

Review Article

Self and Organisation Management Principles in Bhagavad Gita

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A B S T R A C T

This review article delves into the intricate complexities of societal implications influenced by materialistic tendencies. It comprehensively investigates the diverse effects of these tendencies on power dynamics, information dissemination, and community well-being. Excessive consumption is highlighted as a sobering reality that poses formidable challenges to fairness and harmony in society.

Additionally, the article explores management guidelines inspired by the Bhagavad Gita, covering various aspects such as vision development, strategic planning, leadership skills, institutional excellence, innovation, teamwork, and individual motivation. The focus is on aligning individuals towards common goals and maximising social benefits. The integration of Bhagavad Gita principles with modern management practises is examined, aiming for a holistic approach.

By incorporating spirituality and traditional wisdom into contemporary management practises, organisations can create harmonious and fulfilling work environments that go beyond materialistic aspirations. The article suggests incorporating meditation, optimal resource utilisation, visionary attitudes, unwavering commitment, and ethical work cultures to enhance corporate sector efficacy.

Overall, the review article provides detailed insights into how integrating Bhagavad Gita principles can foster equitable, harmonious, and successful management approaches. It emphasises the significance of self-awareness, ethical conduct, and a broader perspective in achieving holistic excellence.

Keywords: Principles, Bhagavad Gita, Diverse Effects, Materialistic Tendencies

Introduction

The dominant focus on producing and accumulating material possessions and comforts as a means to achieve personal fulfilment, happiness, and societal recognition has deeply ingrained itself within the systems of power and information.

Unfortunately, this preoccupation has resulted in the marginalisation of alternative perspectives and paradigms, constraining their influence and contribution.¹

The promotion of desires within these limits has led to a system heavily reliant on excessive consumption, primarily

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benefiting a privileged few. Consequently, this exacerbates exclusion, poverty, and inequality among the majority.² Furthermore, the failure to integrate economics into the broader framework of humanity's social and spiritual existence has nurtured a destructive sense of greed in economically advantaged regions, perpetuating ongoing conditions of deprivation for the masses.

Here we examine the implications of society's fixation on materialism, exploring its impact on power dynamics, the dissemination of information, and the overall well-being of communities. By shedding light on these issues, our goal is to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges inherent in our modern world, with the ultimate aspiration of cultivating a future that embraces greater equity and harmony.³

Management Guidelines from the Bhagavad Gita⁴

The primary role within the corporate sector can be summarised as follows:

- 1. Developing a clear vision: Formulating a clear and compelling vision that outlines the desired future state of the organisation.
- 2. Strategic planning: Creating a well-defined strategy to achieve the established vision, setting goals, and determining the actions necessary to accomplish them.
- Cultivating leadership skills: Fostering and nurturing leadership qualities within individuals at all levels of the organisation to drive success and inspire others.
- 4. Establishing institutional excellence: Building a culture of excellence that emphasises continuous improvement, high standards, and exceptional performance.
- Building an innovative organisation means encouraging a culture of innovation and creativity, promoting the generation of new ideas, and adopting forward-thinking approaches.
- Developing human resources means investing in the development and growth of employees by providing training, mentorship, and opportunities for advancement.
- 7. Building and fostering teamwork: Creating an environment that fosters collaboration, cooperation, and effective teamwork to achieve collective goals.
- Delegating tasks, motivating individuals, and promoting effective communication: Assigning responsibilities, motivating and empowering individuals to perform their best, and facilitating open and effective communication channels.
- Reviewing performance and taking corrective measures when necessary: Regularly evaluating individual and organisational performance, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing corrective measures to ensure continuous progress.

In essence, management is the process of aligning individuals and inspiring their commitment to work towards a common goal, ultimately maximising social benefits in the pursuit of excellence.

The Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Indian text, provides valuable insights that can be applied to various aspects of life, including management and leadership. One important lesson from the Bhagavad Gita is the significance of self-awareness. It emphasises the importance of understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. Self-awareness serves as the foundation for effective management and leadership.

By cultivating self-awareness through practices such as meditation, reflection, and seeking honest feedback, managers can gain a deeper understanding of themselves. This process involves introspection and an objective assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Self-awareness enables managers to uncover their unique talents, identify areas for improvement, and align their actions with their values and motivations.

Incorporating the principles of self-discipline, devotion to a greater purpose, and selfless action from the Bhagavad Gita can further enhance management practices. Self-discipline is crucial for achieving success, while devotion to a higher purpose helps leaders prioritise the needs of employees and customers above their own. Embracing selfless action allows managers to make decisions based on what is right for the organisation, even if it doesn't personally benefit them.

Applying these teachings from the Bhagavad Gita alongside modern management principles can lead to a holistic approach to management that combines self-awareness, strategic thinking, and ethical decision-making. By integrating spirituality and traditional wisdom into contemporary management practices, managers can create a meaningful impact and contribute to the success of their organisations.

Old Truths in a New Context

In the ancient scriptures of India, there exists a profound work known as the Bhagavad Gita, which holds within its verses invaluable insights into corporate techniques that can propel us towards a state of affairs characterised by harmony and bliss. ⁶ This timeless scripture offers guidance on navigating through common challenges such as conflicts, tensions, poor productivity, and a lack of motivation, which are prevalent not only in Indian enterprises but also in enterprises across different countries.

Diverging from Western management concepts that often skim the surface of problems, the Bhagavad Gita plunges deep into the core of human thought processes. Refining the fundamental patterns of human thinking naturally enhances the quality of individuals' actions and their subsequent outcomes.

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The prevailing philosophy of corporate management, originating in the West, centres predominantly around materialism and an unrelenting pursuit of profit, regardless of the means employed to achieve it. This mindset has been globally embraced, including in India, influenced by colonial rulers and the perception that Western practices hold superiority over Indian ones. Consequently, despite significant investments in corporate management education in India, discernible improvements in the overall quality of life have been minimal, with numerous sectors still grappling with challenges such as struggles, institutional criminalisation, social violence, exploitation, and other vices.

It is vital to acknowledge the timeless wisdom embedded within the Bhagavad Gita and its relevance to contemporary management practices. This sacred scripture serves as an inspirational source for success in both individual and organisational contexts. Eminent leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Radhakrishnan, and Lokmanya Tilak have been profoundly influenced by its philosophy, underscoring its impact on society.

The Bhagavad Gita encompasses profound management principles, guiding individuals towards self-knowledge and inner peace. By emphasising the importance of self-awareness, it highlights the significance of comprehending one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations as the bedrock of effective leadership. Moreover, it emphasises the essentiality of ethical conduct and righteousness in leadership roles. The scripture is structured into three sections, each offering its own focal point: self-discipline and detachment from material possessions; devotion to a higher power; and the importance of selfless action. These sections encompass valuable lessons for business and management, including the significance of clarity, focus, goal-setting, dedication to a greater cause, and selfless actions for the benefit of others.

By integrating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita into modern management practices, organisations can cultivate a holistic approach that encompasses spiritual well-being, ethical conduct, and the pursuit of long-term sustainable success.⁸ Instead of solely prioritising materialistic goals, the Bhagavad Gita encourages a profound understanding of the self and a mindful approach to decision-making, thus fostering a harmonious and fulfilling work environment.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The recommended suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of the Corporate Sector when integrated with meditation are as follows:

Optimal Resource Utilisation

The fundamental principle of corporate management science emphasises the importance of wise decision-making and

the efficient utilisation of limited resources. An insightful example from the Mahabharata War sheds light on the nature of effective corporations. Duryodhana chose Sri Krishna's large army, symbolising a focus on quantity, while Arjuna selected Sri Krishna's wisdom, symbolising a focus on quality and wisdom.⁹

Attitudes Towards Work

Attitudes towards work can be perceived and interpreted in various ways.

Three individuals were involved in the construction of a temple, practising the art of stone-cutting. Inquisitively, an HRD consultant approached them and posed a seemingly innocent question regarding their activities. The responses from these three workers shed light on their contrasting perspectives:¹⁰

- The first stonecutter, wearing a despondent expression, expressed his engagement in the task as a means to sustain his impoverished family. He viewed his work merely as a source of livelihood.
- The second stonecutter, filled with a sense of pride, proclaimed his purpose to be the demonstration of his exceptional stone-cutting skills, aspiring to establish himself as the finest artisan in the entire country.
- The third stonecutter, with a visionary gleam in his eyes, shared his aspiration of constructing the most exquisite temple in the nation. He saw his work as an opportunity to create something of profound beauty and significance.

Although their roles were identical, their perspectives diverged significantly. The teachings of the Gita encourage individuals to cultivate a visionary outlook in their work, emphasising the development of a broader vision that serves the common good.

Work Commitment

Within the popular verses of the Gita, a deep recommendation emerges, focusing on the concept of "detachment" from the outcomes of our actions carried out in the pursuit of our duties. The essence lies in wholeheartedly dedicating ourselves to our work and striving for excellence simply for the sake of it. When our efforts are overshadowed by constant calculations concerning future promotions or monetary gains, our work loses its detached nature. Rather than generating excellence for its intrinsic value, we become fixated on extrinsic rewards that may or may not materialise.

Engaging solely with the anticipation of benefits inevitably diminishes the quality of our present performance as our minds become consumed by anxieties about the future. It is important to recognise that the world does not always align with our calculations, and expected rewards may not

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always come to fruition. Hence, the Gita advises against jeopardising our present commitments for an uncertain future.

Some individuals argue that relinquishing the pursuit of business results renders one unaccountable. However, it is crucial to note that the Bhagavad Gita expounds on the theory of cause and effect, emphasising the responsibility of individuals for the consequences of their actions. ¹¹ While advocating detachment from the desire for selfish gains while fulfilling one's accepted duties, the Gita does not absolve anyone from the outcomes arising from the discharge of their responsibilities.

Consequently, the most effective form of performance management lies within the work itself. Achieving a state of mind known as " nishkama karma" characterised by this detached approach, represents the right attitude towards work. By doing so, we prevent our egos and minds from wasting away attention through speculation about future gains or losses.

Motivation – Self and Self-transcendence

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, an ancient scripture from India, offers valuable insights into corporate techniques that can lead to harmony and bliss. Unlike Western management concepts that only scratch the surface, the Bhagavad Gita delves deep into human thought processes, refining fundamental patterns of thinking to enhance the quality of actions and outcomes.

The prevailing philosophy of corporate management, influenced by the West, prioritises materialism and profit at any cost. Despite significant investments in corporate management education in India, there have been minimal improvements in the overall quality of life, with sectors still facing struggles, exploitation, and other vices.

Recognising the timeless wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita and its relevance to contemporary management practices is crucial. This sacred scripture serves as an inspiration for success in both individual and organisational contexts, influencing leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Radhakrishnan.¹¹

The Bhagavad Gita encompasses profound management principles, guiding individuals towards self-knowledge and inner peace. It emphasises self-awareness, and understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations as the foundation of effective leadership. Ethical conduct and righteousness are also highlighted. The scripture is structured into three sections, each offering valuable lessons for business and management, including clarity, focus, goal-setting, dedication to a greater cause, and selfless actions.

Integrating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita into modern management practices allows organisations to cultivate a

holistic approach that includes spiritual well-being, ethical conduct, and long-term sustainable success. Instead of solely pursuing materialistic goals, the Bhagavad Gita encourages self-understanding and mindful decision-making, fostering a harmonious and fulfilling work environment.

However, an intriguing observation emerges when comparing the dissatisfaction levels of a clerk and a director: despite their varying scales and compositions, they experience identical dissatisfaction. One would expect that once the lower-order needs are more than satisfied, the director would face minimal difficulties in optimising their contribution to the organisation and society. Surprisingly, this is often not the case. A famous quote captures this paradox: 'The eagle soars high but keeps its eyes firmly fixed on the dead animal below' Conversely, a lowly paid schoolteacher or a self-employed artisan might exhibit higher levels of self-actualisation despite a relatively lower satisfaction of their basic needs.

To elucidate the present circumstances, the Gita's exposition of self-transcendence offers invaluable discernment. Self-transcendence entails relinquishing egocentrism, prioritising the welfare of others above oneself, and cultivating an environment of teamwork, dignity, cooperation, harmony, and trust. It also entails sacrificing lower needs for higher goals, which stands in contrast to Maslow's hierarchy. The Gita emphasises the need for work to be done with detachment, as it is the ego that hampers work and serves as the centrepiece of most motivational theories. Hence, what is needed is not just a theory of motivation but rather a theory of inspiration.

Renowned Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, also known as "Gurudev", has beautifully expressed the idea that working for love is freedom in action. This concept aligns with Gita's notion of "disinterested work", where serving others and viewing work as a sacrifice for their benefit leads to liberation from sin. Conversely, those who accumulate wealth solely for their own consumption bear the burden of frustration and failure. Disinterested work finds its expression in devotion, surrender, and equipoise. While the former two have psychological dimensions, the latter represents a resolute determination to remain free from the dualistic pulls of materialistic experiences. Detached involvement in work unlocks the key to achieving mental equanimity, or what is referred to as the state of "nirdwanda". This mindset eventually allows the worker to sense the presence of a higher intelligence guiding their individual intelligence. Such depersonalised intelligence is best suited for those who genuinely believe in the supremacy of organisational goals over narrow personal success and accomplishments.

Work Culture

An effective work culture can be characterised by an

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atmosphere of dynamic and strenuous efforts dedicated to accomplishing assigned or chosen tasks. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna discusses two types of work cultures: the "daivi sampat" or divine work culture, and the "asuri sampat" or demonic work culture.

The "daivi sampat" embodies qualities such as fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice, honesty, self-discipline, serenity, absence of criticism, lack of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy, and humility. On the other hand, the "asuri sampat" involves egoism, delusion, personal desires, improper performance, and work not oriented towards service.

However, it is important to note that effective work culture cannot be solely dependent on work ethics. Merely possessing a strong work ethic is not enough, as even individuals with questionable character can exhibit a commendable work ethic. What is essential is a work ethic that is guided and conditioned by ethical principles in the workplace.

In this context, the counsel "yogah karmasu kausalam" should be understood. In the Gita, "kausalam" refers to the skill or technique of work, which is an essential component of a work ethic. "Yogah" is defined as "samatvam yogah uchyate", meaning an unchanging equilibrium of mind or detachment. Acting with a mind characterised by equanimity and detachment is considered yogah.

By making an equanimous mind the foundation of all actions, the Bhagavad Gita aims to integrate work ethics with ethics in the workplace. Without an ethical framework, the mind cannot attain equilibrium. Adi Sankara, a renowned guru, stated that the skill required in performing one's duty lies in maintaining an evenness of mind in the face of both success and failure. Cultivating a calm mind in the face of failure allows for introspection and understanding of where the process went wrong, enabling corrective measures to be taken to avoid shortcomings in the future.

Some argue that this principle diminishes the incentive for effort and undermines the work ethic. However, Gita suggests that focusing on the task itself, rather than personal gains, leads to excellence and genuine mental satisfaction for the worker. While conventional motivation theories often emphasise external rewards, Gita's principle directs us towards the intrinsic rewards of mental and moral contentment.

In summary, an effective work culture is not solely dependent on work ethics; it also requires ethics in the workplace. The Bhagavad Gita highlights the importance of developing a work ethic conditioned by an equanimous mind and detachment. By reducing attachment to personal gains and focusing on the task at hand, individuals can achieve excellence and experience true satisfaction in their work.

Work Results

The Gita expounds on the concept of "detachment" from the external rewards of work in the following manner:

- If sincere effort leads to success, the credit should not be solely attributed to the doer, thereby mitigating arrogance and conceit.
- Similarly, if sincere effort results in failure, the blame should not be entirely placed on the doer, preventing excessive despondency, demotivation, and self-pity.

These two dispositions safeguard the doer against psychological vulnerability, which is responsible for contemporary managers' companions of diabetes, high blood pressure, and ulcers, suggesting a correlation between psychological well-being and physical health.

Additionally, there is another dimension to the work ethic: when "karma-yoga" (service) is combined with "bhakti-yoga" (devotion), work itself becomes a form of worship, known as "seva-yoga" (service for its own sake). While this idea may appear religious, its application extends beyond religion and encompasses engaging in meaningful actions to serve others and contribute to making the world a better place.

Employee's Mental Health in the Corporate Sector

Sound mental health is the ultimate objective of any human endeavour, especially in the realm of management. It signifies a state of mind that can maintain a composed and positive demeanour or restore it when disrupted amidst the unpredictable external challenges of work and social life. Internal stability and tranquillity are prerequisites for a healthy and stress-free mind.

Several factors can hinder sound mental health, including:

- 1. Greed: the desire for power, status, prestige, and wealth
- 2. Envy: feeling discontented about others' accomplishments, successes, and rewards
- 3. Egotism: excessive self-centeredness regarding one's own achievements
- 4. Suspicion, anger, and frustration
- 5. Distress caused by comparisons

The driving forces in today's business world are speed and competition. However, there is a distinct risk that these forces may erode moral values. In pursuit of desired outcomes, individuals may resort to immoral means such as tax evasion, illegitimate financial practices, dishonesty in reporting, deliberate omissions in auditing, and overly clever financial manoeuvres. This phenomenon can be referred to as the "Yayati syndrome".

In the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic, there is a tale of a king named Yayati who exchanged his old age for the youth

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of his youngest son, hoping to indulge in endless pleasure. Yet he discovered that the pursuit of sensual gratification ultimately left him unsatisfied. He later regretted his choices and pleaded with his son to take back his youth. This story exemplifies the conflict between external acquisitions driven by extrinsic motivation and inner values and conscience guided by intrinsic motivation.¹³

It is worth noting that sound mental health is closely intertwined with personal values. It has been seen that values play a significant role in shaping attitudes, behaviour, and mental well-being. The relationship between values and mental distress has primarily been studied in non-clinical populations. However, exploring not only the prioritisation of values but also the compatibility or incompatibility between them may independently contribute to mental health outcomes.

Effective mental healthcare systems are vital for addressing mental health challenges. Unfortunately, many healthcare systems worldwide, including those in medium- and high-income countries, suffer from deficiencies and limitations. Barriers such as stigma, lack of resources, and low mental health literacy hinder the implementation of scalable interventions. To overcome these challenges, simpler and easily accessible approaches, delivered by trained community leaders and lay counsellors, have shown promise.

In conflict-affected populations, the prevalence of mental disorders is significantly elevated. This situation poses a considerable challenge for providing mental health interventions in such settings due to various complex factors. ¹⁴ Limited resources, a lack of awareness about mental health issues, stigma, and the need for context-specific therapies are some of the major obstacles faced. However, there is hope, as certain approaches, such as thought field therapy, facilitated by community leaders and trained lay counsellors, have shown effectiveness in addressing mental health concerns in these populations.

Resolving conflicts among healthcare professionals is of utmost importance for ensuring optimal patient care. Conflicts can arise from various factors, including individual differences, interpersonal issues, and organisational dynamics, which can profoundly impact the well-being and performance of healthcare providers. Understanding these factors and their consequences is crucial for developing strategies that promote harmonious working environments and improve patient outcomes.

To summarise, achieving sound mental health is highly desirable as it empowers individuals to navigate the challenges of work and social life with composure and positivity. Overcoming barriers to mental well-being and fostering an environment that supports individuals' values

and psychological needs are essential for promoting a healthy and stress-free mind.

Corporate Needs Those Who Practice What They Preach

In the realm of management education, Sri Krishna's words from the Gita resonate: "Whatever the excellent and best ones do, the commoners follow". This suggests that visionary leaders should possess missionary qualities, a strong practical approach, intense dynamism, and the ability to transform dreams into reality. The true strength and dynamism of a leader stem from an inspired and spontaneous motivation to assist others. Sri Krishna expounds further, expressing, "I am the potency that empowers those who are free from personal desires and attachments. O Arjuna, I am the righteous aspiration within those who are not opposed to moral principles". Sri Krishna emphasises that He is the source of strength for those who possess selflessness and detachment, while also serving as the rightful ambition within individuals who embrace righteousness.

Recent research highlights the significance of spirituality in management. It has been observed that many individuals acknowledge the importance of spirituality but find it challenging to put it into practice. However, incorporating spirituality into management yields numerous benefits and helps alleviate the prevailing negatives in the field. Recognising this, it is recommended that the Ministry of Human Resource Development take steps to reform the current education system and integrate value education and spirituality into the curriculum. This integration aims to improve the eroded moral values and uplift society while enhancing professional abilities and qualities crucial for effective management in the present scenario, ultimately leading to improved outcomes.

Promoting progress and success in life is not solely the responsibility of the government but also rests with individuals themselves. By actualising what we hear and possess in real life rather than merely preaching, we can achieve success even in today's stressful environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the review article highlights the dominant focus on material possessions and comforts as a means of achieving personal fulfilment, happiness, and societal recognition. This preoccupation has resulted in the marginalisation of alternative perspectives and paradigms, leading to a system heavily reliant on excessive consumption that primarily benefits a privileged few. The consequences of this fixation include increased exclusion, poverty, and inequality among the majority.

Furthermore, the failure to integrate economics into the

broader framework of humanity's social and spiritual existence has fostered a destructive sense of greed in economically advantaged regions, perpetuating conditions of deprivation for the masses. The introduction sheds light on these issues and aims to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges in our modern world, with the aspiration of cultivating a future that embraces greater equity and harmony.

The subsequent sections of the article explore the management guidelines derived from the Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Indian scripture, and their relevance to modern management practises. The Bhagavad Gita offers valuable insights into the various aspects of life, including management and leadership. It emphasises the significance of self-awareness as the foundation for effective management and leadership, encouraging managers to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations.

The recommended management guidelines from the Bhagavad Gita can be summarised as follows: developing a clear vision, strategic planning, cultivating leadership skills, establishing institutional excellence, building an innovative organisation, developing human resources, fostering teamwork, delegating tasks, promoting effective communication, and reviewing performance and taking corrective measures. By aligning individuals and inspiring their commitment to work towards a common goal, managers can maximise social benefits and contribute to the pursuit of excellence.

The article also discusses how the Bhagavad Gita's wisdom can be applied to modern management practices. It emphasises the importance of optimal resource utilisation, cultivating a visionary outlook, wholehearted commitment to work, motivation through self-transcendence, fostering a positive work culture, detaching from work outcomes, promoting mental health, and the significance of visionary leaders who practise what they preach.

By integrating spirituality and traditional wisdom into contemporary management practises, organisations can create a meaningful impact and strive for excellence while prioritising the common good. The Bhagavad Gita serves as a timeless source of knowledge that can guide managers in navigating challenges, improving decision-making, and contributing to a more harmonious and sustainable business environment.

Thus, this article provides a compelling case for incorporating the principles of spirituality and the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita into modern management practices. By embracing these insights, managers can foster a work environment that promotes wisdom, vision, detachment, self-transcendence, and a focus on the common good.

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