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Management

A STUDY OF BHAGAVAD GITA FROM MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES

KEY WORDS:

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INTRODUCTION

The whole of this study is based on the assumption that the Bhagavad Gita contains some management concepts. The various review of literature also corroborates this assumption. Now, in this chapter an objective study of the entire Gita is made to (or "intending to") identifying the management concepts contained in the Gita. The scanning is done chapter wise so as to have more clarity. As could be seen the concepts so identified cover various facets of General Management.

A Study of Bhagavad Gita from Management Perspectives Chapter One

This chapter opens with Dhritarashtra asking his minister Sanjaya as to what is happening on the battlefield where his children and the children of his brother Pandu have assembled with the sole intention of waging war against each other. Here, Dhritarashtra's words 'my children' are indicative of his affinity, bias and self-centered nature. He is not only the emperor but also the guardian of his brother's children. In other words he is a CEO and his children and his brother's children are like two companies or divisions under his care and control. As the head of the family and emperor, he must have averted the war. He could not do that. The war is declared and fought, and not only all his children but also thousands of others lose their lives at the end. This shows Dhritarashtra does not have the vision and mission of an emperor or a CEO.

Chapter Two

As already stated elsewhere the second chapter is often deemed as a summary to the entire Bhagavad-Gita. Here Lord Krishna talks about many subjects such as Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Sankhya yoga, and Ataman or soul. This chapter is also replete with many management topics including Leadership, Managerial Knowledge, and Stress Management.

Chapter Three

As we have seen already, this chapter is called as the yoga or chapter of karma or action. Leadership in action is explained by the Lord in this chapter. The chapter opens with a question by Arjuna to the Lord, why does He command Arjuna to engage in terrible acts, when He is the view that knowledge is superior to action. And Arjuna pleads with the Lord for a clear direction. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that there are two classes of men who realize God, one through deep philosophical thinking and the other by actions soaked in devotion. In each association, we discover two sorts of administrators: some of them are adepts in executing administrative choices, and the others are specialists in figuring arrangements, approaches, and programs. Hence, every official should pick the employments that are most appropriate to him. Then in stanza 20, Lord Krishna quotes the example of Emperor Janaka who perfected himself by Karma yoga or excellence in action. Janaka is often quoted as a Karma Yogi, a person who performs actions to the best of his ability and in a perfect manner without the least impacted by emotions. In the same way, every executive should work as a Karma Yogi doing his best and perfecting his actions every moment. Such executives are role models and are always outstanding. And in the very next stanza Lord Krishna says that whatever action is performed by

a great man, common men just follow him and always consider his actions as the standard. In other words, senior executives are always held as the role models by their subordinates and are emulated by them.

Chapter Four

Lord Krishna talks about incarnations in stanzas 7 and 8 of this chapter. He declares 'whenever there is a decline of Dharma or righteousness and rise of Adharma or non-righteousness I descend myself'. This descend is called as Avatar or incarnation. And what does an Incarnation do? Stanza 8 contains the answer. 'To protect the pious and to destroy evil doers and also to re-establish Dharma or Righteousness I appear on this earth from time to time' declares the Lord. Now what is the message for management here? Whenever there is some crisis brought about by corrupt or villainous people in the organization, the top management would bring in somebody who may be from the management family or a very senior person working elsewhere to resolve the crisis. And ultimately the guilty will be eased out or legally prosecuted and the honest will be safeguarded and retained.

Chapter Five

In this chapter, Arjuna wants to know which path is superior, the path of action without attachment and the path of complete renunciation. The Lord replies that both the paths lead to the same goal of God Realization. Lord Krishna, in essence, declares that outwardly performing his duties or actions but inwardly renouncing their fruits thereof, the wise man, who is refined and purified by real knowledge, attains instantaneous peace. Now the one stanza which is very much relevant to the modern executive is stanza 18 where the Lord says that a really knowledgeable person, because of the true and superior knowledge he possesses, looks up with equal vision a learned Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a socially outcast person who eats dogs. In the same way, an executive should be sensitive to the concept of the dignity of labor and treat all employees alike. It will tremendously improve his acceptability.

Chapter Six

Today some executives have been turning to meditation to get rid of executive stress and fatigue and enhance their creativity. This is happening in both India and abroad. In other words, meditation is accepted by executives all over the world as a key to their personal health and professional success. The whole of chapter six of Gita is devoted to Meditation. In stanza 5 the Lord asserts that one should uplift oneself with one's efforts. One should never indulge in self-condemnation. A person's best friend is himself, and in the same way, he alone is his worst enemy. Nobody should labor under the false notion that somebody else is responsible for his success or failure. Every one man should tell himself "I am responsible for my life." God has given the potential to every human being to achieve the best in life. This stanza should be taken as the seed or basis for executive development.

Chapter Seven

The Lord declares in stanza 7 that there is no Truth superior to

Him and that every being rests upon Him as the pearls are strung together a thread. An executive must realize that every employee is connected to the organization. However, nobody is greater than the organization whatever his designation be. The Lord again says in stanzas 21 and 22 that He lives in everyone's heart as the Super soul. And when one plays a demigod for the fulfillment of his desires it is God, the Almighty who grants his prayers.

Chapter Eight

This is a very small chapter which has just 28 stanzas. Moreover, stanza 7 alone is relevant to management thought. In this stanza, the Lord says 'Therefore, Arjuna, constantly remembering me, you fight. Dedicating all activities to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, without any doubt you will certainly reach me. As has been stated Arjuna represents the modern CEO and he finds himself face to face with his Grandfather, Teachers, Cousins and a host of close relatives arrayed against him in the war. This is a typical crisis for Arjuna, and it is at this juncture that Lord Krishna teaches him the Gita. Moreover, in this stanza the Lord counsels him to constantly think about him and fight. Our executives are also constantly facing a crisis in their day-to-day work. Moreover, the advice given to Arjuna would equally apply to the executives also. Whenever an executive faces a crisis, he will do well to do his best to resolve it remembering Gods name.

Chapter Nine

This is yet another small chapter with just 34 stanzas. In stanza 18, the Lord declares, For Example, the organization in which an executive is serving is his supreme master and also his best friend. Therefore all his activities revolve around his organization which watches or monitors these activities. Stanza 22 is one of the beautiful stanzas of the Gita which contains one of the greatest promises of God to humanity. The Lord promises that whoever worships Him not thinking about anything else, He will take care of all his needs and ensure that he enjoys all the things granted by Him. Again in the stanza, 26 Lord Krishna says that when a devotee worships Him with sincere devotion, a leaf, flower or water, He will accept it with supreme joy because it is offered with a pure heart. We have been seeing that some executives may not have dash or flash like others, but they do serve the organization with unflinching loyalty.

Chapter Ten

This chapter talks about the unending glories of God. In stanza 7 the Lord says: 'One who is convinced of my glories and divine powers is always engaged in unflinching devotion to me without any doubt whatsoever.' Moreover, He continues in stanza 8 that He is the source of all material and mystic glories or worlds. Everything in this universe has emanated from Him. The wise or the knowledgeable people who know this great truth worship Him wholeheartedly and are engaged in constant devotion to Him. Again in stanza 39, He says that He is the seed of all the animate and inanimate things in the world. Finally, He concludes saying in stanzas 40 and 41, that there is no end to His glories and that whatever He has listed is only an indication of His divine and unending glories.

Chapter Eleven

As desired by Arjuna, Lord Krishna appears before him showing His Cosmic or Universal form. Thus, this chapter contains the descriptive details of the Lord's Cosmic form. As already stated Arjuna wants to behold the Cosmic form of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna replies that Arjuna cannot see His true form with his naked eyes. So saying, He grants Arjuna a 'divine eye.' Moreover, how was the Lords Appearance? It was as though 'hundreds of thousands of suns rose up at once into the sky.' Naturally, Arjuna got scared and was amazed, frightened and hair standing on end; he started praying the Lord with folded hands. In the end, Lord Krishna assumes His usual human form and blesses Arjuna. Now, what is there for

management in this chapter? Normally an executive works for a company located in a particular place with or without branches.

Chapter Twelve

This is a very small chapter with just twenty stanzas. However, still, this is a very important chapter from management as it speaks about several traits of an effective executive. Here the discussion is about devotion both with form and without form and also about the characteristics of devotees. Students of management are concerned here about the discussion about the traits of a devotee for they are the same applicable good executives. Therefore, we shall focus on those stanzas which talk about the characteristics of devotees. Lord Krishna describes certain qualities here and says devotees with these qualities are dearer to Him. In other words, the Lord prescribes these traits as the ideal qualities of a devotee.

Chapter Thirteen

In stanzas, 8-12 the Lord lists certain qualities or traits as an indication of knowledge, and He also says that any other trait which is contrary to these as marks of ignorance. Of these positive traits the following are highly relevant to modern executives: Humility, absence of arrogance, non-violence, forbearance, simplicity, approaching a bona fide spiritual master, cleanliness, steadiness and self-control; renunciation of the objects of sensual pleasures, absence of false ego, the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease; non-attachment to close relatives, and even-mindedness towards pleasure and pain unflinching devotion to God, and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth.

Chapter Fourteen

This chapter is named as 'Guna Thuraya Vibhaga Yoga' or the basic traits of humans. In stanza 3, the Lord calls his womb as 'Mahat Brahman' from which, He says all the beings originate. In other words, He says He is the Father of all beings. In verse 5 Lord Krishna says that the three basic traits namely, Goodness, Passion, and Indolence are all born of nature and bind the imperishable soul with the body. Moreover, through stanzas, 6 to 20 the Lord explains about these major traits and the consequent reaction of man. The basic trait goodness is known as 'Sathva' in Sanskrit, and it is the cause of light and brilliance. Its attachment is to knowledge and happiness. Rajas or Passion is characterized by desire and longing. It binds the soul with its attachment to material pleasures.

Chapter Fifteen

This chapter which is titled 'chapter on the Supreme Person' is again a small chapter consisting of just twenty stanzas. Here the Lord describes the Supreme Soul and the Individual Soul. For the limited purpose of the present study, the supreme soul can be compared to the organization and the individual soul to an executive or even a department in the organization. Stanza nine reveals the truth that the individual soul enjoys or experiences the objects while dwelling in the senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, and in mind. In other words, the executive exercises his powers through the authority conferred on him by the organization. In stanza fourteen, the Lord declares that He is the fire (energy) of digestion in the bodies of all living entities that digests all the four types of foodstuff in conjunction with the vital outgoing and incoming air. This is something like the funds of the organization which is spent for various activities that are carried out to achieve its goals.

Chapter Sixteen

This chapter lists the attributes of Devas or Gods and Asuras or Demons. Here Gods are to be understood as persons with noble qualities and Demons are to be understood as people of dubious or devilish character. From this research, the qualities that are ascribed to the Gods are fully relevant to an effective executive. In stanzas, 1 to 3 the Lord describes the

qualities of Gods. Among these the following traits are greatly relevant to an executive : Fearlessness, inner purity; acquisition of spiritual knowledge, charity, self-control, study of the Vedas, austerity, simplicity, non-violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, a calm and composed nature, aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, strong determination, vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, and freedom from envy. Here, the study of Vedas is to be understood as the acquisition of domain knowledge relevant to the job of the executive.

Chapter Seventeen

This chapter deals with the faith of people with different dispositions and behavior. People may have faith in God and perform austerities. This need not mean that they follow the scriptures and ethical in their behavior. Here, Arjuna is (Stanza 1) expecting the Lord to know about the faith people who are dominated by Goodness, Passion, and Ignorance. Executives also can be classified into three groups, based on their predispositions or basic nature. They could be dominated by extreme goodness, passion or aggression and ignorance and sloth. Lord Krishna replies that the faith of people depend on their basic traits which could be goodness, passion, and ignorance (stanza 2)

Chapter Eighteen

This is the biggest and the last chapter of Bhagavad Gita. It is often considered the review or summary of the entire Gita. In this chapter the Lord is summing up the essence of all the previous Chapters and in some detail He also talks about 'Sanyasa' or renunciation' and 'Thyaga' or giving up the fruits of all actions at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Here only such of those stanzas that have relevance to an executive in the performance of his organizational context will be discussed. Moreover, again such of those stanzas which are just repetitions of what have been discussed in the previous chapters will not be considered here. In stanza 9, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that whatever action is to be done by a person because it is a duty on his part, he should do it in pure detachment and not attaching himself even to the fruits of such an action.

CONCLUSION

In this research paper, the researcher has presented a study of Bhagavad Gita from Management Perspectives. It highlights the Bhagavad Gita from Management Perspectives of eighteen chapters of Bhagavad Gita. It can be inferred by thorough analysis of the Bhagavad Gita that management has been a part of life for centuries. The numerous Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita have given evidence for this before the management thinkers came to be. It supported various management concepts which gave them a different perspective and viewpoint.

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