



LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT-AN INSIGHT FROM BHAGAVD GITA

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ABSTRACT

Every organization is established with some goals which are achieved by a group of people assembled together for a common purpose. For giving proper direction to the efforts put on by the people working towards common goals, effective leadership is required. *Leadership is an act — a decision to take a stand, or step, in order to encourage, inspire or motivate others to move with you.* Whatever the excellent best one do, the commoners follow. In simple sense a leader is one who practices what he preaches. What so ever be a leader prove by his life and action the commoners follows. This common and combined effort leads to the overall institutional development. That is what Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna in a great Indian Epic Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavad Gita is the most popular literary composition of Sanskrit literature conveying lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics. It is the Perfect theistic science because it is directly spoken by supreme personality of God head- Lord Krishna. The message of Bhagavad Gita is not only limited to spiritual development but also in other aspect of human capital development including leadership. Using contextual analysis this paper explores the leadership implication found in this classic text and offers present day managers useful advice regarding overall institutional improvement. This paper intended to determine the leadership qualities helpful in institutional improvement from the perspective of Bhagavad Gita. Some of the qualities incorporated in the paper are advice giver, even mindedness, commitment, equality of mind, mind control, integration, sacrifice and work ethics. In short present work may be helpful in proving the Bhagavad Gita as it acts like an old truth in a new context.

KEYWORDS: Organization, Leadership, Bhagavad Gita, Philosophy, Religion and Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Religion plays a very decisive role in molding the world view of people. In Indian context, particularly where religio-cultural values and socio economic and political power structure are so closely intertwined, the question of an effective approach to religion and its interpretation is of great relevance.

One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is holy GITA. Arjuna got mentally depressed, when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight. To motivate him the BHAGAVAD GITA is preached in battle field of Kurukshetra by lord Krishna to Arjuna as counseling to do his duty. Bhagavad Gita is the most popular literary composition of Sanskrit literature conveying lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics. Srimad Bhagavad Gita is the pearl of wisdom management from great epic Mahabharata. It contains 700 verses.

"The Bhagavad-Gita 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*

In support of above said lines it can be inferred that the message of Bhagavad Gita is not only limited to spiritual development but also in other aspect of human capital

development including leadership. In today's dynamic environment, it is very difficult to lead any institution in effective manner until leader is competent enough to do this. He is required to be ready for any alarming situation at any point of time. Just as soldier of army at border are always ready for contingency. Leaders are also required to get prepared for any urgent situation. Even not only for urgent situation but also for emergent situation which are quite unusual to happen. A leader sometimes does not have luxury of choosing his battle as it emerges from the environment and present itself.

Success of the leader in this battle is dependent upon the performance of subordinates and groups within the sphere of influence plus their own skills and qualities to coordinate their efforts. Thus leadership is nothing but a combination of processes which involves the coordination of activities of various groups. These combined efforts of all the entities of institution in a right direction make it a successful institution. Thus the combined efforts towards some common agreed upon objectives with the influence of proper leadership make the institution a developed institution. Since all the efforts revolve around the effective leadership, it is necessary that leader should be perfect one. In order to improve as a leader he must first understand that what areas needed improvement

then only he will be able to move in right direction for corrective action. For that the key factor is awareness. This journey of awareness towards the organization starts with self awareness and this concept of self awareness is best explained in Bhagavad Gita in which Krishna lead Arjun to this journey of darkness enlightenment or self awareness. This knowledge of self impales the Arjuna to stand for his duty lead the battle of Mahabharata and with the effective leadership finally won the battle.

As its economy grows, there is increased interest in India and its culture. This world's largest democracy has captured the attention of world not only for economic growth and market potential but also for its rich culture. To better understand Indian culture they might find that India's ancient scripture offer some insight into cultural norms and values and perhaps meaningful lessons for the modern day practice of management. One of the most popular and useful of the ancient texts is the Bhagavad Gita. Using contextual analysis this paper explores the leadership implication found in this classic text and offers present day managers useful advice regarding overall institutional improvement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rarick, Nickerson (2007) identified maintaining one's proper role and duties, being proactive and acting with wisdom, working for the greater good, and engaging in self-sacrifice as an important lessons for leadership from Bhagavad Gita. In the age of globalization there is a need of enhancement of global business practices. It encourages managers to look at the big picture, a holistic view, for guidance with a realization that there can be no simultaneous winners and losers. When managers change their outlook, success is enhanced for these they emphasizes on Yoga, Dharma, Dhyana, Samabhava, Nishkama Karma, and Tat-Twam-Asi (Chinna, Michael 2009). While western management thought deals with problems at an extrinsic and peripheral level, the *Bhagavad Gita* tackles the same issues from the subliminal level of human psyche. (Satija, 2011) Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne (2003)I their paper *Tipping Point Leadership* Says that leaders do not need extra resources to reach the tipping point. They concentrate resources where the need and the likely payoffs are greatest. Leaders have the capabilities to solve the motivation problem by signaling out the key influencers. They act like kingpins in bowling: When you hit them just right, all the pins topple over. In any organization, once the beliefs and energies of a critical mass of people are engaged, conversion to a new idea will spread like an epidemic.

Taking perspective from Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Hindu epic, (Hee2007) presents a management grid to link the profit oriented approach with a purpose oriented approach in running a business.

An orientation toward meaningful life is based upon the premise that people should develop what is best within them and then use these skills and talents in the service of greater goods, including in particular the welfare of other people or humankind at large. (sudha,charu,2012)

LEADERSHIP AT GLANCE

Leadership is inspiring others to pursue your vision within the parameters you set, to the extent that it becomes a shared effort, a shared vision, and a shared success

Leadership is an act — a decision to take a stand, or step, in order to encourage, inspire or motivate others to move with you. What's more, the most effective leaders do not rely on their title, or positional power, to lead. Rather, their ability to use their own personal power combined with their use of strategic influence are what make them effective. Whatever the excellent best one do, the commoners follow. In simple sense a leader is one who practices what he preaches. What so ever be a leader prove by his life and action the commoners follows. This common and combined efforts lead to the overall institutional development. That is what Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna. He imitated both inwardly and out worldly. Lord Krishna was great practical witty and tactful leading using the resources of men and material most resourcefully and proactively.

For being a good leader, there should be some qualities required in a person. These qualities are helpful in overall institutional development. Before moving on to the leadership traits, we have to know about different leadership styles. In institution it is the duty of leader to coordinate the efforts of people for the achievement of agreed upon goals of institution. This accomplishment of institutional objective is depending on the type of organization. For instance, for profit making organization financial upliftment is the main motto, on the other hand for nonprofit making organization social welfare is the primary objective. So these objectives give the direction to the efforts of people involved in its achievement. Apart from that the leadership style is also an important factor for institutional development.

Rotenberg and saloner believes in two types of leadership styles-

- One where leader tries to work for maximizing the profit of organization
- In other where the leader is concerned or inclined more towards human aspect.

The first form of leadership will surely be helpful in short term perspective for financial upliftment, but in long run it might cause a great harm to the organizational development. On the other hand the other form of leadership style create the feeling of belongingness among the employees, they in turn become more dedicated towards the organizational development, thereby making the organization profitable in long run.

Though the organizational policy and objectives are deciding elements for the way of leadership style to be follow, but the individual skills and capabilities are also key to the success of organization. Leadership skills and qualities are helpful in overall institutional development. Bhagavad Gita inculcates such qualities in the form of verses and incidence. This paper intended to determine the leadership qualities helpful in institutional improvement from the perspective of Bhagavad Gita. Some of the qualities incorporated in the paper are

advice, even mindedness, commitment, equality of mind, mind control, integration, sacrifice, and work ethics. Incorporation of these qualities makes an ordinary leader into effective leader.

ADVICE

When Arjuna got distracted from his duty of kshatriya and refuses to fight he didn't find any solution what to do and what not to. At that time he surrendered himself to his friend, philosopher and guide Sri Krishna to seek his advice. Before giving advice to Arjuna, Supreme personality of godhead Sri Krishna tried to settle down Arjuna's turbulent mind. While giving advice to distressed one the very first task for the philosophy is to bring steadiness and confidence into the mind of student. That is what Sri Krishna does to Arjuna. This is the significance of verses 2 and 3 of the second chapter

The supreme personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, how have these impurities come upon you? They are not at all befitting a man who knows the value of life. They lead not to higher planets but to infamy.

Son of Prtha, do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not become you. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, o chastiser of enemy.

In these two verses we have the application of mental tonic by Sri Krishna to Arjuna; and that tonic is necessary before any teaching could be fruitful. When a person is grief stricken and his nerves are shattered, no amount of teaching or advice whatever can bear fruit; and much less philosophy.¹

Similar role is expected to be play by leader. Leaders reform the reality in a way that gives hope to the follower even in hopeless circumstances. Krishna creates an alternative reality for Arjuna by showing him how to think like a victor rather than a victim by saying- how unbecoming of a hero is it to abandon a just war that was decided on after great deliberation how you can protect your reputation if you retreat from battle now. His mentor's word begins to have effect on Arjuna. The alternative reality created by Krishna for Arjuna begins to move him towards action.

EVENMINDEDNESS

At the inception of Mahabharata, the Arjuna told Lord Sri Krishna to put his chariot in the middle of the two armies, he got depressed after seeing his own kinsmen, he dropped down all his weapons and sat down in the verge of not to fight. He lost all his senses, his mind lost the capability of differentiating between right and wrong. That time Lord Krishna preaches him the teachings of Bhagavad Gita. It teaches us we should remain calm at the time of adverse conditions. There are so many incidences come in work span of leaders where he is unable to find what is right and what is wrong and usually in hurry he might take the wrong decisions for which he, related people, and organization as a whole have to pay in future. This can be avoided by keeping calm at the time of adverse situation. Having even minded in adverse and

favorable situations makes us indifferent about the results of work.

Do the fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat- and by doing you shall never incur sin

Even mindedness develops in us the quality of calmness in both success and failure. This calmness leads us for self introspection which in turn makes us visible the flaws of the process and ultimately results to the success. At the time of failure or confusion knowledge of self help us to find out where we had made mistakes because of which we had to face failure. Moreover through self introspection one can be aware about one's ability. After knowing the abilities one can better able to contribute for the institutional development by utilizing them accordingly. Thus even mindedness of person have the capability to turn unfavorable into favorable and failure into success.

SACRIFICE

Maslow's need hierarchy theory tells that after the satisfaction of lower level need one go for the satisfaction of higher level needs. But the theory propounded in Gita is just a reverse of that. It emphasizes on the fulfillment of higher level needs in that coarse lower level needs get automatically get satisfied. This theory is explained as a theory of self transcendence propounded in Gita. It emphasizing on renouncing of egoism, putting others before ourselves, teamwork, dignity, cooperation, harmony, and trust and indeed potentially sacrificing lower needs for higher goals, the opposite of Maslow. Sacrifice is a critical dimension of leadership work. This word is generally been taken in negative sense of diminishing the self. Bhagavad Gita explains it in much wider context. It explains the sacrifice as a extension of the self by giving up the lower for the cause of higher. This will be helpful not only for individual but also for surroundings. Say for instance a leader who sacrifice small pleasure on the way to his work place and arrives there on time every day acquires the virtue of punctuality, which benefits not only himself but also his organization. In an ordinary state of consciousness it is difficult for us to think of work as a sacrifice. It is equally difficult for us to work unselfishly. Krishna understands this is he makes it simpler for Arjuna. "Dedicate the result of all your action to a higher consciousness" if Arjuna is able to do it, he will be free from feverish anxiety that comes from anticipating the result of an action.²

ROLE MODEL

The leadership qualities are for which Shri Krishna says that whatever the master piece of work of excellence the commoners follows. Leader's work is no different from parenting. Like parents leader touch the generation, that follows them. Often children don't do what their parents say they do what their parents do. It is the leader's action rather than his speeches that followers imitate. The visionary leader

will have dynamism and strength which flows from an inspired and spontaneous motivation to help others.³

EQUALITY OF VISION

Leader must possess equality of vision. Gita also says The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle Brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste.

Follower expects their leader to be fair and just in their treatment of them. Each time a leader shows a biased towards someone or certain class of people. He lost the faith that people have placed in him. Thus when leader do not have equality of vision they start up promoting partiality, prejudice which ruins the organization. Such person who does not have equality of vision starts moving away from the people whom they dislike. This behavior gives rise to the hatred towards dislike person as a result of which one chooses the path of partiality against them. This behavior of leader diluted his image among the followers who then attaches the tag of partial leader with him. So for being an effective leader one must develop equality of vision.

Striving towards the equality of vision require reconditioning of the nervous system to accept likes and dislikes without becoming unduly agitated. This can be done through meditation. Dalai Lama the Tibetan dharma Guru has a very good method of teaching equality of vision which signals that whether you have equality of mind or not.

In this you are firstly required to close your eyes and visualize the face of a person that you intensely like and observe the feeling that arises as a result. Then visualize the face of a person that you intensely dislikes observe whatever feeling arise in you. Finally visualize the face of a person you neither like or dislikes and observe the feelings. When all the three feeling states eventually become the same, you can claim to have understood the equality of vision.

INTEGRATION

One conqueror of wealth, there is not truth superior to me. Everything rest upon me, as pearl are strung upon thread. One of the fundamental tasks of the leader is integration. There so many situations arise in the organization when different class of people does not agree upon common way to perform the task. In such conflicting situations leader acts as a arbitrator between conflicting parties. In any conflicting situation he can't take one side but his task is to bring the two sides together like a thread of necklace which unites the different size and colour pearl together, leader must have the quality to unite diversity of people into unity of purpose.

MIND CONTROL

Mind is born free but gets burdened by the weight of memories and the structure of past experiences. Whenever any problem arises we used to get the solution from the past. It is very difficult to apply yesterday's solution to the today's problem. Most leaders hold on to experience of past success and project these on to their future. This solution works if the future is predictable like the past. However when the future takes a U- turn, such a conditioned mind is caught napping⁴. so for taking right decision it is necessary to free the mind from the burden of its accumulation such a free mind reflect the reality around it just as a clean mirror truthfully reflects the image of reality before it.

COMMITMENT AND FLEXIBILITY

For a meaningful life we must have some goal to achieve. This provides the direction to the life. But mere setting of goals is not enough, chasing them with full dedication is equally important. For the achievement of set goal one is required to be in a continuous Endeavour. Just like a river. From the Himalayas the river Ganga goes all the way to Bay of Bengal regardless of obstacle, it has that much strength to reach the ocean. So for as the achievement of goal one is required strength in the form of commitment. As in this journey river have to face obstacle in the form of rocks, the river is so flexible, it goes round the obstacle and still keeps going. Thus the river has both strength and flexibility to go towards ocean. In our journey toward goal might also face the obstacles in different forms like for businessman economic crisis, competitor, and inflation, non-availability of resources may be proved as obstacles. If in such situation he will remain rigid to his policies, he will not be able to overcome the situation, his business will crack down. Thus for survival and reach the overall of business objective he is required to do some changes in his policies as per prevailing circumstances then only he will be able to move forward. The power of commitment guides you towards the goal and flexibility leads you towards it. So we can say it required flexibility is in strength and strength lies in flexibility⁵. Even before flexibility one thing required along with strength is acceptance. Acceptance to the realities of life, acceptance to the failure, unfavorable situation in the life. One will be flexible to the thing only after he accepts it. The fact of life is that you have to learn to accept the realities. Even when you get confused accept. You will be able to find out the solution to anything only when you accept that there is certain problem exists. Only strength without acceptance is too rigid.⁶ Just like a tree in a heavy breeze fall down as it is hard and rigid, but bamboo tree being flexible bend down. Thus strength of commitment for the achievement of goal will be successful

venture when backed up with the acceptance and flexibility. It help to fight in adverse situation rather than to giving up. we usually complaints that there is so much unfair in this world. Yes it is true. Life is a combination of fair and unfair. So we must develop the power to accept these unfair also not to tolerate but o change or to overcome it.

WORK ETHICS

Daivi Sampat/ Divine work culture- fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice, straightforwardness, self-denial, calmness, absence of fault finding, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy and pride.

Asuri sampat/demonic work culture- egoism, delusion, personal desires, improper performance, work not oriented towards service.

Leadership qualities are might be innate, or they can be developed by practice. Effective leader should opt for divine work culture for sure success, while demonic work culture leads to the failure. But mere work ethic is not enough. What is needed is a work ethic conditioned by ethics in work. It is in this light that counsel 'Yogh karmasu kausalam'⁷ should be understood. Kausalam means skills or technique of work which is an indispensable component of work ethic skills needed in the performance of one's duty is that of maintaining an evenness of mind in face of success or failure. The calm mind in the face of failure will lead to deeper introspection and se clearly where the process went wrong so that corrective step could be taken to avoid shortcoming of future.

CONCLUSION

To the modern world generation where everything is moving at a very fast pace, where so many literature available on today's management, it may look rather strange to find that, Gita which is religious and a spiritual book, could say something about modern management. The present work may be helpful in breaking such a myth about Indian spirituality which is the foundation pillar of our culture.

Moreover present work may also be helpful to create in the minds of reader a positive attitude towards our culture in the light of its relevance in modern world. The teachings from Gita may also be used for drawing out the solution to the management problems which are very common phenomena in today's world. One such issue is effective leadership. Importance of leadership traits are well accepted by all management thinker and tycoons running the business for over all organizational development. This paper explores some of the leadership traits helpful in organizational development from the perspective of Bhagavad Gita.

In short present work may be helpful in proving the Bhagavad Gita as it acts like an **old truth in a new context**.

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