills and practices that has come to be acknowledged as valuable and on that basis students of management are taught that an organization is a goal-directed entity whereas we know that an organization does not function only normatively and that existential and phenomenal functioning of an organization is the *mot juste* for managers to be needed!
2. as a process of managing boundaries, resources and responses.

This requires continuously clarifying system and sub-system enmeshments arising from task partitions, role purposes, levels of authority (full, delegated, limited to observe and report etc), and attention to organization structures, input-output systems and management processes. If structures are to provide reliability, role holders must know how partitioned task engagement for which they are responsible involves interfaces with others who are simultaneously outside their sub-systems and inside the common organization system resurrecting all the dynamics of aggression and hostility that we reserve for "them" vs. "us". This involves working with hate, anger, frustration, anxiety because only if we are aware of our feelings is it possible to give attention to what emotional transformations are feasible once common purpose unities can be found and emphasized. Getting rid of avoidable suffering, while simultaneously coping with the triad of pain, guilt, and thanatos is a spiritual endeavour.

3. as a collective noun.

This is a tricky one because people inside and outside may confuse "management" as a collective noun referring to that set of roleholders who are believed to be holders of responsibility or associated with the source of authority and power for action. This can result in complete abdication of responsibility if everyone begins to believe that it is hierarchically the next higher level that is the "management". The result is that anxieties can escalate to the point that such an organization remains undermanaged and becomes overcontrolled producing a great deal of toxicity.

4. as synonymous to justified manipulation, coercion and control.

When we hear utterances such as "Have you managed him?" it is clear that the organization is not operating by reference to criteria and bench-marks and standards set for activities that support fulfillment of goals, budgets and targets. Rather, the premium on skills to manipulate happenings renders it impossible for anyone to



know how well are people engaging with the normative primary task, individually and collectively.

Herein lies the danger that the authority of the Bhagavad Gita can be infinitely cited in support of almost any kind of *karma*. Chattopadhyay (1997) recounts the Puranic story of Sharpalika and Pundarika. Sharpalika was rich Magadha Brahmin respected as a scholar. When his son, Pundarika reached the age of sixteen, Sharpalika initiated him into their family business and tradition of ambushing and looting rich travelers justifying this to his horrified son by quoting shlokas of the Bhagavad Gita (1:28, 1:30, 2:5, 3:6, 1:44, 1:45, 2:11, 2:13, 2:17 to 2:20, 2:26, 2:27, 2:22, 2:30, 9:1 to 9:4, 11:32, 11:33, 2:3 and 18:73 in that order).

We live in an age where its perfectly conceivable that as the saying goes, the devil may quote scriptures and this is amply demonstrated by Mephistopheles's conversation with Faust. In Goethe's Faust (Part I, Scene 3), the Devil Mephistopheles names nature's power to create life as his ally:

*“From Water, Earth and Air Unfolding  
A thousand germs break forth and grow  
In dry and wet, and warm, and chilly.  
And had I not the Flame reserved, why, really,  
There's nothing special of my own to show”*

It is remarkable that there is actually no concept of evil in the Bhagavad Gita. There is reference to wickedness and goodness, and to vice and virtue. The concept of management and organization in the European and North American traditions values bureaucracy and hierarchy as a safeguard against abuse by agents appointed by principals. Systems thinking, spiral dynamics and organization development interventions such as critical mass events have sown doubts over these business models. The Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian and Scandinavian approaches to management tend to emphasise shared perspectives of collectives that require models based on ethics and values. This is where the Bhagavad Gita comes into the picture again whenever authority, organization, strategies and politics of relatedness are to be reconfigured bereft of concepts of sin, guilt, and presumed shirking. The dark side of management brings us face to face with the sixth phenomenal duality, that of mind and matter.

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## **The Sixth Phenomenal Duality: Mind and Matter**

Hanlon (2016) has succinctly elaborated on the dark side of management. Hanlon regards management as the most dominant discourse of the twentieth century and laments that its preoccupation is very materialistic seeking to alter social relations to ease the path of capitalist accumulation “to foist a neo-liberal project to force market-based solutions, competitiveness, self-care, individualism, utility, formal rationality and property rights on to a recalcitrant population.

There are three aspects of mind-matter duality that are significant for leaders and managers.

1. Organisational health requires attention to organizational toxicity that inevitably builds up in any organization because there is a phenomenal primary task that unconsciously takes shape even as people consciously engage in the normative and existential primary tasks. Tools and techniques and methods for dissolving anxieties and fears are required to mitigate neurosis paralysis of dyadic and small group transferences.
2. There are huge controversies over what can guide ethical behaviour when engaging with the world mindful of the need to balance truth with harmony, and residual negatives with what constitutes justice in the “here and now”.
3. Organisations are known to be weak in acting with discernment when conflicts arise between the illegal, the unlawful and the unjust because the tangible rules of a given moment in time can never cover all known eventualities.

Contrast this with 5:8 and 5:9 wherein the Bhagavad Gita discusses how the Sankhya Yogi even when immersed in materialism remains untouched by sin as the lotus leaf by water because he does nothing holding that it is the senses that are moving among their objects. Internalising and preserving the good experiences from any relationship or relatedness, however transient, concerns not only persons but also objects, abstract and concrete (Klein, 1940; Fromm, 1970). The act of conscious mourning for lost relationships is necessary so that the good experiences can be transferred to new relationships and relatednesses. The Bhagavad Gita urges that the mind and matter duality requires letting go with grace. Instead, organizations are often reluctant to mourn for losses because they are afraid that any sign of acknowledged fragility or weakness would make them vulnerable. Paradoxically what leaves them vulnerable are the unprocessed residues that they defend against and which continues to demand energies to be diverted without the possibility of internalizing the good experiences that also get buried.

In an engineering family business firm, when the Founder died, the top management team was so afraid that their share value would drop that they engaged in denial by refusing to mourn and declared that only two people’s roles had changed. In the process they unconsciously mismanaged the succession, created splits in the organization, preserved the forms of managerial systems while losing the essence of the processes underlying them. Within 3 years, this prosperous firm slid to near-bankruptcy. They then turned to consultants to make decisions on their behalf. In such situations, Chief Executives can try to evade responsibility for surfacing and resolving conflicts within themselves.

This also happened with Arjuna when Sri Krishna tried to get him to examine what was troubling him. Arjuna had an inkling of what was bothering him but he wanted Sri Krishna to do his thinking for him hoping that Sri Krishna would prioritise the values in conflict within Arjuna. The material temporal and the spiritual eternal required distinguishing so that the mind could prevail over matter. The characteristic of atman is changeless and eternal and so there was no need to grieve over

that which does not die if one could mourn for the lost temporal and move on. Sri Krishna did not present any formula for dealing with the sadness. There is no way to avoid negative emotional experiences when people live up to their roles and responsibilities. By even minimally following dharma, the anxiety associated with loss, sadness, grief is mitigated. This is why armies are trained to fight not for political causes that may have precipitated a war or for flags of countries but simply for regimental comradarie and honour. In 2:41, Sri Krishna urges Arjuna to tune himself to commonsense pointing out that the indeterminate may move in any direction and get caught with the fifth phenomenal duality whereas those who determine what they must do are able to direct their efforts to achieve those aims.

The Bhagavad Gita covers the complexity of attachments with reference to the three *gunas*. Satva is the capacity to relate to one's inner world; Rajas is the ability to transact with the environment and tamas represents the hindrances and defences that come in the way. From a psychoanalytic perspective, all three *gunas* are needed: satva, to be spiritually healthy, rajas to be socially effective and tamas to be psychologically safe. A dynamic balance of the three *gunas* is required by those who are engaged with the material world. Yet, yogis may reach a state of non-attachment where the *gunas* lose all meaning. Sri Krishna first introduces the vedic notion that so long as there exist these *gunas*, there can be no relief from sadness. But then the conversation proceeds further and Arjuna is told that going beyond the *gunas* requires rising above internal conflicts arising from memories and freeing oneself of desires to covet or possess by anchoring the self in its here and now. Bion (1961, 1970) called it a state "without memory and without desire" and used it as the basis of designing experiential learning for groups. The regenerativity principles by which the cosmos is in a perpetual state of creation and creative destruction are part of the civilizational experience of how inter-generational continuities populate for the planet to remain inhabited. This brings us to the seventh eternal phenomenal duality involving *purusha* and *prakriti* which produces also dynamics around the masculine and feminine and transgender.

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### **The Seventh Phenomenal Duality: Purusha and Prakriti**

The categories *purusha* (spirit) and *prakriti* (nature, signifying the principle of mind and matter) are different from the western mind-matter duality. *Prakriti* is the arena of objectively knowable phenomena, "whatever has name and form not only of matter and energy but also of mind" (Easwaran, 2015, p. 37) and *Purusha* (spirit) is the knower of this field of phenomena and is conscious. The union of these two fundamental forces sets creation in motion. Sankhya lists twentyfour principles or *tattvas* by which *prakriti* becomes manifested and these *tattvas* are listed in the Bhagavad Gita (13:5). It is *prakriti* that constitutes the field of forces we call *gunas*.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna states that only knowing both *purusha* and *prakriti* along with the *gunas* enables immortality (13:23) because only the *Purusha* seated in *Prakriti* senses objects of the nature of the three *gunas* evolved from *Prakriti* and it is contact with these *gunas* that is responsible for the soul taking birth

in new garbs (13:21). An analyst would say, “The ego is unconscious in that one can become aware of only its work as its manifestation and not of the ego itself” (Kakar, 1978 discussing the concept of moksha). According to Advaita Vedanta, there is a difference between the state of awareness as a self-realised soul that is still not free from the cycle of births and deaths and a state of awareness where the self-realised soul has achieved identity with everything else never to be born again. In other words, moksha is the state of unity of self with the cosmos in which a person is constantly and fully aware of one’s oneness with the universe. The “I”, the ego, and the multiple selves that come into the consciousness do not get integrated as long as one is living in ‘avidya’ (ignorance).

Radhakrishnan (1948, p. 39) interprets this in another way. According to him, purusha and prakriti belong to one spiritual whole because reality by nature “is infinite, absolute, untrammled and inalienably possessed of its own unity and bliss” (p. 43). He then cites the Taittiriya Upanishad to suggest that there is an inner direction for the five sheathes of existence [anna (matter), prana (life), manas (mind), vijnana (sensory intelligence) and ananda (bliss)] which constitute the contours of materiality, organization and animality. In that sense, the Bhagavad Gita is both a brahmavidya and a yogashastra.

The Tantrikas (those who followed *Tantra*) have also contributed to the thinking about what made the universe tick. They conceptualised universal forces as manifesting in two complementary divisions, prakriti, the feminine aspect, and purusha, the masculine aspect. Psychoanalysis developed similar notions about anima and animus. But tantra and yoga went further to develop a postulate that when purusha and prakriti come together in an act of cosmological creation at the macrocosmic level, and biological procreation at the procreative microcosmic level, in both instances they are joined by prana. Conception occurs when a space is created for prana to enter at the time when a sperm (shuklam) and an ovum (shonitam) come together and unite igniting yoga, the joining. There was no religious claptrap to clothe these beliefs until after the Manusmriti cast aspersions on the status of women as dependents. The Bhagavad Gita versions that follow the Sankaracharya version as the complete one eschew this connection between the spiritual and the biological. This is significant because it has implications for gender equity, diversity and inclusivity. Tharoor (2018) notes that 21 of the original rishikas to whom Vedas were revealed were women.

There are two well known civilizational taboos: the taboo against aggression and the taboo against freedom of expression of sexuality found in every civilization known to humankind of which only one can be the dominant taboo at any given moment in time. Taboos cannot be consciously changed by legislation, executive orders or judicial pronouncements. Authority for faith, responsibility for organization, and power for movement balances the power of *eros* to create and sustain to co-exist with the power of *thanatos* bringing forth energy to destroy through the conjunction of *prakriti* with *purusha*. The striving for pleasure and the avoidance of unpleasantness are the basis of psychic phenomena but not all psychic phenomena. Spielrein (1912) was the first to discover the spiritual unconscious in the western traditions. Spielrein claimed, on the basis of clinical evidence from her work as an

analyst that there were deeper layers in the personal unconscious beyond feelings. To quote Spielrein:

“I have come to the conclusion that the chief characteristic of an individual is that he is ‘dividual’. The closer we approach our conscious thoughts, the more differentiated our images; the deeper we penetrate the unconscious, the more universal and typical the images... The instinct for self-preservation is a simple drive that originates exclusively from a positive component; the instinct for preservation of the species, which must dissolve the old to create the new, arises from both positive and negative components. In its nature, preservation of the species is ambivalent. Therefore, the impulse of the positive component simultaneously summons forth the impulse of the negative component and opposes it. Self-preservation is a static drive because it must protect the existing individual from foreign influences; preservation of the species is a ‘dynamic’ drive that strives for change, the resurrection of the individual in a new form. No change can take place without destruction of the former condition”.

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## Conclusions

Each of the seven dualities discussed above manifests existential ambiguity rooted in a core of phenomenal complexity, surrounded by normative uncertainty and hermeneutic vulnerability. This is precisely the canvas of wicked problems in business strategy where at the heart of the problem are boundary confusions arising from incompleteness of knowing and undecideability of actions for leaders and managers in every generation and in every arena of organisation. The latent dynamic in the Bhagavat Gita concerns the tension between the overt forces of salvation theology and covert forces of revelation politics. The beliefs, values, norms, and attitudes surrounding these seven phenomenal dualities are capable of being reinforced by either of these forces. The same dynamics are present in the management of organizations when setting limits, partitions, demarcations for the porosity of boundaries that enable and regulate flows. The rich discussion in the Bhagavad-Gita contributes to understanding the function of boundaries for management and human response development in organizations so that structures provide reliability, systems produce certainty, and processes ensure aesthetics and harmony. Thus, the Bhagavad Gita can be regarded as a powerful source for practical philosophy and as an aid for organization development and transformative change. Wherever and whenever ambiguity is to be coped with or resolved, organizational toxicity mitigated and anxiety of role holders contained, the Bhagavad Gita has much to offer.

The meta-learning from the Bhagavad-Gita for the functions of boundaries is that normative, existential, phenomenal and hermeneutic endeavours are simultaneously required and these endeavours cannot be rank-ordered. Holding on to this simultaneity requires attention to political processes that enable or disable, and reflect or distort actionable revelations. The Gita exhorts us that this is not achieved by remaining frozen as prisoners or slaves of models and frames that promise salvation predicated on theology garbed as cosmology depending for rescue at the nadir of civilizational epochs only on plenitudes of divinity. One can interpret “*Sambhavami yuge yuge*” not as a personal commitment of the persona called Sri

Krishna to reincarnation (in fact Sri Krishna clearly states that he creates the illusion of divinity plenitude and never once calls himself an avatar maintaining that he is a self-realised and liberated soul who was never born nor will die) but as the confidence that there would always be people who can think and lead in every era as long as *dharma* is alive. The Bhagavad Gita as the celestial song of non-attachment offers hope and invites us to go beyond religion to touch spirituality and continue that journey beyond spirituality to cross into unbounded realities. Distinguishing revelation politics from salvation theology in the Gita helps expand our understanding of the functions of boundaries in management. It also points to the need to revisit the behavioural foundations of economics and management.

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# *IokasaMgraha: An Indigenous Construct of Leadership and Its Measure*

# 14

Dharm P. S. Bhawuk

## Introduction

Some notable psychological work value studies include the contribution of Triandis who helped us understand differences in subjective values across cultures (Triandis, 1972), and more recently how self-deception shapes our values (Triandis, 2009). England's research on work related personal value system captured pragmatic, moralistic, and hedonistic orientations (England, 1975). Hofstede's work on cultural differences in work values presented a typology of cultures (e.g., Individualism, Power Distance, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Time Orientation) that is useful in comparing work values across cultures (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). More recent work includes Schwartz's research that presented a universal value structure (Schwartz, 1992, 2012), Inglehart's contribution toward the understanding of post-modernistic values (Inglehart, 1997), and Leung and Bond's Leung and Bond (2004) enumeration of social axioms that are closely related to work values. Despite the emergence of a large volume of cross-cultural psychological literature on values and those related to leadership (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), little is known about indigenous models of leadership, and the search for universals has debilitated the development of indigenous constructs and insights. This chapter tries to fill that lacuna by presenting an indigenous Indian construct of leadership and also proposes a way to measure the construct.

Harvard-Kyoto protocol for transliteration for *devanAgarI* is used for all *saMskRtam* and *hindi* words and names, and the first letters of names are not capitalized. All non-English words are italicized.

अ a आ A इ i ई I उ u ऊ U ए e ऐ ai ओ o औ au ऋ R ॠ RR लृ IR ॡ IRR अं M अः H क ka ख kha ग ga घ gha ङ Ga च ca छ cha ज ja झ jha ञ Ja ट Ta ठ Tha ड Da ढ Dha ण Na त ta थ tha द da ध dha न na प pa फ pha ब ba भ bha म ma य ya र ra ल la व va श za ष Sa स sa ह ha क्ष kSa ञ tra ज jJa श zra.

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Leadership literature is firmly set in its initial cocoon of the early 1900s with the focus on leader as a person. This core is stable in all the variations that has evolved over the years. For example, in the Ohio State Studies the leader initiates structures by organizing and structuring group activities, defining relationships, and directing followers toward task accomplishment or has consideration for the employees captured by open communication between leader and follower, mutual trust and respect, follower participation in decision making, and interpersonal warmth (; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Hemphill, 1950; Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy, & Stogdill, 1974; Shartle, 1979). In the University of Michigan studies, the leader is production oriented and focused on planning, direction, and productivity or employee oriented captured by good rapport with subordinates, open and accepting style, concern for the problems and feelings of subordinates (Kahn & Katz, 1952, 1953; Katz & Kahn, 1951; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). When analyzing the interaction process between leader and member, emergent leaders are found to be task-specialists who organize, summarize and direct behaviors; or they are socio-emotional specialists who reduce interpersonal tension, raise morale, and instigate group participation (Bales, 1950; Bales & Slater, 1955; Slater, 1955). In all these studies, even when traits of leaders were not studied, the focus remained on leader as the person, and leadership, therefore, was about a particular type of person.

The idea that the leader is a person that makes a difference (the difference indeed!) persisted in the contingency theories, and so did the ideas of structure and consideration. For example, in Fiedler's contingency theory, a leader picks directing or participating style depending on three factors, good or poor leader-member relation, high or low task structure, and strong or weak position power. Leaders that score low on Fiedler's least preferred coworker (LPC) scale are task oriented, and those who score high are relationship oriented. Task-oriented leaders are effective when the three factors are either high or low, whereas relationship oriented leaders are effective when the three factors are moderate (Fiedler, 1964, 1971, 1978; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Similarly, in Path-Goal Theory, the leader sets the goal and shows the path depending on the characteristics of the subordinates and the work environment. Whether the leaders prefers a directive, participative, supportive, or achievement oriented leadership style also shapes the selection of the path in the achievement of the goal (Evans, 1970; House, 1971, 1996; House & Mitchell, 1974).

The leader as a person is strengthened by such theories as charismatic leadership (the leader has charisma that draws followers; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977) and transformational leadership (the leader goes beyond calculative transactions to transform the follower by being an exemplar and articulating the vision and goals; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993). Leader-member exchange (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017; Graen, 1976; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) makes a significant shift in the focus from the leader as a person to the relationship between leader and follower by examining the quality of their relationship, offering insights into how people work together to get work done in organizations. Indigenous perspective can provide a fundamental shift in how we understand leadership, and in this paper the construct of *lokasaMgraha* is presented as a small step in that direction.

In what follows, first the Indian concept of self derived from the *bhagavadGItA* is presented, which is consistent with other sources in the literature (see *Bhawuk, 2011*, Chapter 4 for a discussion). Understanding the Indian concept of self helps examine other indigenous concepts in the cultural context. Next, the construct of *lokasaMgraha* as presented in the *bhagavadGItA* is discussed. Then the construct is examined in the context of Indian philosophy of *karma* or action. Finally, implications for future research and global psychology are discussed.

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## Indian Concept of Self

Concept of self has been studied from multiple perspectives in India. A review of the study of self in India reveals that indeed the core of Indian self is metaphysical, and it has been the focus of study by philosophers as well as psychologists. Examining the concept of self, *Bharati (1985)* concluded that compared to the Western perspective, self is defined in a rather unique perspective in the Indian worldview. The self has been studied as “an ontological entity” in Indian philosophy for time immemorial, and “far more intensively and extensively than any of the other societies” in the East (Confucian, Chinese, or Japanese) or the West (either secular thought or Judeo-Christian-Muslim traditions) (*Bharati, 1985*, p. 185).

In verse 3.41 of the *bhagavadGItA*, *kRSNa* explains to *arjuna* that the five senses are said to be superior to the body, whereas the *manas* is considered superior to the senses. *Buddhi* is said to be superior to *manas*, and the *Atman* is superior to even *buddhi*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, *manas* is above the body and senses, which is also captured in the Indian conceptualization of self where *manomaya* is more subtle than the *annamaya* and *prANamaya* selves. But more subtle than the *manomaya* self are *vijJAnmaya*, and *Anandamaya* selves. Thus, *manas* stands in the middle of the five-level concept of self, and thus is an intermediary in understanding the *Atman*.

In the *bhagavadGItA*, there are also other definitions of self that are important in understanding the Indian self-conception. In verse 7.4, self is defined as constituting of eight parts—earth, water, fire, wind, space, *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaMkAra*. This is important because the concept of self is tied to the environment, and could be divided into external and internal self. *Manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaMkAra* constitutes the internal self, and together they are referred to as the *antaHkaraNa*,<sup>2</sup> or the

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<sup>1</sup>Verse 3.42: *indriyaNi parANyahurindriyebhyaH paraM manaH; manasastu parA budhhiryo bud-dheH paratastu saH*. The five senses are said to be superior to the body, and the *manas* is superior to the senses. *Buddhi* is said to be superior to *manas*, and the *Atman* is superior to even *buddhi*.

<sup>2</sup>See *Bhawuk, 2011a*, Chapter 4, for a definition and discussion of *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahaMkAra*, and *antaHkaraNa*. The closest translation of *ahaMkAra* would be ego, which comes at the cost of much loss of meaning. People often use mind for *manas*, which is simply wrong, since *manas* is the locus of cognition, affect and behavior, whereas mind is only cognitive. And *buddhi* is closest to the super-ego in Freudian parlance, but without ego, which makes the similarity rather superficial. And *antaHkaraNa* is the composite internal organ or agent combining *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaMkAra*. *Adizankara* also includes *citta* in the definition of *antaHkaraNa* (see *Bhawuk, 2014* for a discussion of *citta*).

internal instrument of mental, emotional, verbal, and physical activities. In the 13th canto (verses 13.1 and 13.2) this is further elaborated by stating that the body is the field, and *Atman* is the knower of the body, and a *jJAni* (one who knows) knows both the field and the knower of the field. In verse 13.5, the field is further divided into the five elements of knowledge, five elements of action, the five subjects of the knowledge (earth, fire, water, wind, and space), five experiences of these elements of the nature, *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahaMkAra*, and *Atman*. This is also referred to as the 24 basic elements in *sAMkhya* philosophy. Thus, *ahaMkAra* is an important component of self, and interacts with the environment to create unhappiness (see *Bhawuk, 2011*, Chapter 7). *buddhi* helps in the process of realizing the *Atman* by systematically detaching oneself from the material experience and existence.

It should be noted that Indians do not neglect the physical body, and in fact they care about it so much that they have many daily prayers to protect the body. For example, many verses in the section that is called the *kavacaM* or the protective armor in the *durga saptazati* text are presented in which one prays to many forms of the Goddess for protection from all directions of the physical body and the psychological as well as the social self. In verses 17–21, 11 forms of the Goddess are invoked to protect one from all ten directions (11th one for all directions). Further, four forms of the Goddess are invoked to protect one from front, back, and the two sides. Having prayed for protection in all directions by referring to each of the ten directions, and then also by referring to them with respect to the person—front, back and the two sides—the next verses invoke a particular form of the Goddess for a particular part of the body. For example, in verses 21 to 33, the person prays for one body part at a time by invoking a unique form of the Goddess. Verses 43 to 56 describe the benefits of chanting these verses daily, which include achievement of every desire, victory in every activity, incomparable wealth, freedom from accidental death and long life beyond a hundred years in which one would enjoy children and grand children (see *Bhawuk, 2011*, Chapter 4 for details). Thus, the concept of self includes physical self, psychological self, social self, many socially constructed concepts, and metaphysical self.

Thus, the Indian concept of self consists of gross and subtle elements, which can be further categorized as physical, social, and metaphysical selves (*Bhawuk, 2011*). More specifically, in the Indian worldview there is social self that is ever expanding by additions of various social roles and attributes. Though it is subtle, it has concrete attributes and also has psychological characteristics. Physical self and sense organs are the grossest. The internal self that consists of *ahaMkAra*, *manas*, and *buddhi*, is also called *antaHkaraNa* or the internal organ or agent. Beyond all this is *Atman*, which is the subtlest (*Bhawuk, 2011*).

There is general agreement that the metaphysical self, *Atman*, is the real self. This metaphysical self is embodied in a biological or physical self, and situated, right at birth, in a social structure as a result of past *karma*. The importance of the metaphysical self is reflected in the belief that of all the living beings, human beings are the only ones that can pursue *mokSa* (or liberation), enlightenment, *jJAna* (or knowledge), or self-realization, which is presented as the highest pursuit of human life. Most Indians, including Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and people of many other religious groups believe that they go through many life forms on their way to

ultimatum liberation, and the pursuit of self-realization is a common shared belief. This is captured beautifully in a verse by a mystic—In my search for Him I traveled far, traveled wide, questioned many. No answer appeared. When I returned, I saw Him within my own Self (*muktAnand*, 1995; verse 43).

In the traditional Indian worldview, people were assigned social roles according to their phase of life. The first phase was called the *bramhacarya Azrama* in which people got education and learned life skills. In this phase, the primary focus was on achievement of skills, and traditionally one lived with a *guru* in his *Azrama* and led a frugal life. Upon completion of education at the age of twenty-five, traditionally people entered the *gRhashta Azrama* or the second phase of life in which they became householders and led a married life raising children. In this phase of life the focus was on family and community responsibilities.

At age fifty, one entered the third phase of life or *vAnaprastha Azrama* and became a forest-dweller, and focused on his or her spiritual life. In this phase of life, people led an austere life much like they did in the first phase as a student. Finally, at the age of seventy-five one entered *sannyAsa Azrama* or the fourth phase of life, and became a *sannyAsin* or a monk, and renounced all pleasures of life to pursue *jJAna* (or knowledge) or self-realization. The third and fourth phases of life are not adopted by most Indians today, who remain *gRhashtas* all their lives. However, many do cultivate spiritual practices after retirement, which was the main characteristic of the third phase of life.

Meaning in life is found by pursuing *dharm*a (duty), *artha* (money), *kAma* (desire), and *mokSa* (liberation), which is referred to as the four *puruSarthas* or pursuits of life. In householder stage of life money and pleasure are allowed,<sup>3</sup> though in moderation, and were to be guided by *dharm*a or duty. This stage of life is clearly a preparation for the next stage, rather than a phase of unbridled excesses of “do what you like.” *dharm*a is to always guide ones’ behavior, and one is never to lose sight of *mokSa* or liberation. Also, enjoying anything excessively or immoderately, as noted in *cANakya*’s teachings,<sup>4</sup> is not an Indian cultural value.

Depending on which phase of life one is in, the self is viewed differently. Life style completely changes from phase to phase. For example, as a student one ate less (*alpAhAri*), but as a householder there were fewer restrictions on what to eat and

<sup>3</sup> Verse 7.11: *balaM balavatAM cAhaM kAmarAgavivarjitaM, dharmAviruddho bhUteSu kAmo’smi bharatarSabha*. I am also the strength of the strong who are without desire and attachment. I am the desire in all beings, which is not against the *dharm*a. In this verse, first *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that he (*kRSNa* himself) is strength of those who are devoid of desire and attachment, which speaks against having desires or attachment to anything. Strength lies in being without desire and attachment alludes to *niSkAma karma*, or performing actions without desiring the outcomes of the actions, which is the basic tenet of the *bhagavadgItA*. *niSkAma karma* is always for *lokasaMgraha* or common good, and, therefore, without craving for any outcome. Then he further explains that he is *kAma* or desire that is consistent with *dharm*a. This indicates that desire or pleasure is to be guided by *dharm*a. Thus, the guiding principle for leading one’s life as a *gRhashta* or householder is to practice *niSkAma karma* and to follow the *dharm*a.

<sup>4</sup> *cANakya* listed the following eight “don’ts” for students: desire, anger, greed, taste, finery or paying attention to how one looks, pleasure or entertainment (e.g., song, dance, show, spectacle, and so forth), too much sleep, and enjoying anything excessively or immoderately. Only taste, finery and pleasure are acceptable in the householder phase of life. Other don’ts apply to all phases of life.

when to eat. As a forest-dweller one ate fruits and roots, and as a monk one begged three houses, washed whatever food one received from them, and then ate the “taste-free” food. Thus, stage of life clearly defined one’s occupation and role in the society, and, therefore, the Indian concept of self was socially constructed and varied with stage or phase of life.

We can see that spirituality, which emerges as the highest desideratum of human living and pursuit in Indian culture, is captured in the concept of self, in the normative prescription about how to lead one’s life in phases where the last two phases are clearly dedicated to the pursuit of spiritual practice, and the four pursuits of life recommended by tradition, which includes, *dharmā* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), and *mokṣa* (release from birth and death cycle). Both *dharmā* and *mokṣa* are related to spirituality.

India claims to have one of the longest historical traditions of innovation in spirituality (Bhawuk, 2003, 2011). The Indian spiritual value emphasizes the concept of *jīvanmukta* or being free while living in the material world, and so material world is not neglected in the Indian ethos. It is this love for the material that is captured in the love for gold jewelry, silk, hundreds of varieties of food, music, movies, and so forth in India. Therefore, the focus on spirituality in the Indian culture should not be construed as the neglect of material world, and the concept of *lokasāmgṛaha* is a way of life to lead a noble life that balances the external social life with the internal spiritual journey.

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## The Construct of *lokasāmgṛaha* in the BG

The word *lokasāmgṛaha* appears in the *bhagavadgītā* only twice in verses 3.20 and 3.25. Following grammar rule, *lokasāmgṛahaH* is *SaSThI tatpuruSa samAsa* of *lokAnAm* and *saMgṛahaH*. *Adi zaMkara* interprets *lokasāmgṛaham* as *lokasya unmaArgapravRttinivAraNaM lokasāmgṛahaH tam eva api prayojanam* (*goyandakA*, 2004, p. 95) or correcting people’s propensity to pursue the opposite path is called *lokasāmgṛahaH*. Leaders are expected to guide people on the right path to achieve what is envisioned, and in that sense *lokasāmgṛaha* is about leadership. To understand the construct and the verse properly, we need to understand the context in which it is presented. It should be noted that Canto 3 of the *bhagavadgītā* pertains to *karmayoga* (the path of self realization through action or work), and, therefore, *lokasāmgṛaha* needs to be interpreted in the context of action or work. In verse 3.20,<sup>5</sup> *kṛṣṇa* tells *arjuna* that even kings like *janaka* were propelled by *karma* or action in the pursuit of *mokṣa*, the ultimate goal of life. The noble king *janaka* was an exemplar and a role model who never shirked from actions. Therefore, he too should be propelled by action to be an exemplar so that common people could follow him as a role model. Since *arjuna* was standing in the battlefield, and the conch shells were

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<sup>5</sup> Verse 3.20: *karmaNaiva hi saMiddhimAsthitA janakAdayaH, lokasāmgṛahamevApi sampazyankartumarhasi*. *Adi zaMkara* interprets *saMiddhiM* as *mokṣaM gantum* (or achieved *mokṣa*), and *asthitAH* as *pravṛttA* or propelled by.

blown marking the beginning of the war, *kRSNa* enjoins him to engage in his duty and be a part of the war rather than withdraw from it, which *arjuna* was considering. *kRSNa* makes *lokasaMgraha* an argument for action. Therefore, *lokasaMgraha* is about leadership where the common tendency of people to deviate from the spiritual course is to be corrected by the leader through his or her own example.

In verse 3.25,<sup>6</sup> an interesting perspective is presented comparing common people with the wise ones. *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that those who do not know the self act with their mind attached to the outcomes of their actions, and are not wise. However, those who know the self, the wise ones, should perform actions without attachment to their actions for *lokasaMgraha*. In other words, the wise ones should work as hard as those who work to maximize their own self-worth, except that they should work for the benefit of the society rather than their individual benefit. Therefore, *lokasaMgraha* is about leadership where the leader works for the benefit of the society. We see again that the focus is not on the person as the leader but on the society and its wellbeing.

*lokasaMgraha* focuses on *loka*, which means space. There are many *lokas*. The *prANAyAma* mantra emphasizes the seven *lokas* of *bhUH* (the earth), *bhuvaH* (sky or the space between the earth and the sun where *munis* and *siddhas* dwell), *svaH* (*svargaloka* or heaven; the abode of *devas*), *mahaH* (middle region or the home of saints like *bhRgu* who survive even when the three lower *lokas* or universes end), *janaH* (place of rebirths or home of *sanatkumAra*, the son of *bramhA*), *tapaH* (home of ascetics), and *satyam* (abode of truth or *bramhan-loka* where the cycle of birth and death ends; also the abode of *bramhA*). Of these seven, *bhUH*, *bhuvaH*, and *svaH* are also referred to as *triloka* or three *lokas*, since they are of immediate importance to human beings. These seven *lokas* or universes are above the earth, and there are seven other *lokas* below the earth namely, *atala*, *vitala*, *sutala*, *rasAtala*, *talAtala*, *mahAtala*, and *pAtAlan* (*vedavyAsa*, 1970; see *zrImadbhAgavatam* verses 2:5:36, 38–41; verse 2.5.42 refers to the three *lokas*). There is also reference to *ihaloka* (this world or the material world) and *paraloka* (the world beyond), and a spiritual practitioner is advised to pursue *mokSa*, which calls for thinking beyond the material world. The material world is not to be neglected but to be used as an opportunity to practice virtues, and to test how one is progressing in the spiritual journey by becoming detached from this world in one's interactions.

*loka* also means people, humankind, or the world in different contexts. When contrasted with common people, *lokAdhipaH* refers to a king or deity, *lokapAla* refers to a guardian of a quarter of the world, *lokAdhipatiH* refers to a lord of the world, and *lokIza* refers to a king or *bramhan*. There are many uses of *loka*, and its various usages show how this word is embedded in Indian culture. For example, *lokAnugraha* means prosperity of humankind, *lokAnurAga* means love of humankind, *lokAbhyudaya* means public good or the good of society, and *lokahita* means beneficial to humankind. Other usages include *lokaprasiddha* or well known, *lokavyavahAra* or commonly used, *lokAcAra* or common practice,

<sup>6</sup>Verse 3.25: *saktAH karmaNyavidvAMso yathA kurvanti bhAraT, kuryAdvidvAMstathAsaktazcikIr SuloksaGraham*.

*lokakathA* or folktale, *lokagAthA* or folksong, *lokokti* or proverb, *lokayAtrA* or the course of worldly life, *lokadharmA* or worldly matter, *lokavRttam* or the way of the world, *lokakanTaka* or the curse of humankind, *lokaviruddha* or opposed to public opinion, and *lokApavAda* or public scandal (or popular censure). *lokakAnta* (or *lokaraJjanam*) refers to popular or liked by people, and *lokAbhilakSita* refers to generally liked. In philosophy *lokAyatika* refers to those who subscribe to the materialistic or atheistical world view of *cArvAka*. In the last one hundred years, the word *lokanAyaka* has become popular and refers to a popular leader. A freedom fighter and well known Indian politician, *jaya prakAza nArAyaNa*, who was posthumously decorated with *bhArata ratna*, India's highest civilian award, in 1999, earned the title *lokanAyaka* from the people.

*saMgraha* (*sama* + *graha*; *sama* means harmoniously, and *graha* means to hold) means to hold harmoniously. *lokasaMgraha* is interpreted as bringing people together, focusing on the benefits of people, inspiring people toward a common good, and so forth. In all its interpretation, it is about other people, not the self. It is also about action, and that action brings the self in the picture. *lokasaMgraha* means that each person's action should be directed toward common good, not toward self interest. Directing our actions toward public good makes us a better person, a superior person (*zreSTha*, *bhagavadGItA*, verse 3. 25). *lokasaMgraha* has a special place in Indian worldview since spiritual practice calls for *aparigraha* (*a* + *pari* + *graha*; *graha* or acquire; *parigraha* or acquire from all around; *aparigraha* or not acquire anything that comes from any direction) or non-acquisition, but when it comes to common good the spiritual practitioner is enjoined to harmoniously bring together people from all around for public good. *Aparigraha* is also a practice of bringing the outward going senses to the inner self, and *lokasaMgraha* allows the practitioner to let the senses go outward, but for public good. As a spiritual practice *lokasaMgraha* entails cultivating the outward going senses to see the benefit of others in everything, all the time, thus, reducing selfishness or self-centeredness.

A concept related to *lokasaMgraha* is “*sarva bhUta hite ratAH*,” which appears in Canto 12, verse 5<sup>7</sup> *arjuna* asks *kRSNA* whether a devotee is superior to a *jJanI*, or otherwise. In response, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that both the path of devotion and knowledge lead to self-realization. The devotee constantly seeks *kRSNa* with the highest reverence by placing his or her *manas* in him. On the other hand, a person who follows the path of knowledge, reveres *bramhan*, which is non-decaying (*akSaram*), cannot be indicated by words (*anirdezyam* or it is without a destination that can be mapped), unmanifested (*avyaktam* or inexpressible), permeating or pervading everything (*sarvatragam*), beyond thought (*acintyam*), changeless (*kUTastham* or steady), unmoving (*acalam*), and constant (*dhruvam* or fixed like the polar star). The knowledge seeker who controls his or her senses (*samniyama indriyagrAmam*), is always equipoised or in harmony with everything (*sarvatra samabuddhaya*), and is passionate about the benefit of all beings (*sarva bhUta hite ratAH*), also achieves *kRSNa* or *bramhan*. In describing the characteristics of a seeker of knowledge,

<sup>7</sup>Verse 12.5: *samniyamyendriyagrAmam sarvatra samabuddhayaH, te prApnuvanu mameva sarvabhUtahite ratAH*.

*kRSNA* presents *sarva bhUta hite ratAH* as a goal or objective that is akin to *lokasaMgraha*. In other words, a person pursuing *lokasaMgraha* has to be passionate about the welfare of all beings. Thus, a noble person or a leader is not only focused on common good, but is passionate about the wellbeing of all beings. Such a definition of leadership has been missing in the leadership literature, and adds a new perspective about not only the practice of leadership but also its research. To appreciate the significance of *lokasaMgraha*, we need to review other verses pertaining to the philosophy of *karma* presented in Canto 3.

## The Philosophy of *karma* and *lokasaMgraha*

The first time *karma* appears as *karmabandham* in the BG in verse 2.39,<sup>8</sup> which refers to bondage resulting from doing *karma* or taking any action. *Adi zaMkara* explains this word in his commentary as also inclusive of *dharm* and *adharm*, i.e., bondage results not only from doing all kinds of work, but also from performing all activities that are guided by *dharm* or those that are prohibited by *dharm* as *adharm* (*karma eva dharmAdharmAkhyo bandhaH karmabandhaH; goyandakA, 2004, p. 56*). This word appears again in verses 3.9<sup>9</sup> and in 9.28,<sup>10</sup> and it is used in the same sense. Thus, *karma* always leads to *karmabandham* or bondage, except when it is done with balance or *samatva*. *lokasaMgraha* offers a passage to break the bondage of *karma* or actions.

In verse 2.47,<sup>11</sup> which is perhaps the most famous verse of the *bhagavadgItA*, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that one has only the right to perform his or her duties, and does not ever have any right over the fruits of those activities. He is further instructed neither to work with his mind on achieving the fruits of his actions, nor to become attached to not doing his work since the fruits are not to be desired. We see that the *bhagavadgItA* quickly defines the purpose of work—work is to be performed for its own sake, not for its outcomes, and yet this should not demotivate one to become inactive. When one works for the benefit of others following the credo of *lokasaMgraha*, a pathway is available to avoid pursuing the fruits of actions.

In verse 2.48,<sup>12</sup> how to perform one's work is further elaborated upon. *kRSNa* asks *arjuna* to perform all work without any attachment, by performing tasks with indifference toward success or failure, and by situating himself in *yoga*, i.e., all work

<sup>8</sup>Verse 2.39: *eSA te'bhiihitA sAGkhye buddhiyoge tvimAM zriNu; buddhayA yukto yayA PARtha karmabandhaM prahAsyasi.*

<sup>9</sup>Verse 3.9: *yajnArthAtkarmaNo'nyatra loko'yaM karmabandhanaH; tadartha karma Kaunteya muktasaGgaH samAcAra.*

<sup>10</sup>Verse 9.28: *zubhAzubhaphalairaevaM mokshyase karmabandhanaiH; sannyAsayogayuktAtma vimukto mAmupaiSyasi.*

<sup>11</sup>Verse 2.47: *karmaNyevAdhikAraste mA phaleSu kadAcana; mA karmaphalaketurbhUrma te saGgo'stvakarmaNi.*

<sup>12</sup>Verse 2.48: *yogasthaH kuru karmANI saGgaMtyaktvA DhanaJjaya; siddhyaasiddhayaH samo bhUtvA samatvaM yoga ucyate.*



should be done for *brahman*'s sake, without even expecting to please *brahman* or with the desire that *brahman* will be pleased because one acted in a certain way.<sup>13</sup> Doing so for *lokasaMgraha* or the common good is a concrete way to cultivate performing all actions for *brahman*. And to clarify the idea further, *yoga* is defined as the mindset of balance (i.e., *samatvaM yoga ucyate*), which is an important contribution of the *bhagavadgItA*. Building these ideas further, in verse 2.49,<sup>14</sup> it is stated that those who pursue work for its outcomes are much inferior to those who pursue work without desiring the outcomes or fruits of their endeavor. Again, those who pursue *lokasaMgraha* are naturally inclined to pursue work without desiring the outcomes. In this verse those who pursue the outcomes are said to be miser (or *kripaNa*) or pitiable, which is supported in the *brihadAraNyaka upaniSad*—O Gargi, those who leave this world without knowing the undecaying *brahman* are miser.<sup>15</sup> This idea is also captured in *kenopaniSada* where it is stated that if in this human life one knows *brahman* then it is good; but if one does not know *brahman* in this life, then there is a heavy loss.<sup>16</sup> Thus, striving to achieve the outcomes of our work is inherently pitiable as it distracts from the higher goals of life, and *lokasaMgraha* offers the pathway to the highest goal of life, the pursuit of *brahman*.

In verse 2.49, *buddhiyoga* is used to denote *karmayoga* and this is significant in many ways. *Buddhi* is superior to *manas* (as noted in verse 3.42<sup>17</sup>) and it can be directed outward toward the material world, work, outcomes of work, pleasures of material world, and so forth; or it can be directed inward toward the *atman* and *brahman*. When *buddhi* is directed inward and it connects with *Atman*, *buddhiyoga* results. Work done with *buddhi* directed outward is said to be much inferior to work done with *buddhi* that is focused on and connected with *Atman*. *lokasaMgraha* (or *sarvabhUtahite rataH*) is the only outward focused approach that leads to higher goals, and therefore, is comparable to the inward focused spiritual practice.

Later in verse 10.10,<sup>18</sup> *kRSNa* says that he grants *buddhiyoga* to people who are constantly devoted to him and chant his name with love. Further in verse 18.57,<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *zankarAcArya* explains *yogasthaH kuru karmANi saga tyaktva DhanaJjaya in his BhaSyas* as follows: *yogasthaH san kuru karmANi kevalam IzvarArthaM tatra api Izvaro me tuSyatu iti saGga tyaktvA DhanaJjaya!*

<sup>14</sup> Verse 2.49: *dUreNa hyavaram karma buddhiyogAddhanaJjaya; buddhau zaraNamanviccha kripaNaH phalahetavaH.*

<sup>15</sup> *brihadAranyak* 3, 8. 10: *Yo vA atadaksharaM GArgyaviditvAsmAllokAtpraiti sa kripaNaH.* Cited in *ZankarAcArya's commentary (goyandaka, 2004, p. 62).*

<sup>16</sup> *kenopaniSad* 2.5: *iha cedavedIdatha satyamasti na cedihAvedInmahatI vinaStiH.*

<sup>17</sup> Verse 3.42: *indriyANi parANyAhurindriyebhyaH paraM manaH; manasastu parA buddhiyor buddheH paratastu saH.* The senses are said to be superior to the gross body, and *manas* is superior to the senses. *Buddhi* is superior to *manas*, and *atman* is superior to *buddhi*.

<sup>18</sup> Verse 10.10: *teSAM satatayuktANAM bhajatAM prItipUrvakaM; dadAmi buddhiyogaM taM yena mAmupayAnti te.* I give *buddhiyoga* to those who are constantly engrossed in me and chant my name with love. With *buddhiyoga* they achieve me.

<sup>19</sup> Verse 18.57: *cetasa sarva karmANi mayi saMnyasya matparaH; buddhiyogamupAzritya macchitaH satataM bhava.* By surrendering all the karma with your *citta* or *manas* (e.g., voluntarily and naturally), surrender yourself completely to me. By taking shelter in *buddhiyoga* constantly place your *citta* or *manas* in me, i.e., become one with me.

the same idea is asserted—with consciousness surrender all actions to me and by engaging in *buddhiyoga* constantly place your *citta* or *manas* in me. The practitioner of *lokasaMgraha* does attempt to see *kRSNa* in all people and beings, and while serving others gets the joy of serving *kRSNa*. This also supports that *buddhiyoga* means inner directed or *lokasaMgraha*-focused *buddhi*.<sup>20</sup>

Having defined *yoga* as the balance of mind in success or failure of the performance of one's work, in verse 2.50 another definition that links *karma* and *yoga* is presented—*yoga* is excellence in work.<sup>21</sup> *Adi zaMkara* explains this in his commentary as follows. Though work by its very nature is a cause of bondage as noted above, it does not cause bondage if one performs his or her work with a balanced mind. Thus, performing one's work in this way (i.e., with a balanced mind) is achieving excellence in the performance of one's actions or tasks. He suggested that such excellence is achieved when one performs his or her prescribed duties or work by surrendering the consciousness to *brahman*, which leads to having a balance in success and failure (*goyandaka*, 2004, p. 62).<sup>22</sup> This applies equally to all actions performed for *lokasaMgraha* or common good.

In verse 2.51, the wise person who gives up the fruits of his or her work is said to achieve the highest abode of *brahman* by becoming free from the birth and death cycle.<sup>23</sup> A person committed to *lokasaMgraha* clearly is not interested in the fruits of his or her actions. Thus, right at the outset in the second canto the philosophy of *karma* is presented in no uncertain terms. Work is to be done, and never to be avoided. Work is to be done without seeking its outcomes. Work is to be done without paying attention to success or failure. When work is so performed, with a balanced mind, one achieves excellence in his or her performance, work does not cause bondage to life and death cycle, and one achieves the purpose of life—union with *brahman*. And all of this applies to performing work with focus on *lokasaMgraha* passionately seeking the best for all. *niSkAma karma* or *lokasaMgraha* are thus presented as spiritual practices, a unique Indian perspective on work and leadership that fits the Indian worldview that emphasizes spirituality (see Bhawuk, 2011, Chapter 3).

Though the six verses in the second canto quite succinctly state the philosophy of *karma*, *arjuna* is unsure if he should be following the path of *jJAna* (or path of knowledge) or *karma*, since *kRSNa* praised the path of knowledge toward the end of

<sup>20</sup> *zankarAcArya* also notes two kinds of *buddhi* in the opening statement of his commentary on the third canto of the *Bhagavad-Gita*—*zAstrasya pravrittinivrittiviSayabhUte dve buddhi bhagavata nirdiSte, sAGkhye buddhiH yoge buddhiH iti ca. kriSNa* enumerates two kinds of *buddhi* in the *bhagavadgItA*, a *buddhi* that is inner bound employed by the *jJAnis* or those who follow the path of knowledge and a *buddhi* that is outer bound employed by people pursuing material life (*goyandaka*, 2004, p. 76).

<sup>21</sup> Verse 2.50: *buddhiyukto jahAtIha ubhe sukritaduSkrite; tasmAdyogAya yujyasva yogaH karmasu kauzalam.*

<sup>22</sup> *Yogo hi karmasu kauzalaM svadharmAkhyeSu karmasu vartamAnasya yA siddhayaiddhayaH samatvabuddhiH IzvarArpitacetastayA tat kauzalaM kuzalabhAvaH* (*Goyandaka*, 2004, p. 62).

<sup>23</sup> Verse 2.51: *karmajaM buddhiyuktVA hi phalaM tyaktVA manISiNaH; janmabandhavinirmuktAH padaM gacchantyanAmayam.*

the second canto. In verse 3.1,<sup>24</sup> *arjuna* complains to *kRSNa*, “If the path of knowledge is superior, why are you asking me to engage in this dreadful battle?” In response, *kRSNa* says in verse 3.3 that there are two paths that one can follow to engage in the world—the path of *sAMkhyā* or knowledge and the path of *karmayoga* or work.<sup>25</sup> In verse 3.4, *kRSNa* explains that simply avoiding or not starting work does not lead to the state where one is free of bondage; just as simply renouncing the world does not lead to self-realization.<sup>26</sup> The intent is that not doing work is not an option, which is clarified in verse 3.5 by stating that living beings are simply not able to stay away from work even for a moment, as they are compelled to act or made to act willy-nilly.<sup>27</sup> This suggests a role for a *zreSTha* person or a leader—a leader should educate others that non-work is not a choice, and yoke them into action.

Building this idea further, in verse 3.6 it is stated that if one forces the organs of action not to engage in work, but the *manas* keeps chasing the actions, then one is a hypocrite or sinner.<sup>28</sup> And verse 3.7 shows the way—one should control the *manas* and only engage in work with the action organs, remaining detached from all aspects of work and its outcomes.<sup>29</sup> Such a person is a *karmayogi*—one who practices *karmayoga* or a path in which one is engaged in actions and performs work with the body but the *manas* is connected to *Atman* or *brahman*. When one works in this way the outcomes of one’s actions have no motivating potential, and one constantly pursues an inward journey, which is inherently fulfilling and satisfying. Thus, *kRSNa* establishes work as a path (or *karmayoga*) equal to the path of knowledge (or *jJAn-yoga*); rules out the option of not performing work because it is simply not possible to do so; states that work is innate to all beings and we are naturally propelled to act; forcing the body not to act but not being able to control the *manas* from engaging in work is futile and hypocritical; and the ideal way to work is to keep the *manas* anchored internally while engaging in work externally. The *lokasaMgraha*-focused person is also able to achieve the same ends while engaging in the world of action by passionately seeking the best outcome for others.

Having established that one should work, next what is work is dealt with. In verse 3.8, it is stated that one should perform the prescribed work,<sup>30</sup> which *Adi zaMkara* interprets as work that is prescribed in the *vedas* for which no outcomes are stated.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Verse 3.1: *jyAyasI cetkarmaNaste matA buddhirJanardan; tatkiM karmaNi ghore mAM niyo-jayasi KeZava.*

<sup>25</sup>Verse 3.3: *loke’smindividha niSTha purA proktA mayAnagha; jnAnayogena sAGkhyAnAM karmayogena yoginAM.*

<sup>26</sup>Verse 3.4: *na karmaNamanArambhAnnaiSkarmyaM puriSo’znute;na ca saMnyasanAdeva sid-dhiM samadhigacchati.*

<sup>27</sup>Verse 3.5: *na hi kazcitsaNamapi jAtu tiSThatyakarmakrit; kAryate hyavazaH karma sarvaH prakritjairguNaiH.*

<sup>28</sup>Verse 3.6: *karmendriyANi saMyamya ya Aste manasa smaran; indriyArthAnvimudhAtma mithy-acarH sa ucyate.*

<sup>29</sup>Verse 3.7: *yastvindriyANi manasa niyamyArabhate’rjuna; karmendriyaiH karmayogamasaktaH sa viziSyate.*

<sup>30</sup>Verse 3.8: *niyataM kuru karma tvaM karma jyayo hyakarmaNaH; zrIrayAtrApi ca ten a prasiddhyedakarmaNaH.*

<sup>31</sup>*niyataM nityaM yo yasmin karmaNi adhikritaH phalAya ca azrutaaM tad niyataM (goyandaka,*

In other words, it is work handed down to people by tradition; people know what they are supposed to do, and when in doubt the elders can guide them to the right work. This becomes clear because in the same verse two reasons are given for doing one's work. First, doing one's work is superior to not doing it, and second, we cannot go on with the journey of life without performing our work. Both these reasons allude to prescribed work that is done to sustain one's life. When we work to only sustain ourselves, we do not over eat, or drink too much, or buy too many clothes, or use big cars or houses, and so forth, to use some examples from various domains of consumption. In other words, there is no excessive consumption on our part. In fact a person living to sustain his or her life would doctor his or her consumption like a dose of a medicine, and that invariably would leave plenty for everybody else. Similarly, a person focused on *lokasaMgraha* follows the path of consuming a little and nurturing others with the resources at one's disposal. This suggests a role for a *zreSTha* person or a leader—a leader should inspire others to do their prescribed work.

In verses 3.20 to 3.25 the idea of living a life for the welfare of the society is stated from multiple perspectives. First, in verse 3.20, King Janak, who was known to be a self-realized person, is presented as an exemplar of leading a life by following the philosophy of *niSkAma karma*, and implicit in the statement is the fact that even kings can pursue such a path despite the demands of the administration of a country.<sup>32</sup> This is instructive because most people today work in organizations or have to deal with organizations, which requires dealing with affairs much like kings had to deal with. This is particularly applicable to managers and CEOs, the kings of organizational world we live in today. Later in the fourth canto, this idea is further emphasized in verse 4.15 when *kRSNa* cites tradition as a rationale for *arjuna* to engage in the battle. He tells *arjuna* that those desirous of *mokSa* or liberation from birth and death cycle in the past had also engaged in the roles prescribed for their caste or *varNa* and so he should do the same.<sup>33</sup>

In verse 3.21, *kRSNa* states that common people follow the example of the leaders, and in verse 3.22 gives his own example—though he did not need anything and there was nothing that he could not achieve, yet he engaged himself in mundane work so that people would emulate him.<sup>34</sup> It is implied here that even a *deva* has to work not only when he and she<sup>35</sup> comes in human form but also when a *deva* is in his and her non-human or universal form. This idea is further emphasized in the fourth canto in verse 4.14, where *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that actions neither touch him nor does he desire their outcomes, and those who thus understand him are not bound

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2004, p. 88).

<sup>32</sup>Verse 3.20: *karmaNaiva hi saMsidhimAsthitA JanakAdayaH; loksaMgrahamevApi saMpazyankartumarhasi.*

<sup>33</sup>Verse 4.15: *evaM jnAtvA kritam karma pUrvairapi mumukshubhiH; kuru karmaiva tasmAttvaM pUrvaiH pUrvataM kritam.*

<sup>34</sup>Verse 3.21: *yadyadAcarati zreSThastattadevetarA janaH; sa yatpramaNaM kurute lokstad-anuvartate.* Verse 3.22: *na me ParthAsti kartvyaM triSu lokeSu kiMcana; nAnavAptamavAp-tavyaM varta eva ca karmaNi.*

<sup>35</sup>Since God is gender free or can be either male or female, I prefer to use “he and she” when referring to God instead of he or she.

by *karma*.<sup>36</sup> Thus, if *arjuna* and other people were to follow the example of *kRSNa*, they should neither be attached to whatever they do nor pursue the fruits of their endeavor to avoid the bondage that comes with actions. Finally, in verse 3.25, the wise ones are also exhorted to work for the benefit of the society just as hard as those who pursue material benefits through their work.<sup>37</sup> The importance of work is further captured in verse 3.26 where the wise are advised to engage the materially oriented people in work, because working for material gains is superior to not working.<sup>38</sup> Thus, work is not to be avoided, everybody is supposed to work hard, it is better to work for material benefit than not to work, and those who work hard to serve others pursue a path of spiritual self-development through their work itself. When one pursues *lokasaMgraha*, not only all these conditions are met, but also some of them are surpassed as one passionately works for the benefit of others.

In verses 3.27 to 3.29 yet another perspective on work is presented using the Indian worldview and the philosophical tradition of *sAMkhya*. In verse 3.27, it is stated that all work is being done by nature but people blinded by egotism consider themselves as the agent.<sup>39</sup> In verse 3.28, the difference between those who know the truth and those who do not is explained by stating that those who know do not get attached to any work or its outcome because they know that all work is manifestation of the three *guNas*.<sup>40</sup> This idea is emphasized again in the fourth canto in verse 4.13, where *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that he created the four *varNas* or castes based on *guNas* and *karma*, and though that makes him (i.e., *viSNU*) the agent, he (i.e., *viSNU*) is really not an agent the way ordinary people view him.<sup>41</sup> Those who do not know the truth are overwhelmed by the three *guNas* and get attached to their work and its outcomes (verse 3.29<sup>42</sup>), and consistent with what was stated earlier, the wise should not disturb them, i.e., should allow them to continue to work chasing the fruits of their endeavors. Thus, the philosophy of *karma* as propounded in the *bhagavadgItA* fits well with the established Indian philosophical thoughts of *sAMkhya*. Though it is better to work if one is attached to the material world than not to work, it is clear that ideally one should be detached from all actions and their outcomes. Pursuing *lokasaMgraha*, a person would encourage others to pursue work for material benefits while would do so only for the benefit of other people and for the good of society at large.

<sup>36</sup>Verse 4.14: *na maM karmANi limpanti na me karmaphale sprihA; iti mAM yo'bhijanati karmabhirna sa badhyate.*

<sup>37</sup>Verse 3.25: *saktAH karmaNyavidvAMso yathA kurvanti Bharata; kuryAdvividvAMstath AsaktazcikIrSurloksaMgraham.*

<sup>38</sup>Verse 3.26: *na buddhibhedaM janayedajnAnAM karmasaNginAm; joSayetsarvakarmANi vidvAnyuktaH samAcaran.*

<sup>39</sup>Verse 3.27: *prakriteH kriyamANAni gunaiH karmaNi sarvazaH; ahaMkarvimudhAtmA kartAhamiti manyate.*

<sup>40</sup>Verse 3.28: *tattvavittu m = MahAbAho guNakarmavibhAgayoH; guNa guNeSu vartante iti matvA na sajjate.*

<sup>41</sup>Verse 4.13: *cAturvarnyaM mayA sriSTaM guNakarmavibhAgazaH; tasya kartAramapi mAM viddhyakartAramavyayam.*

<sup>42</sup>Verse 3.29: *prakriterguNasaMmUDhaH sajjante guNakarmasu; tAnakritsnavido mandAnkritasnavinna vicAleyet.*

In verse 3.21, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that common people follow the example of distinguished or superior (*zreSTha* or *pradhAn*) people. In verse 3.26<sup>43</sup> *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that the *buddhi* (or discriminating faculty) of those who do not know (the self) and are attached to actions (and their results) should not be disturbed. Those who know should yoke those who do not know (the self) into actions. Working for material gains is superior to not working. In verse 3.27, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that those who do not know erroneously think that they are the actors who cause the outcomes. In verse 3.28, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that those who know understand that nature acts itself out (*guNa guNeSu varianta*), and, therefore, they do not consider the self as the actor, but only a witness of all actions, even those done by one's own physical-psychological-social self. In verse 3.29, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that those who know should let those who do not know pursue actions even if they are pursuing them for their results. Again, as noted above, this is what a person pursuing *lokasaMgraha* is advised to do to lead people.

In verse 3.34, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that attachment (to entities considered favorable) and antagonism (to entities considered unfavorable) are associate with each of the senses, and one should not be subdued by them to be able to perform actions properly. In verse 3.35, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that it is better to follow one's *svadharma* (actions prescribed for the self), for pursuing *paradharma* (actions prescribed to others) is dangerous. In verse 4.15, *kRSNa* tells *arjuna* that those desirous of *mokSa* or liberation from birth and death cycle in the past had also engaged in the roles prescribed for their *varNAzrama dharma* or *duties prescribed for their* caste and stage of life. Therefore, *arjuna* should also follow such exemplars. By pursuing *lokasaMgraha*, we are able to follow in the footsteps of king *janaka* and follow our *svadharma* in the service of others.

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## Scale Development: *gItA* Leadership Questionnaire (gLQ)

The following four-step process was used to develop the scale to measure leadership behavior. The items were written to tap leadership based on the concept of *lokasaMgraha*. First, attempt was made to draw items from the text of *bhagavadgItA*. In this step, (a) verses that are pertinent to the construct of leadership were identified from Canto 3 of the *bhagavadgItA*. (b) Items were written to capture the spirit of the verses. (c) To make sure that the items are faithful to the text, the items were written with the tag, "According to the *bhagavadgItA*," which was attached to each item. (d) Then tags like "leaders should engage common people in action" were added to the items to make them meaningful to leadership research, still keeping the item faithful to the verses of *bhagavadgItA*. It led to the generation of 11 items (see Appendix 1A).

Next, all references to *bhagavadgItA* was removed from the items to avoid bias in the response of the participants. It is plausible that people may respond to items

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<sup>43</sup>Verse 3.26: *na buddhi bhedaM janayedajnAnAM karmasaGginAm, joSayetsarvakarmANi vidvAnyuktaH samAcaran.*

with deference, not presenting their true thoughts and feelings, if they see reference to the scripture in the items. The following modified 11 items resulted (see Appendix 1B). Next, the items were edited making sure that each item was not excessively long, keeping the word count for each item about 22 words (see Appendix 1C). Finally, the items were written in two forms, third person and first person (see Appendix 1D). This methodology should be useful in developing items from scriptures for other constructs also.

As the first step, the following design is proposed, which will help find out how people respond to leaders in different domains of life. The instrument should be administered to people from different walks of life including students, managers, and employees of both for profit and social service organizations. The following six scenarios are proposed. Data can also be collected using other scales to see how this instrument compares to other leadership measures. Researchers can also design other ways of using the scale.

Scenario 1: Please think about managers who lead organizations in India in general.

Please response to the following 11 items on a scale of 1 (do not agree) to 7 (agree) if in your opinion these items capture them and what they do. (USE G-FORM)

Scenario 2: Please think about politicians who lead state and central government in

India in general. Please response to the following 11 items on a scale of 1 (do not agree) to 7 (agree) if in your opinion these items capture them and what they do. (USE G-FORM)

Scenario 3: Please think about social workers who lead non-governmental organizations in India in general. Please response to the following 11 items on a scale of 1 (do not agree) to 7 (agree) if in your opinion these items capture them and what they do. (USE G-FORM)

Scenario 4: Please think about Indian CEOs of large organizations who lead organizations in India in general. Please response to the following 11 items on a scale of 1 (do not agree) to 7 (agree) if in your opinion these items capture them and what they do. (USE G-FORM)

Scenario 5: Please think about Indian spiritual organizations' presidents who lead spiritual organizations in India in general. Please response to the following 11 items on a scale of 1 (do not agree) to 7 (agree) if in your opinion these items capture them and what they do. (USE G-FORM)

Scenario 6: Please think about yourself in leadership roles. Please response to the following 11 items on a scale of 1 (do not agree) to 7 (agree) if in your opinion these items capture you and what you do in this role. (USE I-FORM)

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## Discussion

To summarize, *lokasaMgraha* is about leadership where the common tendency of people to deviate from the spiritual course is to be corrected by the leader through his or her own example. Unlike traditional leadership, which focuses on the leader

as a person, *lokasaMgraha* shifts the focus to the wellbeing of the society. As a spiritual practice *lokasaMgraha* entails cultivating the outward going senses to see the benefit of others in everything, all the time, thus, reducing selfishness or self-centeredness. A person pursuing *lokasaMgraha* is not reclusive but passionate about the welfare of all beings. When one works for the benefit of others following the credo of *lokasaMgraha*, a pathway is available to avoid pursuing the fruits of actions. Those who pursue *lokasaMgraha* are naturally inclined to pursue work without desiring the outcomes.

Therefore, *lokasaMgraha* offers a path or practice to break the bondage of *karma* or actions, and offers the pathway to the highest goal of life, the pursuit of *mokSa* or *bramhan*.

Compared to the material way of life in which we constantly chase the fruits of our ventures, which is inherently pitiable as it distracts from the higher goals of life, *lokasaMgraha* (or *sarvabhUtahite ratAH*) is the only outward focused approach that leads to higher goals, and therefore, is comparable to the inward focused spiritual practice. Thus, where *buddhiyoga* refers to inner directed *buddhi*, it applies equally to the practice of *lokasaMgraha*. *Adi zaMkara* suggested that excellence is achieved when one performs his or her prescribed duties or work by surrendering the consciousness to *bramhan*, which leads to having a balance in success and failure. The same excellence is achieved when all actions performed are for *lokasaMgraha* or common good.

The philosophy of *karma* is often viewed as the doctrine of *niSkAma karma*, which can be stated in the following four statements: (i) Work is to be done, and never to be avoided. (ii) Work is to be done without seeking its outcomes. (iii) Work is to be done without paying attention to success or failure. (iv) When work is performed with a balanced mind, one achieves excellence in his or her performance, work does not cause bondage to life and death cycle, and one achieves the purpose of life—union with *bramhan*. These four fundamentals are equally applicable to *lokasaMgraha*. We saw above that when work is performed with focus on *lokasaMgraha* passionately seeking the best for all, the highest spiritual outcomes are achieved. *niSkAma karma* and *lokasaMgraha* (and *sarvabhUtahite ratAH*) thus provide a theory of leadership that integrates spirituality and material living. Therefore, *lokasaMgraha* offers a novel space to study leadership where a noble person or a leader is not only focused on common good, but is passionate about bringing people together for what is best for all—people, other elements, and contexts. It offers practitioners an opportunity to transform their daily actions into a spiritual practice. It offers researchers to integrate the material and the spiritual, which is often presented as exclusive domains in the literature.

The concept of *lokasaMgraha* forms the implicit foundation of *Nurturant-Task Leaders* (NTL) (Sinha, 1980). These leaders are found to be more effective for the subordinates who are dependence prone, status conscious, and leisure seeking (i.e., not overly work oriented). A nurturant task leader is not only able to engage the subordinates in participation, but also retain a moral superiority that is recognized by the subordinates rather than being imposed by the leader. People who demonstrate a high dependence on the leader are found to take greater risk if the supervisor



expects them to do so. It is a counter-intuitive finding, and makes the theory of NTL insightful. It also helps understand why Indian leaders do not fit the Western models of leadership. In the West, self-oriented leaders are found to be authoritarian and exploitative, whereas other-oriented leaders are found to be participative, but not as effective with objectives or outcomes. Effective leaders in India are found not to be autocratic or participative as proposed in the West, but are NTL. These leaders also focus on the general good of the organization and the society. NTL derives the moral superiority from acting for *lokasaMgraha*, and not merely maximizing his or her personal gain.

NTL is inspired by the traditional wisdom that parents should shower love on the children up to the age of five, discipline them for the next 10 years, and treat them like friends when they turn 16. The nurturant task leader cares for his or her subordinates and their success, and also connects with them socially, acting like a mentor not only at work but also in other areas of life. NTL fits with the social mores of India where every decision is discussed informally in the community in an Indian village, be it selection of seed for a crop or a bridegroom for one's daughter. It is grounded in the observation that unconditional support or nurturance turns the subordinates into unproductive sycophants, which is not good for them, the leader, or the organization.

The *NT Leader* model is also related to theories of organizational cultures (Sinha, 1990, 1995, 2000). High *NT Leaders* create synergistic organizational culture, whereas weak *NT Leaders* create a soft organizational culture that is less productive. The soft organizational culture is more prone to external manipulations by government, union, and other stakeholders often deviating from organizational mission and objectives. It is plausible that the organizational culture created by high *NT Leaders* has many more managers who are inspired to pursue *lokasaMgraha* and inspire others to do the same, creating many layers of an organization that is focused on positive organizational objectives. The idea of *lokasaMgraha* also emerged as a theme practiced by managers in another study of leadership in India (Wilson, 2010).

Scanning the Indian environment of leadership, Bhawuk (2008, 2011) presented two types of leaders that are unique to India, *sannyasin* and *karmayogin* leaders, who are inspired by spirituality. People who have renounced the world are called *sannyasin*, and it would seem that *sannyasins* would have no reason to be a leader since they are by definition not to own any worldly belongings or be attached to any relationship. However, a quick survey of the Indian spiritual and religious organizations shows that there are active *sannyasin* leaders, who have created incredibly large international organizations; to name just a few, and this is not to rank them in anyway—*swAmI vivekAnanda* (*rAmakRSNa* Mission), *swAmI yogNAnanda* (*yogoda satsaGga* Society in India & Self Realization Fellowship internationally), *swAmI zivAnanda* (Divine Life Society), *maharSi maheza yogI* (Global Country of World Peace, *maharSi vidyA mandira* Schools, *maharSi* University of Management), *swAmI cinmayAnanda* (*cinmaya* Mission), *zrI prabhupAda* (International Society for *kRSNa* Consciousness or ISKCON), *swAmI agniveza* (Bonded Labour Liberation Front), and *bAbA rAmadeva* (*pataJjali yogpITha*, *pataJjali Ayurveda* Ltd., and *bhArat swAbhimAna* Trust).

A leader who focuses on work without paying attention to the fruits of the work, which is a concept derived from the *bhagavadgItA*, is called a *karmayogin* leader. A *karmayogin* leader pursues *lokasaMgraha* or social good in all his or her actions. *gAndhI*, *vinobA bhAve*, *gopAla kRSNa gokhale*, and *bAla gaGgAdhara tilaka* are exemplars of *karmayogin* leaders who followed practiced *lokasaMgraha*. Many of the social reformers are also *karmayogin* leaders, which includes the 11 Indian social entrepreneurs who have won the Right Livelihood Award (also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize) since its inception in 1980. This type of leader is not limited to social entrepreneurs in India; they are also found in other organizations. Business leaders like *birlA* and *tAtA*, the founders of the *birlA* and *tAtA* groups of businesses, also fit this category.

Thus, in India, leadership is always about focusing on serving others; leadership is about *lokasaMgraha*, or, acting to hold people together in harmony. Chakraborty (1987, 1993) proposed that a leader so acts in the service of others that his or her individual self expands to encompass the subordinates creating a larger collective self (see Bhawuk, 2005, 2011 for the concept of expansion of self in the Indian worldview). Leaders and subordinates sacrifice for each other unconditionally, and such interactions transform the leader, the subordinates, and the organization (Bhawuk, Mrazek, & Munusamy, 2009). The spirit of *lokasaMgraha* diminishes the self-other dichotomy, allowing both the leader and the subordinates to realize limitless transformation. Success, achievement, and possession for the individual are replaced by those for the group. When this is practiced in the organizational context *Nurturant Task Leadership* emerges. When the scope is expanded to the socio-political and religio-spiritual contexts, *karmayogin* and *sannyasin* leaders emerge. Thus, *sannyasin* and *karmayogin* leaders constitute two spiritually oriented indigenous models of leadership, whereas nurturant-task leader is a socially oriented model from India that also taps into the concept of *lokasaMgraha*.

Leadership is about action. *bhagavadgItA* proposes *niSkAma karma* as a path for liberation (*jeevan mukti* = living without bondage here and now). *niSkAma karma* calls for *lokasaMgraha*. We all need to be guided by *dharma* toward *lokasaMgraha*, but especially the wise ones—the leaders—whom people emulate; or those who aspire liberation here and now. Both leader and follower are roles in the world guided by prescribed duties toward *lokasaMgraha*. Indian wisdom tradition recommends the pursuit of self-realization (*Atman*) by living in the world (*varNAzrama*) and performing ones duties (*dharma*) for *lokasaMgraha* or the good of the world.

We need to explore if indigenous constructs and their measures can enrich the construct of leadership. *lokasaMgraha* is a construct from India that enriches our understanding of leadership. Other such constructs should also be explored. We need to go beyond social and organizational psychology. Indian concept of self spans across physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions, and constructs like leadership cannot be limited to social or organizational levels. *lokasaMgraha* is presented in the Indian worldview; other worldviews should be explored. What if we are spiritual beings having a material experience? Leadership then is to guide each other in our spiritual journeys as we live in this world and interact with each other. As the wise apostle said (Mark 8.36)—For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

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## Appendix 1: *gItA* Leadership Questionnaire (gLQ)

### Appendix 1A

1. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, actions are unavoidable (verse 3.5). Therefore, it is necessary for leaders to guide common people (verse 3.21).
2. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, action is better than inaction (verse 3.8). Therefore, leaders should engage common people in action.
3. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, common people have the propensity for material pursuits of life (verse 3.20). Therefore, leaders should act in the spirit of *lokSaMgraha* to redirect common people toward spiritual pursuits.
4. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, leaders should lead by example like king *janak* did (verse 3.20).
5. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, *karma* is inevitable (verse 3.5), therefore, leaders should be exemplars so that common people can follow them (3.21).
6. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, leaders should be busy with work for *lokSaMgraha* or the benefit of the society, much like common people are driven to work extremely hard in pursuit of material benefits (verse 3.25).
7. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, leaders should guide those who do not know and think they are the actors who cause the outcomes, thus suffering from the bondage of *karma* (verse 3.27).
8. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, the leaders should be knowledgeable (in the spiritual sense) to be able to lead common people (verse 3.29).
9. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, leaders (or those who know) should rather engage common people (or those who do not know) in action for material pursuits than wait for them to be ready for spiritual pursuits (verse 3.26).
10. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, common people follow the example of “*zreS-Tha jana*” or leaders, and so leaders should set good example for common people through their actions (verse 3.21).
11. According to the *bhagavadGItA*, it is our duty to perform our *svadharma* (verse 3.35) however, unpleasant it may be. Therefore, we should perform work prescribed by the leader, even if it is unpleasant.

### Appendix 1B

1. Since actions are unavoidable, it is necessary for leaders to guide common people.
2. Since action is better than inaction, leaders should engage common people in action.

3. Since common people have the propensity for material pursuits of life, leaders should act in the spirit of *lokSaMgraha* to redirect them (common people) toward spiritual pursuits.
4. Leaders should lead by example like king *janaka* did.
5. Since *karma* is inevitable, leaders should be exemplars so that common people can follow them.
6. Leaders should be busy with work for *lokSaMgraha* or the benefit of the society, much like common people are driven to work extremely hard in pursuit of material benefits.
7. Leaders should guide common people who do not know and think that they are the actors who cause the outcome; thus suffering from the bondage of *karma*.
8. Leaders should be knowledgeable (in the spiritual sense) to be able to lead common people.
9. Leaders (or those who know) should rather engage common people (or those who do not know) in action for material pursuits than wait for them to be ready for spiritual pursuits.
10. Common people follow the example of “*zreSTha jana*” or leaders, and so leaders should set good example for common people through their actions.
11. It is our duty to perform work prescribed by the leader, however, unpleasant it may be.

## Appendix 1C

1. It is necessary for leaders to guide their subordinates toward action, since human being cannot live inactively. **(17 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I guide my subordinates toward action, since human being cannot live inactively. **(15 words)**
2. Leaders should engage their subordinates in action, since action is better than inaction. **(13 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I would engage my subordinates in action, since action is better than inaction. **(16 words)**
3. Leaders should act in the spirit of *lokSaMgraha* to direct their followers toward a balanced life, since people tend to pursue materialistic life. **(23 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I act in the spirit of *lokSaMgraha* to direct my followers toward a balanced life, since people tend to pursue materialistic life. **(26 words)**
4. Leaders should lead by example like king *janaka* did. **(09 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I lead by example like king *janaka* did. **(11 words)**
5. Leaders should be exemplars so that their followers can follow their actions. **(12 words)**  
I-form: I am an exemplar so that my subordinates can follow my actions. **(12 words)**
6. Leaders should work for *lokSaMgraha* or the benefit of the society, much like common people work hard in pursuit of material goods. **(22 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I work for *lokSaMgraha* or the benefit of the society, much like common people work hard in pursuit of material goods. **(24 words)**

7. Leaders should guide their subordinates away from ignorance that they are agents who cause outcomes, thus preventing the bondage of *karma*. **(21 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I guide my subordinates away from ignorance that they are agents who cause outcomes, thus preventing the bondage of *karma*. **(23 words)**
8. Leaders should be spiritually wise to lead their subordinates. **(9 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I think spiritually in leading my subordinates wisely. **(11 words)**
9. Leaders should rather engage their subordinates in action for material pursuits than wait for them to be ready for spiritual Journey. **(21 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I would rather engage my subordinates in action for material pursuits than wait for them to be ready for spiritual journey. **(24 words)**
10. Leaders should set good example for their followers through actions, since people follow the example of “*zreSTha jana*” or leaders. **(20 words)**  
I-form: As a leader, I set good example for my followers through actions, since people follow the example of “*zreSTha jana*” or leaders. **(22 words)**
11. It is the duty of leaders to perform even unpleasant work required by their organizational roles. **(16 words)**  
I-form: It is my duty as a leader to perform even unpleasant work required by my organizational role. **(17 words)**

## Appendix 1D

1. G-form: Human beings cannot live inactively, therefore, leaders must guide their subordinates toward action. **(13 words)**  
I-form: Human beings cannot live inactively, therefore, I guide my subordinates toward action. **(12 words)**
2. G-form: Action is better than inaction, therefore, leaders must engage their subordinates in work. **(13 words)**  
I-form: Action is better than inaction, therefore, I engage my subordinates in work. **(12 words)**
3. G-form: People tend to pursue materialistic life, therefore, leaders must direct their subordinates toward spirituality for the benefit of the society or *lokSaMgraha*. **(22 words)**  
I-form: People tend to pursue materialistic life, therefore, I direct my subordinates toward spirituality for the benefit of the society or *lokSaMgraha*. **(21 words)**
4. G-form: Leaders should lead by example like king *janaka* did. **(09 words)**  
I-form: I lead by example like king *janaka* did. **(08 words)**
5. G-form: Leaders should be exemplars so that their followers can follow their actions. **(12 words)**  
I-form: I am an exemplar so that my subordinates can follow my actions. **(12 words)**
6. G-form: Just like common people work hard in pursuit of material goods, leaders should work for *lokSaMgraha* or the benefit of the society. **(22 words)**

- I-form: Just like common people work hard in pursuit of material goods, I work for *lokasaMgraha* or the benefit of the society. **(21 words)**
7. G-form: Leaders should dispel their subordinates' misconception about being agents who cause outcomes, thus preventing the bondage of *karma*. **(18 words)**  
I-form: I try to dispel my subordinates' misconception about being agents who cause outcomes, thus preventing the bondage of *karma*. **(19 words)**
8. G-form: Leaders should be spiritually wise to lead their subordinates. **(9 words)**  
I-form: I think spiritually in leading my subordinates wisely. **(8 words)**
9. G-form: Leaders should rather engage their subordinates in action for material pursuits than wait for them to be ready for the spiritual journey. **(22 words)**  
I-form: I rather engage my subordinates in action for material pursuits than wait for them to be ready for the spiritual journey. **(21 words)**
10. G-form: People follow the example of “*zreSTha jana*” or leaders, therefore, leaders should set good example for their followers through actions. **(20 words)**  
I-form: People follow the example of “*zreSTha jana*” or leaders, therefore, I set a good example for my followers through actions. **(20 words)**
11. G-form: It is the duty of leaders to perform even unpleasant work required by their organizational roles. **(16 words)**  
I-form: It is my duty as a leader to perform even unpleasant work required by my organizational role. **(17 words)**

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# Epilogue: Timeless Teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā

# 15

Satinder Dhiman

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## Introduction

The Bhagavad-Gītā is a true scripture of the human race, a living creation rather than a book, with a new message for every age and a new meaning for every civilization.

—Sri Aurobindo, *The Message of the Bhagavad Gītā*

Gītā is a non-sectarian spiritual text with a universal message. Its subject matter is the truth regarding our essential nature which can be verified by everyone right here and now, in this very lifetime. The Gītā teaches how to be “yoked” to the Divine within through the path or discipline of action (*karmayoga*), devotion (*bhaktiyoga*), meditation (*dhyānayoga*), and knowledge (*jñānayoga*). It is a gem of a scripture in which we can find the complete essence of the paths of selfless action, knowledge, and devotion. The Gītā says that all our existential problems ultimately stem from self-ignorance—not knowing who we truly are. Just as knowledge of physics cannot destroy ignorance of biology, even so self-ignorance cannot be dispelled by any other means except Self-knowledge.

The path to leading others starts with self-awareness through self-discipline and ends with self-transcendence through selfless service. The Gītā calls it enlightened leadership. Enlightened leadership is essentially servant leadership. It represents a shift from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers. Enlightened leaders are not motivated by personal desires or interests. They become instruments of the whole and selflessly serve for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūta hitae*, BG

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5.25; 12.4).<sup>1</sup> Only those who have relinquished personal ambition can truly serve. According to the Gītā, the path to enlightened leadership is paved with authenticity, humility, service, and compassion.

The Gītā introduces us to the joy of giving joy to others. It teaches that unless mind is purged of personal desire and attachment, even service is but an inflation of the ego. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that true peace can only come by serving the common good and surrendering to the Divine *within* us. The Gītā teaches that “be good, do good” is all that one needs to “be” and “do” to foster happiness in oneself and others. This body is given to do good (परोपकार अर्थम् इदं शरीरम्). We should act with the welfare of the entire universe in view, according to the Gītā (3.20).

The Gītā assures us that on the path of goodness, one does not lose ever (6.40) न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चित् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति: One, who follows the path of goodness, there is no misery or misadventure, *durgati*, for such a person.

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## The Bhagavad Gītā: Scripture of Scriptures

The Bhagavad Gītā, literally ‘Song of the Lord,’ often referred to simply as the Gītā, is the most important spiritual text of the Hindus. It is one of the three main sources texts (*prasthānatraya*) of Vedānta, the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-Sūtras being the other two. It has been aptly described as the Bible—the scripture par excellence—of the Hindu tradition. In fact, the Gītā is ‘the most translated Indian book.’<sup>2</sup> According to a conservative estimate, “the Gītā has been translated over 2,000 times in 75 languages.”<sup>3</sup> Over the course of centuries, many sages, experts and lay people have written commentaries on it, suggesting both its sacred and secular significance. Every commentary, classical or contemporary, *claims* to embody the *real* message of the Gītā. The sheer volume of commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Gītā could leave a reader overwhelmed and often bewildered.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on the reasons for the diversity of interpretations of the Gītā, Mysore Hiriyanna observes:

It is one of the hardest books to interpret, which accounts for the numerous commentaries on it each differing from the rest in some essential point or other. Part of this diversity in interpretation is due to the assumption that the Gītā not only concerns itself with the problem of conduct whose solution is a pressing need for man if he is to live without that inner

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<sup>1</sup>The verses of the Gītā are referenced in the ‘chapter, verse’ format: 5.25 denotes chapter 5, verse 25. All translations are author’s unless otherwise stated. Throughout the book, the masculine pronouns have been used in their universal sense. The teachings of the Gītā are gender-neutral and applicable to all human beings alike.

<sup>2</sup>The Gītā is among the most translated and most commented upon book of the world’s sacred texts. See: Koti Sreekrishna and Hari Ravikumar, trans., *The New Bhagavad-Gita* (Mason, OH: W.I.S.E. Words Inc., 2011), 35.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>4</sup>Ādi Śaṅkara, perhaps the most important commentator on the Gītā, says that he undertook to write his commentary precisely for the reasons that there were many highly conflicting meanings (*atyanta-viruddha-anēka-arthatvēna*) and that the real meaning of the Gītā is hard to fathom (*durvijñēyārtham*).

discord which arises from consciousness of the ideal unaccompanied by mastery over self, but also is a treatise on metaphysics.<sup>5</sup>

The Gītā is not only one of the most translated book, it is also one of the most commented upon books of the world. Since the subject matter of the Gītā is highly subtle and profound, one often needs the help of various commentaries to understand its deeper import. As stated above, myriad commentaries by classical and contemporary authorities exist, and the sheer volume of those commentaries can be bewildering to a seeker. It is beyond the scope and intent of this chapter to evaluate various commentaries. However, it may not be amiss to list a few noteworthy English translations of the Gītā's most famous commentator, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya.

Although translations by Swami Gambhirananda and Dr. A. G. Krishna Warriar present Śaṅkarā's *bhāṣya* (commentary) in a contemporary English idiom, yet Alladi Mahadeva Sastry's translation—even though, strictly speaking, it is not a complete translation—seems closer to the intent and purpose of the original. If you do not mind some interpretive theological leanings, then this translation can convey the gist of Śaṅkarācārya's commentary in a simple, pure, and unvarnished way. Sastry usually gets to the essence of the original in the most direct way.

Huston Smith, the great religious studies scholar, calls the Gītā “literally a pager-turner” and a “multivalent book” for “there is something in it that will reward every serious reader.”<sup>6</sup> For most Indian people, the Gītā is a scripture blessed with God's Grace (*ek prasādik grantha*).<sup>7</sup> The Lord Himself has declared it to be His very own Heart: “*Gītā mey hṛdyam Pārtha*.”<sup>8</sup> Extolling the glory of the Gītā, Ādi Śaṅkara (788–820 CE), its most renowned commentator, states: “From a clear knowledge of the Bhagavad Gītā all the goals of human existence become fulfilled....Bhagavad Gītā is the compendium of the quintessence of all the teachings of the *Vedic* scriptures.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Mysore Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2005, reprint Indian Edition), 117.

<sup>6</sup>Huston Smith, Foreword. In Winthrop Sargeant, trans., *Bhagavad Gītā*, the 25th anniversary edition (New York, NY: New York State University Press, 2009), ix.

<sup>7</sup>Satinder Dhiman, trans., *Kripāmayi Bhagavad Gītā: The Benedictory Gītā*: Selection and compilation, Rajendra Kumar Dhawan (Gorakhpur, India: Gita Prakāshan, 2014), 39. Based on Paramśraddheya Swāmījī Shri Rāmsukhdāśjī Mahārāj's Discourses. (Gorakhpur, India: Gita Prakāshan, 2014), 39.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>9</sup>*yataḥ tadartha-vijñānē samasta-puruṣārtha-siddhiḥ ataḥ...  
tat idam gītā-śāstram samasta-vēdārtha-sārasaṅgraha-bhūtam.*

## The Main Subject Matter of The Gītā<sup>10</sup>

The Bhagavad Gītā starts with Arjuna's admittance of his confusion with regards to what is decidedly "good" (*nīścitam chreyaḥ*) in life (2.7). This is the basic human dilemma, which often presents the perennial conflict between duty (*śreyas*) and desire (*preyas*). Leaders and managers face this ethical challenge at all the times: What is the right thing to do in a given situation. Another Indian wisdom text that has close affinity to the Gītā, Katha Upaniṣad (I.ii.3), speaks about the importance of choosing the right goals over the pleasant in this manner: "Both the good and the pleasant present themselves to a man; the wise man examines them well and distinguishes the two. Wisely does he prefer the good to the pleasant, but the fool chooses the pleasant for its worldly good."<sup>11</sup>

According to the Upaniṣads and the Gītā, two type of happiness are available to us: the *preyas* (the worldly, the pleasant) and the *śreyas* (the spiritual, the good). *Preyas* happiness is *caused* by the fulfillment of some desire. *Śreyas* is uncaused happiness—the happiness of realizing our true nature or the fullness of our being. The fulfillment we derive from the *preyas* goals is at best short-lived and ultimately unsatisfying whereas the fulfillment that results from pursuing the *śreyas* goals is long-lasting and deeply satisfying. *Preyas* offers short term pleasure; *śreyas* offers long-term fulfillment. The recent financial meltdown and corporate scandals are sterling examples of leaders choosing the short-term gains over long-term well-being of the organizations.

In the Gītā's view, the performance of actions selflessly as a service to the Supreme purifies the mind and makes it a fit vessel for the reception of Self-knowledge, which alone is the direct and immediate means to *mokṣa*, spiritual freedom.<sup>12</sup> Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher Par Excellence in the Gītā, does not merely want to make us philosophically learned but to help us realize the Truth *experientially* (*jñānam vijñānasahitam*, knowledge *combined* with im-mediate intuitive experience: 9.1)<sup>13</sup>—not to merely *instruct* but to make us truly *wise* and *free*.

What is the main subject matter of the Gītā?

<sup>10</sup>For further details, see a chapter titled entitled, 'The Real Message of the Gītā,' in this author's book, *Gita and Leadership: A Catalyst for Organizational Transformation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>11</sup>Swami Nikhilananda, Trans. & Ed., *The Upanishads: A One-Volume Abridgement* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 71. [Slightly revised].

<sup>12</sup>See Śaṅkara's commentary on Brahma-Sūtra 1.1.12: सद्योमुक्तिकरणमप्यात्मज्ञानम *sadyomuktikāraṇamapy ātmajñānam*. 'Self-knowledge leads to instant liberation:' V. Panoli, trans., *Prasthanathraya, Volume VI—Bramasutra* (Kozhikode, Keralam, India: Mathrubhumi printing & publishing Co. Ltd., 2011), 90.

<sup>13</sup>In the opening verse of chapter nine, Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares: "Now, I will clearly expound this most secret knowledge and its realization, knowing which you will be released from all that is inauspicious (*yaj jñātvā mokṣyaseśubhāt*). Śrī Śaṅkara's comment: 'On realizing this knowledge, you will be liberated from the bondage of *saṃsāra*, conditioned existence.' See Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, trans., *The Bhagavad Gītā with the commentary of Sri Shankaracharya* (Chennai, India: Samata Books, 2001), 238-239.

This author will like to offer the following four perspectives:

1. Conjoining the last word of the last verse of the Gītā (18.78) मम (*mama*) with the first word of the first verse of the Gītā (1.1), धर्म (*dharma*), we get ‘मम धर्म,’ signifying ‘my duty.’ Thus, the Gītā accords great importance to performing one’s innate duty (*svadharmā*) for the good of others, *without* expecting anything in return.<sup>14</sup> And if we rearrange the first two words of the Gītā *dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre* ‘धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे’ as ‘क्षेत्रे क्षेत्रे धर्मम् कुरुः’ (*kṣetre kṣetre dharmam kuruḥ*), we get the following meaning: In every sphere of life, do the *right* thing—in the full wakefulness of Self-knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

Doing the right thing brings us under the protective care of Dharma, the cosmic moral order. We have a Vedic injunction: धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः *Dharmo rakṣati rakṣitāḥ*: Dharma protects those who uphold Dharma. When we make our conduct in life and leadership in tune with what is right, we align it with the universal forces of goodness and justice.

2. Another perspective in approaching the timeless message of the Gītā is to look at the first and last words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s teachings in the Gītā (2.11 and 18.66). The very first word of the teaching is *aśocyaṇa* (अशोच्यान् 2.11)—not worthy to be grieved for; and the last word is *mā śucaḥ* (मा शुचः 18.66)—do not grieve. The first *śloka* (2.11) further declares that the wise, the knowers of the Self, do not grieve *nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ* (नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः). In the Gītā’s view, psychological suffering is optional, while most physical pain in life may be unavoidable. The knowers of the Self overcome all grief. The Gītā expounds the truth of the essential nature of the Self as unborn, indestructible, immutable, eternal, and imperishable (2.16–30). The idea is that the wise, knowing the Self *as such*, do not grieve (2.11, 13, 2.25–27, 30; 18.54).

Thus, the Gītā offers the highest security system that there is in the form of Self-knowledge (*ātma-vidyā* or *brahma-vidyā*). Armed with the knowledge of our true nature, we can weather any storm in the sea of life and leadership.

3. Yet another perspective is presented by Śrī Rāmakrishna, the great seer–saint of modern India. He used to say that one could understand the essential meaning of Gītā by repeating the word ‘Gītā, Gītā Gītā Gītā.’ If the word Gītā is repeated several times, one finds oneself uttering ‘*ta-Gi ta-Gi ta-Gi...*,’ and it comes to sound like *tāgi - tāgi* [*tyāgi*—one who renounces, the unreal in favor of the Real].

<sup>14</sup>The Gītā tells us that although the Supreme Lord of the universe has nothing to attain personally in the three worlds, still the Lord keeps on performing the duties for the benefit of all (3.22). Even so, those in power should model their behavior since majority of people follow whatsoever an important person does (3.21). What an object lesson for the leaders to follow!

<sup>15</sup>To study the Gītā is to study yourself—the *real* “You,” with ‘Y’ capital, ‘O’ capital and ‘U’ capital, as my present Vedānta teacher is wont to say.

This is the teaching of the Gītā—‘Realize the Real by letting go of the unreal.’<sup>16</sup>

4. The *leitmotif* of the Bhagavad Gītā is the vision of a sage who is pure in heart and steady in mind, and who, having casted off all self-centered desires, moves about free from personal likes and dislikes (*rāga-dveṣa*), established in the Oneness of all existence,<sup>17</sup> even-minded in success and failure.<sup>18</sup> Having attained the highest knowledge of the Supreme Self (*brahma-vidyā*), such a person has ‘accomplished all that has to be accomplished’ (*kṛtakṛtya* 15.20).<sup>19</sup>

The Gītā boldly declares that this Self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) or the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality (*tattva-jñāna*) is so special that having known it, nothing else remains to be known here in this world (*yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo’anyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate* 7.2).<sup>20</sup>

Having nothing here left to be achieved for oneself, such a person works concertedly for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*, 5.25; 12.4) and revels in harnessing the coherence of the world-order by bringing the world communities together (*lokasaṃgraham* 3.20, 3.25).

We discover that this conception of an *engaged* sage lies at the heart of all wisdom traditions of the world as well. In the first chapter of his masterly work *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, Dr. Yu-Lan Fang describes the character of Chinese Sage as that of ‘sageliness *within* and kingliness *without*’ [*Emphasis added*].<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup>See: BG (2.16) नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः *nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*: The unreal never is; the Real never ceases to be. A.R. Orage, the great British philosopher and critic, was a great admirer of Indian wisdom. He is reported to have requested that this half-verse should be inscribed on his gravestone. He considered this verse the highest expression of perennial philosophy, *philosophia perennis*. Orage, whom George Bernard Shaw once called the “the most brilliant English editor and critic of last 100 years,” studied Mahābhārata concertedly for 15 years. He believed that it embodied absolute truths emanating from the Objective and Universal Consciousness. See: Philip Mairet, *A.R. Orage: A Memoir* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1966), 121. Also see: Wallace Martin, *The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (New York, Manchester University Press, 1967).

<sup>17</sup>Īśa Upaniṣad declares: What sorrow or delusion for the one who is established in universal Oneness? तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ ७ ॥ *tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanuśyataḥ* ॥ 7 ॥

<sup>18</sup>What can be favorable or unfavorable for the wise? The wise welcome all situations and experiences as opportunities for self-learning and growth.

<sup>19</sup>Verse 14.3 of *Pañcadaśī*, a philosophical sub-text of Vedānta, declares: A Self-realized person is ever-blissful on four counts—absence of sorrow (*duḥkhābhāvaś*), the fulfillment of all desires (*kāmāptiḥ*), the satisfaction of having done all that was to be done (*kṛtya-kṛtyo*) and the satisfaction of having achieved all that was to be achieved (*prāpta-prāpyo*). See: H.P. Shastri, trans, *Panchadashi: A Treatise on Advaita Metaphysics by Swami Vidyaranya* (London: Shanti Sadan, 1982, reprint edition), 448.

<sup>20</sup>See also BG (6.22)

*yam labdhvā cāparaṃ lābhaṃ manyate nādhikaṃ tataḥ |*  
*yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate ||*

Having attained which, one does not reckon any gain greater than that, and established in which one is not affected by even a great sorrow.

<sup>21</sup>Yu-Lan Fang, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy: A Systematic Account of Chinese Thought from its Origins to Present Day* (New York: Free Press; Reissue edition 1997)

Similarly, we find the same theme in Plato's conception of the Philosopher-King, who, having cultivated the wisdom, is *fit* to rule. Why did the great Greek philosopher insist on philosophers being kings and kings becoming philosophers to save the world from all evil? Plato provides the classic answer to the classic question, why should philosophers rule, in what is perhaps the most famous passage in all of Plato, as follows<sup>22</sup>:

Unless . . . philosophers become kings in the cities or those whom we now call kings and rulers philosophize truly and adequately and there is a conjunction of political power and philosophy. . . there can be no cessation of evils . . . for cities nor, I think, for the human race. (*Republic*, V.473c11-d6).

An unexamined life, said Socrates, is not worth living. This self-examination is called discernment, the art of living attentively. The Buddha's last words were: "Act without inattention."<sup>23</sup>

Life, said Aristotle, is a gift of nature. Beautiful living is a gift of wisdom. In his book, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asks a question, what is the essence of life? And answers: The essence of life is *to serve others and do good*.<sup>24</sup> Thus we see that wisdom has its natural flowering in compassion—selfless benevolence for all beings. In fact, wisdom and compassion are two sides of the same coin.

In the final reckoning, the Gītā is a book of Self-knowledge, as the colophon at the end of each chapter of the Gītā states: ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे, a treatise of "yoking" (योगशास्त्रे) one's mind to the Supreme, the Absolute Reality, through Self-Knowledge (ब्रह्मविद्या). All the "yogas" presented in the Gītā are different "yoking" devices to "fasten" oneself to the Supreme Reality. This is the master key to understanding the Gītā. The goal of all spiritual quest is two-fold: happy individuals and harmonious society. A Vedic verse captures this sentiment succinctly:

आत्मनो ज्ञानार्थम् जगत् हिताय च.<sup>25</sup>

For the Knowledge of the Self,  
For the Wellbeing of All Beings.

Gaining the knowledge of Real, our True Self, is the main message of the Gītā. Acting for the good of others in the full wakefulness of Self-knowledge is the culmination of the Gītā.

No higher ideal for authentic leadership can be conceived.

<sup>22</sup> See: John Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997)

<sup>23</sup> *Dīgha Nikāya* II. 156. Cited in Roberto Calasso, *Kā: Stories of the Mind and Gods of India* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 396.

<sup>24</sup> Retrieved June 10, 2017: <https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-great-quotes-of-Aristotle>

<sup>25</sup> Mission statement of Ramakrishna Order, slightly modified: *Ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca* (आत्मनो मोक्षार्थम् जगत् हिताय च) is a mantra in the *Rigveda*. Literally, it means, 'for the freedom of the Self and for the welfare of the world.' Since Self, *ātmā*, is never bound and is ever-free, by 'Self-freedom' the mantra really means 'Self-knowledge.' Through Self-knowledge, one realized one's intrinsic freedom. See Karan Singh, *Hinduism* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2005), 71.

## Leader as an Enlightened Sage of The Gītā

According to the Gītā, the path to leading others starts with self-awareness through self-discipline and ends with self-transcendence through selfless service. The Gītā calls it enlightened leadership. Enlightened leadership is essentially servant leadership. It represents a shift from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers. According to the Gītā, the path to enlightened leadership is paved with authenticity, humility, service, and compassion. The Gītā teaches that unless mind is purged of personal desires and attachments, even service is but an inflation of the ego. Only those who have relinquished personal ambition can truly serve. Enlightened leaders are not motivated by personal desires or interests. They become instruments of the whole and selflessly serve for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*, BG, 5.25; 12.4).

The Gītā garners a view of leader as an “enlightened sage” who operates from a higher stance of being anchored in authentic Self, doing actions in a spirit of offering to the Supreme for the good of all. According to the Gītā, all virtues obtain in a mind that has cultivated equanimity. Whatever the spiritual practice, says the Gītā, if evenness of mind (*samatā*) is not attained, the goal is still far away. It represents the culmination of *wisdom in action* informed by Self-knowledge and guided by selfless service. Self-knowledge transforms our motivation and liberates us from the narrow confines of self-centered action to the freedom of serving others. Self-knowledge enables one to act in the world with a deep sense of peace and inner fulfillment. Such leaders work selflessly for the well-being of all beings and attain the highest felicity of Self-realization, the supreme goal of the Gītā.<sup>26</sup>

Why it is so critical for leaders to develop Self-knowledge? Self-knowledge transforms our motivation and liberates us from the narrow confines of selfish action to the freedom of serving others. Through this re-discovery of our intrinsic freedom, we are also able to experience the calm bliss of the fullness of our Self and intuit the harmonious oneness of all existence. When the false divisions and distinctions based on our narrow personal likes and dislikes disappear, we are able to extend our benevolence without preference or prejudice in all directions and our very existence benefits the whole universe. Our existence then becomes an offering to the Supreme, a celebration to the Whole. And our feet get firmly planted on the path that leads to peace, happiness, and liberation. The teachings of the Gītā gently guide us toward this supreme desideratum of all human quests and pursuits.

According to the teachings of the Gītā, the wise managers and leaders act:

<sup>26</sup> See: Gītā (5.25 and 12.4). *labhante brahmanirvāṇam...sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*: 5.25: Working for the well-being of all beings, sages attain liberation in the Absolute. We have Gandhi’s testimony which was inspired by the teachings of the Gītā: “What I want to achieve,—and what I have been striving and pining to achieve these 30 years,—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end.” See: M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1983), viii.



1. To set an example to the masses, so the unwary do not go astray (3.26);
2. For the unification of the world at large (*lokasaṃgraham*, 3.20, 3.25);
3. For the welfare of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite*, 5.25); and
4. For the purification of the self (*ātmaśuddhaye*, 5.11).

All these four goals furnish an integral touchstone for leadership success in any setting. Leaders do their duty for duty's sake (cf. Kant's Duty Ethics), to set an example for others, to bring the communities together, for the well-being of all beings, and above all, for the purification of the mind and the heart. No higher teaching on the sublimity of a leader's work ethic can be conceived.

In the final reckoning, a leader's work is to bring about what is True, Beautiful, and the Good? The question is not how to live longer; the question is how to live *well* longer. The Gītā answers the question with counter-questions: 'How can I serve the world with my gifts? How can I grow in goodness?' That's all, says the Gītā, you need to know to live well. *Be Good. Do Good.* All blessings, says the Gītā, will follow on their own accord.

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## Timeless Teachings of The Gītā

*I raise my arms and I shout—but no one listens!  
From dharma comes success and pleasure:  
Why is dharma not practiced?*

—The Mahābhārata.<sup>27</sup>

In keeping with the tradition of Indian philosophy, the Gītā starts with presenting the highest human goal to be reached first: Access the Inner treasure-house of Self-sufficiency: *ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ* (2.55), everything else will follow on its own accord. At the heart of the Gītā, there lies the conception of a sage of steady wisdom (*sthītaprajñā*) who has gone beyond the pair of opposites such as pleasure and pain, success and failure, virtue and vice. Steady in wisdom, the seer, *sthītaprajñā*, enjoys the constant bliss of the Self, regardless of the changing circumstances. The Gītā (2.55) defines *sthītaprajñā* as follows: "When a person completely casts away all the desires of the mind, *satisfied in the Self alone by the Self*, then that person is said to be one established in steady wisdom."

This wisdom (*prajñā*) has two aspects: fullness (*puṇaṅattvam*) of being and equanimity (*samatavam*) of the mind. Only when one has experienced the inner fullness can one be free from the servitude of the ever-growing desires. And only when one is able to approach the ups and downs of life with an equanimous mind can one free oneself from the sway of favorable and unfavorable experiences. This wisdom is the only security worth seeking and the sure-fire armor to human sorrow and suffering.

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<sup>27</sup> P. Lal, *The Mahabharata of Vyasa: Condensed from Sanskrit and Transcribed into English* (Lake Gardens, Kolkata: Writers Workshop 2010), p. 370.

In sum, become an instrument of the Divine in all that you do (*nimittamātram bhava*: 11.33). Let all your actions be an offering to the Divine (*brahmany ādhāya karmāni*: 5.10), performed *without* attachment, for the purification of the Self (*saṅgam tyaktvāmasuddhaye*: 5.11), and for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*: 5.25); and be a role model for the bringing of the world communities together and for maintenance of the world order (*lokasaṃgraham*: 3.20). Above all, accept the results of your actions with engaged equanimity, as a Grace of the Lord (*Ishvara-prasādabhāvanā*). Then your actions will never taint you.

The fundamental teaching of the Gītā can be summarized as follows: ‘the unreal has no existence and the real never ceases to be (2. 16); the soul is indestructible (*avināshi*), eternal (*nitya*), unborn (*aja*), undiminished (*avyaya*), all-pervasive (*sarva-gatah*), immovable (*achala*), ancient (*sanātana*), unmanifest (*avyakta*), unthinkable (*achintya*), and immutable (*avikrya*). The soul is immortal and eternal; it is neither born nor does it die; it does not perish along with the body (2.20). Attain the Highest Knowledge, *brahma-vidya*, by which the One Imperishable Being is seen in all the beings, the undivided in the divided, *avibhaktaṃ vibhaktesu* (18.20). This knowledge of the essential oneness of all existence (*sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṃ bhāvam*), the Gītā regards as the purest (*sāttvik*) knowledge: *taj jñānam viddhi sāttvikam* (18.20). Śrī Kṛṣṇa succinctly points out this fact in the Gītā (13.27):

*samaṃ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṃ paramēśvaram /  
vinaśyatsv avinaśyantaṃ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati //*

He alone truly sees who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally as imperishable amidst the perishable.

Strive to know yourself as the unchanging, Limitless Awareness and be free. Once this realization becomes an *existential fact*, not just an *idea in the mind* but as a *living truth in the heart*, the goal has been realized.<sup>28</sup> Living with this understanding, by the Divine Grace, one attains the communion of the individual Self with the Supreme Self, the *summum bonum* of human existence.

This is the timeless message of this manual for life, leadership, and liberation.

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## War and Peace in The Gītā

*The Gītā teaches how to attain the Highest Peace—  
the peace of the Eternal Self—  
the peace which passeth all understanding.*

Some scholars have opined that the Gītā teaches war under the pretext of the immortality of soul. This we take to be the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the main message of the Gītā (2.11-30). The purpose of the Gītā is neither war nor

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<sup>28</sup>My Vedānta teacher used to reiterate: “With Self-knowledge, one can weather all existential storms aplomb and can swim in any ocean.”

peace but to establish *Dharma*, righteousness. As the story of Mahābhārata reveals, the Pāṇḍavas under the guidance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa had tried every possible peaceful means to avoid war. Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself went as a messenger of peace to avoid the war, but Duryodhana was not willing to listen; so much so he even tried to arrest the peace-messenger! Thus, the war became inevitable as a last resort.

When one knows oneself to be the One only reality, that I am the truth of the whole universe (*Tattvamāsī*); when a person knows that, how can such person slay anyone when he sees only himself in all and everything. The Gītā (2.21) clarifies that one who has realized that the One Self residing in one and all to be Imperishable, eternal, free from birth and death, how can such a person kill or cause anyone to kill? Because It, the Self, is the only reality, It cannot kill anything, since there is nothing else besides Itself. There are no two things here; it is all pure non-duality. How can one who has known the Self, the Imperishable, the Eternal, the Unborn, the Unchanging, cause anyone to be slain? And how can It be slain?

Until one knows this—that I am the unchanging Witnessing-Consciousness—one *must* act.<sup>29</sup> That is why Arjuna is instructed to act initially—to fight (*yudhyasva* 2.18; 3.30). In 8.7, the refrain is to remember the Lord and fight (*yudhya*); here the word “fight” is used in the general sense of performing one’s duties, appropriate to one’s *svadharama*—and Arjuna’s being one from the warrior class (*khaṣatriya*), is asked to fight the battle of life. In addition, in B.G.11.34, Arjuna is asked to fight, as an instrument of the Divine (*nimitta mātram* 11.33). At no other place, Arjuna is asked to fight. The Bhagavad Gītā is not about war. War is the setting in which the teachings of the Gītā happen to be presented. Later on, when the complete and clear knowledge of the Self has been imparted, Arjuna is finally exhorted to deeply ponder over the teachings and do as he likes (*yathecchasi tathā kuru* 18.63).

Arjuna was no ordinary fighter; he was a consummate warrior. He exactly knew his dilemma. A fighter fights with others; a warrior’s war is with himself. A warrior knows that all wars are first fought *within* the mind. Mind matters the most. A fighter always thinks in terms of *ends*, namely, winning or losing; a warrior focuses on *perfecting the means*.

A fighter is focused on the *results*; a warrior’s concern is the propriety of the *process*. A warrior understands that when the process is right, right results follow inevitably. A warrior *knows* that the universe has a structural bias toward goodness. That is, when you do the right thing, right things happen to you.

A fighter fights with the inexorable laws of the universe. A warrior has a deep trust in the divine order—an order modulated by the cosmic laws of cause and effect. A fighter keeps on collecting *needless* karma by fighting with the inevitable; a warrior triggers no unwanted causes and fears no unintended consequences. At every failure, the fighter gets into the blame-game and contemplates quitting; the warrior confronts the enemy *within*, resolutely perseveres, and finally prevails.

<sup>29</sup>For further clarification of this point, please refer to Ira Schepetin’s three excellent talks on Bhagavad Gītā on YouTube. See: Ira Schepetin gives a talk about The Bhagavad Gita: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Vl6OUezVY&t=2070s> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHbiTNsoYi4&t=1s> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxamejEBPQ4&t=2063s>

When a master-archer fails to hit the target, she does not blame the target. She steps back, *realigns* her purpose, works resolutely on her technique, and comes back—*extra* renewed.

By all thy becoming, *become* a warrior—a peaceful warrior of spirit!

The Gītā teaches us how to engage in the world strategically (1.25) in a most pragmatic way but that pragmatism is principled (rooted in *Dharma*) and informed by certain mental clarity and intrinsic goodness in which all actions are performed in the full wakefulness of Self-knowledge. The philosophy of the Gītā is an invitation to practice. Knowledge must lead to an inner transformation. The inner change must express itself in our daily life.

## Uniqueness of The Bhagavad Gītā

The Bhagavad Gītā is an endearing dialog (*samvād*) between two friends—the warrior prince, Arjuna, and the Lord in human form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is probably the only scripture in the human history where the reader is not asked to accept anything on faith. Every question is examined insightfully and diverse perspectives are presented for reflection. It offers food for thought *without* interfering with the intellectual appetite of the reader. At every step, the freedom of choice of the listeners/readers is upheld and respected.

The wisdom of the Gītā is available to everyone who is interested in it. It transcends all distinctions and boundaries. It is humbly offered in the spirit of ‘to whom it may concern’ and not imposed on anyone (18.67–69). After the entire teachings of the Gītā had been given, Śrī Kṛṣṇa offers Arjuna the complete freedom of choice to decide for himself:

*iti te jñānam ākhyātāṃ guhyād guhyataraṃ mayā /  
vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru // 18.63*

Thus has the wisdom, more secret than all that is secret, been declared to you by Me; reflect over it all and act as you please.<sup>30</sup>

Do as you wish, *not* as I say. At best, teachers can only open the door; students have to enter of their own volition.

The Gītā uses a very special teaching methodology. It presents the highest teachings—the “big picture”—first. Arjuna was confused about his duty and wanted to know ‘the right thing to do,’ (*śreyas*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa starts the teaching with the highest good (*param-śreyas*)—the nature of the Self. Arjuna was mostly worried about the *outer* kingdom; Śrī Kṛṣṇa gently guides him to the *inner* Kingdom—the abiding inner treasure of the fullness of our being (*puraṇattvam*).

Thus, the Gītā expounds the art of attaining the highest good (*param śreyas*) while remaining fully engaged in the everyday practical matters. It demonstrates

<sup>30</sup>Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, trans., *The Bhagavad Gītā with the commentary of Sri Shankaracharya*, 497.

that we can achieve the highest perfection by being true to ourselves (*svakarmanā/ svadharmā* 18.46).

The Bhagavad Gītā teaches that the greatest project you will ever work on is YOU! It says that ultimately all our existential problems stem from Self-ignorance—not knowing who we truly are. Realizing our true Self as the immutable, eternal, and conscious principle constitutes [Self-] Knowledge according to the Gītā. In the Gītā’s view, only those who know themselves are truly wise (*pañḍītāḥ*).

Knowing the Self, the wise find fulfillment working selflessly for the welfare of the world.

What an object lesson for life and leadership!

The Gītā recognizes that much stress in life comes from misalignment of our actions and results. It explains that all actions are orchestrated by the interplay of the threefold properties of the material Nature (*triguṇātmika prakṛti*). Only those who are confused about the true nature of the Self *mis*-appropriate all actions to themselves (3.27). The Gītā teaches us to do our allotted duty diligently and selflessly and leave the results to the workings of the Cosmic Order.

What is the gist of the message of the Bhagavad Gītā?

Always and in everything, keep your mind fastened on the Truth of the Self and fight the battle of life.<sup>31</sup> Then your actions will become creative expressions of the Divine and you will become *nimita-mātra* (11.33), a mere instrument, for the willing service of the Supreme.

No better pointers for making our life divine can be conceived!

There are only a few books worthy to be called ‘whole’ and ‘holy.’ The Gītā is one such book. One is also reminded of a famous quotation by Francis Bacon (1561–1626) that occurs in an essay titled, *Of Studies*: “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.”<sup>32</sup> The Gītā is indeed one such book whose wisdom needs to be thoroughly “chewed” and “inwardly digested.”

The final message of the Gītā is: *Know* yourself, *serve* all, and *surrender* to the Divine within.<sup>33</sup> This is the wisdom we all need in the present turbulent times.

<sup>31</sup> सर्वेषु कालेषु माम् अनुस्मर युध्य च: *sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca* (8.7).

<sup>32</sup> See: Francis Bacon, *The Essays* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 209.

<sup>33</sup> This captures the essence of all three paths, *yogas*: *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, and *bhaktiyoga*—the paths of knowledge, selfless action, and devotion. In short, *jñāna* culminating in *bhakti*: Self-knowledge culminating in surrender to the Divine within. When this occurs, *niṣkāma karma*, selfless action, happens on its own accord.

These *yogas*, paths/disciplines, and their application to life and leadership, is the subject-matter of this book.

## Life and Leadership Maxims from The Bhagavad Gītā

### Know Yourself, Do Good, and Be Fulfilled

The Bhagavad Gītā is a treasure trove and a gem of Indian spiritual wisdom and contains eternal truths about life and liberation. The beauty of the Gītā lies in its ability to harmonize the spiritual and the temporal, in the art and science of attaining the highest good (*param śreyas*) while remaining fully engaged in the everyday practical matters (*vyavahāra mein paramārtha kī kalā*). This blend of the spiritual and the practical is the key to the Gītā's universal appeal over the centuries. The Gītā teaches us that there is no progress on the spiritual path if there is no harmony and unity between our *vichāra* (thought process) and *āchāra* (conduct). The Gītā's ideal is not indifference to the world but love and compassion born out of the identity of oneself with all beings, *ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati* (6.32).

It contains practical guidance for every aspect of our life, secular as well as sacred. Consider the following one verse alone that may guide us in most of our practical life:

*yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu /  
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥ // 6.17*

Yoga which destroys sorrow, is accomplished only by one who is regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in sleep and wakefulness.<sup>34</sup>

Gītā teaches three *yogas*, paths or disciplines, to realize our destiny. The purpose of all the *yogas* in the Gītā is to “yoke” us to the One Witnessing Divine Consciousness within, the Supreme Absolute Reality. The Gītā's spirituality is not an abstract affair but a lived experience. It has to be imbibed from those who have realized its tenets directly. It teaches us that spiritual freedom, *mokṣa*, can be realized only through knowledge, *jñānam*, gained from a teacher who is established in the vision of Truth [of the Self]—*tattvadarśinaḥ* (4.34). Otherwise, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would have asked Arjuna to meditate!

The Gītā teaches us how to live in the world and yet remain untouched by its worldliness—like a lotus leaf in the water (5.10). The Gītā teaches us the art of doing our duty diligently without the tag of doership—as an offering to the Supreme.

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## One Hundred-One Maxims of Life and Leadership

The Gītā is universal in its message, comprehensive in its outlook, and concrete in its suggestions. It is a non-sectarian spiritual text, completely free from sectarian dogma. As Scott Teitsworth has rightly observed:

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<sup>34</sup> See: *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* (with English Transliteration and Translation) (Gorakhpur, India: Gita Press, 2011), 108.

There is no vengeful God in it, only a benign and loving principle, called Brahman, or the Absolute. It is replete with the finest spiritual advice tendered without compunction or guilt....There are no chosen or cursed souls, only more or less damaged and confused ones. The game here is to rectify the damage and dispel the confusion with clear thinking and action....In learning from the Gītā, we have to find and express our own inner motivation.<sup>35</sup>

It is important to remember that though in its ultimate bidding, the Gītā is essentially a manual for spiritual freedom (*mokṣa śāstra*)—as Śāṅkarācārya, its greatest commentator and exponent reminds us—however, in its practical aspect, it is also a great manual for living and not an esoteric treatise on spirituality. As A. Parthasarathy has rightly noted, “The Bhagavad Gītā is a technique, a skill for dynamic living, not a retirement plan.”<sup>36</sup>

At what point of one’s life one should pursue the goal of self-realization or *mokṣa*? Many believe that spiritual quest is something to be pursued during the last phase of one’s life. Dispelling this popular notion, Gandhi tells us in his autobiography that people had a “superstition” that self-realization could be attained only in the last stages of life. Those who deferred it until then attain not self-realization, but “a second and pitiable childhood living as a burden on this earth.”<sup>37</sup>

We present below 101 maxims of life and leadership distilled from a concerted study of the Gītā. Each maxim is a little nugget that can illumine our path by showing us the right thing to do in life and leadership.

1. The Gītā teaches the path of the *śreyas* (doing our duty for duty sake) that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end. This is the foundation of a leader’s work.
2. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that the greatest project you will ever undertake is You! To study the Gītā is to study yourself—the real “You,” with ‘Y’ capital, ‘O’ capital and ‘U’ capital. This is the beginning and end of all authentic life and leadership.
3. The Gītā teaches that nothing can give you happiness except yourself (2.55). It introduces us to the intrinsic fullness of our being, *purāṇattvam*.
4. The Gītā teaches us that running after desires is a race without finish line and a mind tormented by desires cannot find peace (2.66). Only those who are content are happy.
5. The Gītā warns us that the path of greed leads to unhappiness, as we can never have enough of anything. Experience and observation will convince us that pining for more and more is a race without finish line and a weariness of spirit.
6. The Gītā teaches us that fulfillment of any particular desire does not free us from craving or greed because desire increases with enjoyment even as a fire

<sup>35</sup>Scott Teitsworth, *The Path to the Guru: The Science of Self-Realization according to the Bhagavad Gita* (Rochester, Vermont, Inner Traditions, 2014), 3-4.

<sup>36</sup>A. Parthasarathy cited in Dennis Waite, *Back to the Truth: 5000 Years of Advaita* (Winchester, UK: John Hunt Publishing, Ltd., 2007), 519.

<sup>37</sup>M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 302.

grows stronger with the addition of fuel (3.39). The Gītā declares, “With the attainment of peace, all sorrows come to an end” (*prasāde sarvaduḥkhānām hānir asyopajāyate*: 2.65). This peace is the peace of understanding.

7. The Gītā teaches us that true peace can only come by serving the common good and surrendering to the Divine *within* us. That our happiness multiplies by making others happy, has been widely confirmed by various studies on subjective well-being in positive psychology.<sup>38</sup> Every wisdom tradition has recognized the importance of surrendering to a higher principle/being/intelligence in fostering abiding joy and peace.
8. The Gītā tells us that although the Supreme Lord of the universe has nothing to attain personally in the three worlds, still the Lord keeps on performing the duties for the benefit of all (3.22). Even so, those in power should model their behavior since majority of people follow whatsoever an important person does (3.21). What an object lesson for the leaders to follow!
9. The path to leading others starts with self-awareness through self-discipline and ends with self-transcendence through selfless service. The recent studies on Emotional Intelligence confirm the importance of self-awareness in the leadership equation. The Gītā calls it enlightened leadership.
10. Enlightened leadership is essentially servant leadership. It represents a shift from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers. According to the Gītā, the path to enlightened leadership is paved with authenticity, humility, service, and compassion. This is one good recipe for effective leadership.
11. The Gītā teaches that unless mind is purged of personal desires and attachments, even service is but an inflation of the ego. Only those who have relinquished personal ambition can truly serve. Selflessness is the greatest gift leaders can give to the society. Selflessness is also the best thing one can do for oneself! This is the path of *niṣkāma karma*, the path of disinterested action.
12. Enlightened leaders are not motivated by personal desires or interests. They become instruments of the whole and selflessly serve for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūta hitae*, BG, 5.25; 12.4).
13. The Gītā teaches us that our innate lifework, *svadharma*, is a supreme means to discover who we are. The goal is Self-knowledge; service is the means to it.
14. The Gītā teaches us how to be “yoked” to Divine within through the discipline of action (*karmayoga*), devotion (*bhaktiyoga*), meditation (*dhyānayoga*), and knowledge (*jñānayoga*). Yoga brings a certain measure of “integration” in human personality. Only a well-integrated (*yoga-yukta*) person can be an effective leader.
15. The Gītā teaches that all our existential problems ultimately stem from self-ignorance—*not knowing who we truly are*. According to the great Indian philosopher, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, ‘self-ignorance is the cause of human bondage; Self-knowledge is the remedy.’

<sup>38</sup> See Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The how of happiness: a scientific approach to getting the life you want* (New York: Penguin Press, Reprint Edition, 2008)



16. The Gītā teaches us that spiritual freedom, *mokṣa*, can be realized only through knowledge, *jñānam*, gained from a competent teacher who is established in the vision of Truth [of the Self]—*tattvadarśinah* (4.34). Likewise, the goal of leadership is not to gather more followers, but to inspire more leaders. However, leaders first must practice what they preach. Like Gandhi, they must embody the change they wish to see in the organizations; that is, they must make their life their message.
17. The Gītā teaches that “be good, do good” is all that one needs to “be” and “do” to foster happiness in oneself and others. It introduces us to the joy of giving joy to others. When we have joy in our heart, we act *with* fulfillment, and not merely *for* fulfillment.
18. According to the Gītā (3.20), leaders should act with the welfare of the entire universe in view. When one becomes a leader, the responsibility for doing the right thing grows tremendously. The stakes are raised immediately. For a leader, the question is never, what do I like? It is always, what needs to be done. The common good is the guiding star of a leader’s conduct in this terrain.
19. The Gītā (6.40) assures us that on the path of goodness, one does not lose ever (न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चित् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति): There is no misery or misadventure, *durgati*, for such a person who follows the path of goodness. This understanding accords internal strength and helps leaders to remain steadfast on the path of righteousness, when the going gets tough.
20. The Gītā is probably the only scripture in the human history where the reader is not asked to accept anything on faith. Every question is examined insightfully and diverse perspectives are presented for reflection. Likewise, leaders should offer diverse perspectives for the followers to consider, rather than promoting their own pet ideas.
21. After the entire teachings of the Gītā have been imparted, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna at the very end, ‘...now that the most profound wisdom has been shared; deeply ponder over it and *do as you wish* (18.63).’ Do as you wish not as I say. Teachers open the door; we have to enter by ourselves.
22. Throughout the entire Gītā, Arjuna asks good questions (*paripraśnena*) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers them lovingly and objectively, without becoming upset or deprecating. The student has humility and respect for the teacher and the teacher has caring concern for the wellbeing of the student. As a master teacher, Śrī Kṛṣṇa shows great *passion* for the subject, and great *compassion* for the student. This makes the Gītā a great treatise on the art and science of effective communication.
23. The Gītā uses a very special teaching methodology. It presents the highest teachings—the “big picture”—first. Arjuna’s was confused about his duty and wanted to know ‘the right thing to do’ (*śreyas*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa starts the teaching with the highest good (*param-śreyas*)—the nature of the Self. Arjuna was mostly worried about the outer kingdom; Śrī Kṛṣṇa gently guides him to the inner Kingdom—the inner treasure of the fullness of our being (*purāṇattvam*).

- Likewise, leaders who are able to garner a vision of “big-picture” are able to create a high level of buy-in.
24. The Bhagavad Gītā is the ultimate self-help book, which teaches eternal Truths about our true nature (Gītā, 3.3, 4.1-3). The sole purpose (and the goal supreme) of the Gītā is Self-Realization or God-Realization. By following this philosophy, leaders are able to attain their highest good, while discharging their duties diligently in the full wakefulness of Self-knowledge.
  25. The beauty of the Gītā lies in its ability to harmonize the spiritual and the temporal, in the art and science of attaining the highest good (*param śreyas*) while remaining fully engaged in the everyday practical matters (*vyavahāra mein paramārtha kī kalā*). This practical orientation is responsible for the Gītā’s universal appeal and abiding influence.
  26. Gītā teaches us that there is no progress on the spiritual path if there is no harmony and unity between our *vicāra* (thought process) and *ācāra* (conduct). Its spirituality is not an abstract affair but a lived experience. How often we hear these days that the leaders need to ‘walk the talk’ to attain a measure of authenticity. Effective leaders’ conduct is authentic: their thoughts, speech, and deeds are well aligned. Ultimately, right thinking and right conduct serve as the two unshakable pillars of leadership.
  27. Gītā’s ideal is not indifference to the world but love and compassion born out of the identity of oneself with all beings, *ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati* (6.32). The writer, speaker, and the listener of the Gītā were all householders, and not renunciates.
  28. Gītā (6.17) teaches that the *Yoga* which destroys sorrow, is accomplished only by those who are regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in sleep and wakefulness. This object lesson in moderation is also the mainstay of all secular ethics.
  29. The Gītā teaches us how to live in the world and yet remain untouched by its worldliness—like a lotus leaf in the water (5.10). This wisdom fosters certain detachment that is so essential for leaders to carry out their work objectively.
  30. The Gītā teaches us the art of doing our duty diligently without the tag of doership, without hankering after results, as an offering to the Supreme. At first, this may seem to an idealistic, lofty goal. Understood properly, this become the most practical strategy in carrying out all functions of life and leadership. When our mind is too focused on the outcome, it is not able to give its full attention to the process at hand. And our work suffers in consequence.
  31. The Gītā invites us to focus on the *process* rather than obsessing about the *goals*. This alone can serve as a sure guide in life and leadership.
  32. The Gītā teaches us how to act without being attached to the outcomes. The attachment to outcomes, desiring to get a specific result, sets the stage for anxiety. One gets elated by favorable results and feels dejected when the results are unfavorable. This is to live a life of perpetual emotional roller-coaster. When we release ourselves from the attachment to outcomes, we develop certain mental equipoise to deal with the ups and downs in our life.

33. The greatest practical lesson that the Gītā teaches us is Karma Yoga—the highest discipline to live by: use the right means for a just cause and leave the results in hands of God.
34. Stress comes from misalignment between our actions and results. The Gītā says do your allotted duty conscientiously as an offering to the Supreme and leave the results to the workings of the Cosmic Order.
35. The Gītā considers attainment of equanimity as the litmus test for perfection in all the three *yogas*: *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga*, and *bhakti yoga*.
36. The Bhagavad Gītā frees us from the syndrome of “more-ism”—wanting more and more of more and more in more and more ways—from the compulsive habit and the torment of, the relentless pursuit of, chasing after myriad objects compulsively. It frees us from the “destination-addiction.”
37. The Gītā likens the mind of sage steadfast in wisdom (*sthitaprajña*) with ocean that remains unruffled despite the raging rivers of desires.
38. The Gītā declares in no uncertain terms that, of anyone born, death is certain (*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur*) and that which is dead, birth is certain (*dhruvam janma mṛtasya ca*, 2.27). Therefore, one should not grieve over the inevitable. This understanding helps us to overcome the greatest fear in life, the fear of death.
39. The body is gifted to us to practice righteousness, *dharma*: *Sarīra mādhyam khalu dharma sādhanam* (the purpose of human body is to practice dharma). This is evident from the very first word of the Gītā, i.e., *dharma*.
40. The Gītā teaches us that whatever the spiritual practice, if equanimity of mind (*samatā*) is not attained, the goal is still far away.
41. The Gītā urges us to see things in the correct perspective—*yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*: One who sees thus, truly sees (5.5; 13.27, 13.29). It helps us to develop foresight and self-insight, two cardinal qualities required of all managers and leaders.
42. The Gītā teaches that the highest ethical ideal for the spiritual seekers and enlightened leaders is *lokasaṅgraha*—the upliftment of the entire world. (3.20, 3.25). One should act with the welfare of the entire universe in view (*loka saṅgraham-evāpi saṁpaśyan kartum arhasi*, 3.20).
43. Knowing that both prosperity and adversity are temporary, the wise welcome them, fully understanding that “this too shall pass.” They enjoy prosperity with humility and bear adversity with equanimity.
44. The Gītā teaches us that our choice lifework, *svadharma*, is a supreme means to discover who we are. The goal is Self-knowledge; service is the means.
45. The Gītā teaches the high art of detached engagement—to focus on the actions rather than the results. When we shift our attention from goal-orientation to process-orientation, the results take care of themselves.
46. Effective leaders know that self-awareness is the key to leading from within. They manage their awareness alertly to lead others effectively.
47. Self-awareness ultimately depends upon Self-knowledge. The Gītā presents detailed instructions about attaining steady abidance in Self-Knowledge (2.52–72; 13. 7–11).

48. Self-knowledge means the knowledge of one's true self at the "soul-level"—beyond senses, mind, and intellect. While all other knowledge pertains to knowing everything that can be objectified externally, self-knowledge is about knowing the knower.
49. Selfish desire obscures self-awareness and meddles with achieving life's true ends. Self-aware leaders are not motivated by personal desires or interests. Their goal is contribution through service.
50. The Bhagavad Gītā says, "Cast the pebble of your karma in the pond of life and wait for the Cosmic Laws to work out the ripples for you." This is a perfect recipe for our lifework and work life, a surefire way to free oneself from over-anxiety about the results.
51. The Gītā teaches us to focus on the process and the outcome will take care of itself. By focusing on the process rather than on the results, we are in fact able to create the desired outcomes in a more optimal manner.
52. The Gītā teaches us that cultivating equanimity, *samatā*, is the best antidote to the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." (2.48)
53. The Gītā teaches us to be patient with ourselves for we are the greatest obstacle in our way. We are our own best friend and our own worst enemy. This is a mature understanding based on self-responsibility and self-restraint.
54. The Gītā teaches us that an unruly mind is our greatest enemy and a restrained mind is our best friend. (6.5)
55. The Gītā teaches that the wise work, without attachment, for the well-being of all beings (*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* 5.25, 12.4) and for the welfare of the world (*lokasaṁgraham* 3.20). This comprises the complete template for *spiritualizing* life and leadership. This is the message the leaders need to hear and practice to lift themselves out of the quagmire of present-day *selfie* culture.
56. How can I serve the world with my gifts? That's all, says the Gītā, you need to know to live a fulfilled life. The recipes for living a fulfilled life do not come any better than this.
57. The gist of the message of the Gītā is: Always and in everything, keep your mind fastened on the Truth of the Supreme Self and fight the battle of life. सर्वेषु कालेषु माम् अनुस्मर युध्य च *sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca* (8.7)
58. The Gītā teaches us that the world of becoming is fleeting and unreal; the world of being is unchanging and real (2.16).
59. The Gītā introduces us to the joy of giving joy to others. It teaches us that in giving, we receive. When we practice this as way of life, our whole life is infused with joy and fulfillment.
60. The Gītā teaches that unless mind is purged of personal desire and attachment, even service is but an inflation of the ego.
61. The path to leading others starts with self-awareness through self-discipline and ends with self-transcendence through selfless service. It is paved with authenticity, humility, and compassion.
62. "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others," said Gandhi. This is an important lesson he learned from the Gītā.

63. Know that your actions are really not “your” actions—just expressions of the Divine within. And you will become *nimita-mātra* (11.33), a mere instrument, a vessel, in the hands of the Divine.
64. Only actions performed in full wakefulness of Self-knowledge, in the remembrance of the Self (*māmanusmara*), do not bind.
65. The Gītā tells us that all actions are orchestrated by the interplay of the three-fold properties of the material Nature (*triguṇātamaka prakṛti*). Only those who are confused about the true nature of the Self appropriate all actions to themselves (3.27). No better pointers on spiritualizing life can be conceived!
66. The Gītā says that most of the humanity is running incessantly—either running *after* (*rāga*) or running *from* (*dveṣa*)—in the whirlpool of *samsāra*. It provides the diagnosis of the malady and presents an effective solution in the form of *karmayoga*, the art of working selflessly for the common good, offering actions to the Divine and accepting the results gracefully.
67. The Gītā says that the wise ones transcend the sway of likes and dislikes (*rāga-dveṣa*) and live a balanced life, a life of equanimity, *samatā*.
68. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches that the only spiritual practice you need is *not to react*—to favorable/unfavorable circumstances. What can be favorable or unfavorable for the wise? The wise welcome all situations as opportunities for self-learning and growth.
69. Most stress in life comes from misalignment between our actions and results and misdirected expectations. Gītā says do your duty diligently and leave the results to the workings of the Cosmic Order.
70. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches that wisdom (*prajñā*) has two aspects: *purāṇattvam* and *samattvam*. Only when both of these are present that wisdom, *prajñā*, becomes steady, *stīthaprajñā*.
71. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches that happiness is an inside job. It lies in steady abidance in the contented self (*ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ* 2.55).
72. The Bhagavad Gītā that all existential problems are centered on the lack of understanding of “Who am I?”
73. The Gītā teaches us that the spiritual quest starts and ends with asking and answering the question, “Who Am I?” In fact, the entire spiritual journey starts and ends with asking and answering this question.
74. The Bhagavad Gītā (2.40) teaches that the knowers of the self and the practitioners of the yoga of selfless action are freed from the greatest fear: the fear of repeated conditioned existence: स्वल्पम् अप्य् अस्य धर्मस्य ज्ञायते महतो भयात्: *svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*: even a little practice of this art of selfless action (born of self-knowledge) saves one from the great terror of *samsāra* (Repeated conditioned existence).
75. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that a restless mind and an anxious heart know neither peace nor happiness. Tranquility comes to a heart which is no longer stirred by desires.
76. To know the Truth is to see the oneness of the Self with God (Srimad Bhagavatam). Likewise, the Gītā underscores the oneness of the individual Self and the Supreme Self (10.20; 13.2, 13.27; 18.61)

77. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—belong to the mind only. Rise above the *guṇas* and know the Self.
78. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that you can raise yourself by yourself (*uddhared ātmanātmānaṃ*: 6.5). This is the soul-uplifting message of the Gītā: You can raise your destiny by pulling your own shoestrings. This is very different from what goes for easy self-esteem in most of the overly simplistic self-help guides.
79. The Gītā says that nothing can give you real happiness except your Self (*ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*: 2.55).
80. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that that you are your best friend and worst enemy. In fact, our mind is our best friend and worst enemy. An unruly mind brings ruin its wake, whereas a restrained mind saves us from all trouble (*uddhared ātmanātmānaṃ nātmānam avasādayet; ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ*: 6.5).
81. The strongest person is not the one who has subjugated the whole world; the stronger person is one who has subdued his/her mind. This is an object lesson in self-mastery through self-discipline.
82. The Bhagavad Gītā (17.15) teaches us that when you speak austerely, sincerely, and politely from the heart, you touch the soul. However, such speech should be truthful, beneficial, and pleasing.
83. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that we should face challenges of life and leadership like a peaceful warrior and not like a fighter. Both enter the battle, but there is a fundamental difference in their approach. A fighter fights with others; a warrior's war is with himself. A warrior knows that all wars are first fought *within* the mind. A fighter always thinks in terms of *ends*, namely, winning or losing; a warrior focuses on *perfecting the means*. Arjuna was one such consummate warrior.
84. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that wise leaders work for well-being of all beings and for bringing people and communities together—*without hankering after the results*. They find fulfillment in their work itself and are glad to be of some service.
85. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that only a self-aware person is free and happy. Only happy individuals create a harmonious society. These teachings hold the key to individual happiness and social harmony.
86. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that we should accept nothing on faith. Throughout, Arjuna asks good questions and Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers them sincerely without reproach. The Gītā teaches us to examine everything under the microscope of reason before accepting or acting upon it.
87. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that through proper attitude and discipline we can achieve perfection (*siddhi*) in any field of life.
88. The Gītā teaches the art of attaining the highest good (*param śreyas*) while fully engaged in the everyday practical matters. This is where its uniqueness lies. All the yogas of the Gītā are geared toward this aim.

89. The Bhagavad Gītā (18.46) teaches us that we can attain the highest perfection (*siddhi*)—here and hereafter— by being true to ourselves (*svakarmanā/svadharma*) and by dedicating all our actions to the Divine.
90. In the Gītā’s view, only those who know themselves are truly wise (*pañḍitāḥ*, 2.11). Knowing the Self, the wise do not grieve. This is the message of the Gītā.
91. The Gītā extols equanimity (*samatvaṁ*) above all. In all the three main yogas presented in the Gītā, *samatā* is offered as the benchmark of their perfection (*siddhi*). No matter what the path, if evenness of the mind is not attained, the goal is still far away.
92. Favorable or unfavorable, success or failure, gain or loss—these epithets do not sway the one steady in the wisdom of the Self (*sthita-prajñah*). Such a person remains unshaken amidst even the greatest sorrow (*na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate*).
93. The Gītā says that all our existential problems ultimately stem from self-ignorance—not knowing who we truly are. Just as knowledge of physics cannot destroy ignorance of biology, even so self-ignorance can only be dispelled by Self-knowledge.
94. Realizing our true Self as immutable, eternal, and imperishable constitutes [Self-] Knowledge according to the Gītā. Put differently, realizing our true nature as the Absolute, unchanging, limitless consciousness constitutes Self-knowledge. Liberation through this knowledge is the sole purpose of the teachings of Vedānta and the Gītā.
95. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that the ego is one of the biggest barriers to the achievement of peace. The one who moves free the shackles of ego and attachment attains peace (2.71).
96. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that it is in the fullness of Being that you can find true happiness.
97. Our experience and reflection dictates that wealth and happiness are not related to each other as cause and effect. The very fact that we are constantly in pursuit of happiness shows that we are not content with the current situation. Constantly pining for more is termed as greed, which the Gītā counts among the three gateways to hell, the other two being lust and anger.
98. Enlightened leaders master their senses instead of letting their senses master them. The leader should manage his anger and should not let anger gain control over him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that from anger, delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, reasoning power is lost and with the loss of reasoning one falls from one’s status as human being.
99. Therefore, enlightened leaders do not lead by anger or fear. They practice forbearance and use forgiveness as their principal armor. They are well aware that leading by anger and fear is unproductive and leads to disempowerment and disengagement.
100. The Upaniṣads and the Gītā have one central theme or teaching: Supreme Bliss as a result of complete cessation of sorrow (आत्यंतिक शोक निवृत्ति पूर्वक सुख प्राप्ति).

The Gītā (6.23) calls it yoga. When we have attained complete separation (*viyogaṃ*) from sorrow, we enjoy the supreme bliss. This bliss (*ātma-sukha*) is the result of Self-knowledge alone and does not depend upon the contrivance of outer circumstances or things.

101. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us that *all except God perishes* (2.17; 13.27). Accordingly, the wise find joy in serving and surrendering to the Divine, the Imperishable principle that resides as witnessing consciousness in all, as the innermost Self of all (*pratyagātmā*). In one of the most important verses of the Gītā (10.20)<sup>39</sup> Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells, ‘Arjuna, I am the universal Self seated in all beings:’ *aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ*. This is why Sureśvarācāya, the foremost disciple of Ādi Śaṅkara, says that when the innermost self is known nothing remains unknown: *Pratyagātmani vijñāte nājñātam avashīsyate* [BUBV 1.4.1007]. The Gītā (7.2) likewise assures that having known which, nothing else remains yet to be known in this world. And knowing which one is released from all that is inauspicious in life (9.1).

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## Concluding Thoughts

*Only two paths are available to man: the path of wisdom and the path of suffering.*  
–Paul Deussen.

This book is humbly dedicated to the Grand change master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who 5000 years ago, proactively impelled political change from the prevailing unjust order to that of righteousness. He proved the greatest exemplar of servant leadership by agreeing to humbly serve as Arjuna’s charioteer in the epic war of Mahābhārata. Where else can we find the Supreme Lord of the universe leading by example in human form to fulfil his promise for establishing righteousness (*dharmasamsthāpanārthāya*), for the protection of the virtuous (*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām*), and for disciplining the wrong-doers (*vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*) [4.8].

Śrī Kṛṣṇa provides the greatest *raison d’être* for managers and leaders to act in the following verses:

Arjuna! For me there is nothing whatsoever to achieve in the three worlds. Nor is there anything worth attaining, unattained by Me. Yet, I remain engaged in action (3.22) [to set an example for others so that they do not go astray].

Arjuna, as the unwise act, attached to the results, even so should the wise act, (but) without attachment, with a view to maintain the world order (3.25)

Within the compass of one short paragraph, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has handed over all the keys to effective leadership to Arjuna. Servant leaders have nothing left to achieve for themselves. They engage in action to help others, unattached to the results. Yet they act as role models with same dedication as those who act out of self-interest. Their motivation comes from serving a cause much higher than their narrow

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<sup>39</sup>Sri Ramana Maharshi used to say that this verse (BG, 10.20) contains the essence of the entire Bhagavad Gītā.



personal aims and ambitions. They find their fulfillment by working for the wellbeing of all beings and by bringing the world communities together. They become instruments of the Whole and live a life of service, contribution, and purpose. They have passion for their work and compassion for others. Their actions are graced by Self-awareness born of Self-knowledge. Their specialness lies in their ordinariness. They find their joy in giving joy to others.

Leadership guidance does not come any better than this!

The final message of the Bhagavad Gītā:

*Know yourself, serve all, and surrender to the Divine within.*

We conclude this book with the following two Peace Invocations.

### Shanti Mantra (Prayer for Peace)

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय ।  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।  
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*om asato mā sadgamaya ।  
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya ।  
mṛtyormā amṛtam gamaya ।  
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥*

Lead me from unreal to the Real.

Lead me from darkness to light.

Lead me from death to immortality.

Om! Peace. Peace. Peace. (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28)

### Peace Invocation:

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*om sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ sarve santu nirāmayāḥ ।  
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū mā kaścidduḥkhabhāgbhavet ।  
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥*

May all be happy, May all be free from misery.

May all realize goodness, May none suffer pain.

Om! Peace. Peace. Peace.

श्री कृष्णार्पणमस्तु  
*Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu*