



# The Management Mantra of the Bhagavad Gita: Key to Organizational Excellence

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Received: 4 October 2018 / Accepted: 14 September 2022 / Published online: 30 January 2023  
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**Abstract** The paper aims to understand and expand the idea of ardent devotees of the Hindu Dharma who devoutly follow the Bhagavad Gita, inarguably the epitome of principles of Hinduism, having imbibed it in their way of living, be it professionally or personally, thereby adhering to the learning out of it, both directly and indirectly thus resulting in decisions which are rational. The present research paper delves on the four levels, namely obedience, anticipation, creation and fulfilment of the public expectation towards Gita, and how the same is relevant in today's extremely competitive corporate environment. This paper establishes the rationality of teaching of various tenets of Bhagavad Gita while striving for excellence by corporate leaders so as to gain competitive edge as well as the viability of scriptures like Bhagavad Gita so as to carve a niche for the corporate to ensure sustainable development. Keeping the professional challenges of corporate world in consideration, the shlokas of Bhagavad Gita produce a unique solution. The teachings of Bhagavad Gita, as a holy scripture, at one side prepare the managers of today to strive for excellence and on the other side emphasize on importance of humanitarian touch in today's business world. The paper acts as a catalyst for leaders and managers to facilitate better decision-making

in competitive corporate environment as key for organizational excellence, which reinforces to work with self-consciousness and ensures how one can create happiness for their stakeholders.

**Keywords** Bhagavad Gita · Competitive corporate environment · Spirituality · Scripture

## Introduction: Bhagavad Gita: The “Elixir” to Nirvana

Bhagavad Gita, the holy scripture which defines the Hindu way of living, has been known to make possible the winning way of living for everyone, be it an individual or a group of people like family (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Not only this, the epic has been instrumental with regard to ensuring success for such entities like industry, state, business and the likes. Any profession or administration who intends to take the voyage towards eternal peace and continued growth in the realms of life can very well look up to Bhagavad Gita (Brown & Moffett, 1999).

The Bhagavad Gita is an epitome of wisdom and fountain of knowledge which facilitates good decision-making ability and a deeper understanding into the mores of life. Such a trait of this scripture of epic proportion helps in unlocking one's true potential as well as ensures that the human being is aware about the higher cause for which they live. Not only this, the candid nature of this holy text has been able to give human beings reasons to fathom their success in the most pragmatic way. Other researchers, like Nair and Rao (2016), suggested that the Bhagavad Gita has played a significant role for those who intend to survive and prosper in today's cut-throat competition.

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What is so beautiful about this holy scripture is that it never advocates taking extreme steps and bases its learning on the moderate behaviour which humans ought to display under various circumstances. Moreover, the growth which we talk about in terms of materialistic one as well as productivity aspect is also given due significance in this holy book which also a reminder about how we need to imbibe values and ethics for the larger good. For example, the spiritual guru and author Malkani (1964) is of the opinion that increasingly the image of an organization could be projected with a social bend. The focus should not be solely on enhancing profit or profitability. The corporate values CSR, that too only through the learning of Bhagavad Gita. Having the image of a responsible corporate player helps a lot. In the Indian context, the Tatas (the largest Indian conglomerate), the Godrejs, the Birlas, Infosys, Wipro, Bajaj, Sriram Investments, BHEL, Bharat Heavy Industries, Asian Paints, Brook Bond, Larsen and Toubro and many others of their ilk have worked on these lines. TATA uses the CSR model to enhance business thus believing in “I am that action in all things that is unopposed to values” (Muniapan & Dass, 2008). Social and political urge to enhance productivity as per one school of thought, whereas another school of thought recommends that it is materialism which leads to improved productivity and then there is the third school of thought which has its own views on the aspect of prosperity (Rath & Srivastava, 2018). It propounds that a prosperous living is characterized by the understanding achieved as a result of prudent decision-making at multiple levels. Contrary to popular myths, yoga and meditation enhance the decision-making capabilities along with improving one’s clarity of mind thus leading to a pious approach towards life (Dhamija et al., 2017).

Thinking about purity which is transcendental in nature, one can highlight the significance which the holy scripture of the Bhagavad Gita can bring to the same. Cultivating a sound decision-making necessitates requisite deliberation on understanding that one needs to set free of the partisan nature of self as well as let go of the state of alienation as well as incomprehension thus resulting in a state of oneness. The corporate way of living is something which can definitely borrow from the various tenets of the Bhagavad Gita thereby leading to a better sense of judgement for those who take decisions influencing the lives of others (Adhia et al., 2010).

The trait which enables a person towards fulfilling duties effectively as well as efficiently is the conscience which generates from within. In this regard, the relevant advice of Bhagawan, Krishna convinces as well as guides Arjuna to fulfil his duties towards the state without thinking too much about the opposition. This also throws light on how one should think about Me and fulfil the duty irrespective of what s/he encounters along the way.

Simultaneously, Krishna prophesizes Arjuna to be objective, that is, with no bias, whether good or bad, towards anyone because only then he would understand what is right for me and what is not thereby leading to a comprehensive knowledge of the same.

**mayi sarvani karmani sannyasyadhyatma-cetasa  
nirasir nirmamo bhutva yudhyasva vigata-jvarah**

*Those who are deluded by the modes of nature become attached to the actions of the modes. However, let no one who understands this unsettle the ignorant, whose knowledge is imperfect.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 3.29)**

Hence, O Arjuna, surrender your works, their entirety, unto Me, with your mind concentrating on Me, and you pick up the weapons and fight sans such desires as benefits, be free from egoism as well as the scourge of lethargy thereby following the true path. On the same lines, a corporate employee ought to surrender themselves towards the cause of their work and devote along with committing supreme concentration. They must not think about anything else and trust that the God would take care of them and ensure that they move on the right path without any signs of egotism (Edgerton, 1944; Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1954).

## Levels as Propounded by Bhagavad Gita

Four levels have been proposed to understand how the holy scripture of the Bhagavad Gita could be followed thereby capturing, as well as, fulfilling one’s expectations. According to Antony (2014), understanding these levels through yoga would help the reader how they can obey the Gita in the optimal manner thereby living up to the expectations of the general public as well as find the rationale for observing the tenets of the Gita beginning at the initial level and culminating with the last level thereby truly reflecting on the ways of meaningful living. A set of values could be imbibed when one follows the four stages as propounded in the holy scripture. Additionally, such qualities as a pious mind and heart, fearlessness, empathy towards others, harmony and common good arising out of tendency to sacrifice and patience could be the results of the same.

The levels of Bhagavad Gita which characterize the imbibing of values in the Indian context can be studied as follows:

### Obedience Towards the Gita

When one talks about obeying to the guidelines of the Almighty with regard to the way one lives life, it is nothing but the love which the devotee has towards God. Knowledge about the wisdom and knowledge as prophesized by

the higher powers is the most common way towards obeying them. The learning which one derives from the Bhagavad Gita is well-tested during such times when we have to put efforts thereby leading to a situation where everyone is a winner (Coates, 2009). It is because of this very reason that many a great scholars and scientists from across the globe have been fascinated by this Hindu text and followed its principles in letter and spirit. Some of the most prominent ones have been:

- “When I read the Bhagavad-Gita I ask myself how God created the universe. Everything else appears to be superfluous”. – **Albert Einstein**.
- “It was the first of books, it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence, which in another age and climate had pondered the same questions which exercise us”. – **Ralph Waldo Emerson**.
- “Here in the Bhagavad Gita, we find a practical handbook of instruction on how best we can re-organise our inner ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in our everyday life and draw from ourselves a larger gush of productivity to enrich the life around us, and to emblazon the subjective life within us”. – **Swami Chinmayananda**
- The Gita was first translated into English by the first British Governor General Warren Hastings for whom the Holy Scripture was too fascinating and engaging. On December 3, 1784 he wrote about how he felt that long after the British empire would have ceased to exist in the Indian sub-continent, the Bhagavad Gita would continue to guide the common Indian towards the pursuit of the larger good. As is the case today, it was indeed a true observation as the relevance of the Gita has only increased with time. The beauty of the situation is that during the later phase of his life when he was put on trial, it was from this holy book that he drew inspiration.

It is quite evident from the above testimony of the high and mighty about their views on the Gita that it has been the quintessential source of learning and inspiration for innumerable souls, not only in India but abroad as well. They have paid their obeisance to this fountain of knowledge, be it in their decisions or their way of living. Discharging their responsibilities towards fellow beings, be it family, friends or the society at large, has been another area where they have been immensely benefitted from the lessons as found in this holy book as well as their inclination towards living up to the principles as mentioned in it. All this has greatly assisted them towards getting recognized for their work and feel important in the world. The corporate czars can learn from these oracles of wisdom and imbibe such values in their day-to-day decision-making thus making lives better for others, and in the process, of themselves (Chandrasekhar

& Shivdas, 2014). One aspect which has been amply highlighted as a part of this study is the practice as employed by many communities of following more than one religion. According to Singh (2003) “there are 27 communities who follow both Hinduism and Sikhism, 116 both Hinduism and Christianity, 35 Hinduism and Islam, 21 Hinduism and Jainism and 29 communities who are both Hindu and Buddhist”. Different religious too consider the learning of Bhagavad Gita as a source of reckoning.

### Anticipating Public Expectation Towards the Gita

When one talks about one notch above, the Gita does not merely fulfil the expectations which a person might have while going through this great scripture. Additionally, it also adopts a pro-active approach (through meditation) thereby anticipating what one might need to feel accomplished in life (wakefulness) and guides the reader towards attainment (mindfulness) of the same (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). This trait of the holy book is a wonderful reminder to the corporate honchos that the best is yet to come, and they should never stop working towards the betterment of others, and by the virtue of it, of themselves.

In the words of Col. (Retd.) Anil Athale, the unwisely interpretation of the Gita has resulted in the decay of moral values and virtues when we look around ourselves, and we are to be blamed for the same. Without much rationale (and success), we have waited perennially for a saviour to rescue us from the downfall in our lives and free our souls from the vices. However, we have forgotten the many ways in which the Gita helps us to achieve the same on our own. We have failed to understand the central premise of the Gita which is to not care for the fruit and focus on the doing, our karma. Selfless acts such as community services (especially during disasters like natural calamities or grief), remembering the higher powers without greed or fear through Satsangs are the natural extension of our personalities which our society ought to have if we really intend to imbibe the principles of the Gita and spread its message to the masses (Ališauskienė, 2010; Vertovec, 1990) If one wishes to reach out to the Supreme Lord, the way to the same goes through the realms of spirituality and renouncing materialism. At the same time, it is to be understood that a certain level of materialism is necessary for our existence.

#### **tasmād asaktaḥ satatam kāryaṁ karma samācara asakto hy ācāraṁ karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ**

*Therefore, always perform without attachment the work that should be done. By doing work without attachment, man attains the Supreme.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 3.19)**

Based on the above discussion, it is to be understood that one should focus upon delivering on the duties as assigned to

them and they would be delivered from the unnecessary and unwanted uneasiness which comes along with expectations and fear of non-deliverance. Attachment with outcomes invariably influences the level of commitment and adversely impacts one's performance. The corporate players would do good to themselves and to their teams if they could practise what is mentioned here (Murthy, 1985).

To amplify the pragmatism which surrounds the Bhagavad Gita, there is nary a single scripture which talks about Karma Yoga—selflessness and commitment towards the betterment of the human race as much as it does. All this is done with logic and validation. It was Lord Krishna who propounded the concept of Altruism, the act of working for the greater good by helping others unconditionally (Piper, 1954). He prophesized that it is the best way of devotion which is the best way of connecting with the Supreme Lord and attain spirituality for the simple reason that it results in inner peace and wisdom. Altruism results in grace, thus paving the way to faith. Truth rests on faith and hence Altruism helps us to see what is true in our lives. When one helps others, this act enables them towards perfection in life. Setting examples for others by walking the talk is something which a true leader should be known for and should aspire for. Selfless service separates true leaders from those who merely pay lip service.

**yajnarthat karmano 'nyatra loko 'yam karma-bandhanah  
tad-artham karma kaunteya mukta-sangah samac-  
ara**

*This world is bound by action (karma), except for work done as a sacrifice. Therefore, O son of Kunti, do your work as a sacrifice and become free from the bonds of desire.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 3.09)**

Working towards fulfilling the cause of mankind, seen as the work of Lord Vishnu, should be undertaken with much selflessness thereby highlighting the sacrifices which one makes in the process. Not living this way of life would lead to fulfilling of no purpose and keep the person bind with materialism. Hence, O son of Kunti, live up to the duties which have been bestowed upon you by the higher powers and do so to the satisfaction of his. Along the way, be free of any sort of feeling thereby exhibiting stoicism. The purpose of life as per Bhagavad Gita is to purify our Existence from all material contamination by practising Bhakti-yoga or Devotional Service and at the end of life go back home, back to Godhead, i.e. Lord Krishna's abode. The ultimate motive of life underlies in the achievement of eternal love, a sense of tranquility and content and is to realize our true nature keeping God in perspective (God/Self-Realization), "*Sat Chit Anandam*" as per the Bhagavad Gita. The same could be accomplished on the virtue of serving the cause of the

Supreme Self/God through tending to his Creation (Prabhananda & Isherwood, 1954).

Fulfilment of purpose of life is contingent upon the deliverance of our work. Lord Vishnu is also known as Yajna which is the alias for sacrificial performance. Thus, satisfying Lord Vishnu requires performances emanating from our sacrifices. Working towards satisfying Lord Vishnu should be the very reason for our existence thus leading to a chain of related activities. Working in any other way would eventually result in some form of attachment thus defeating the very purpose for which we exist. Krishna consciousness is something that enables us towards fulfilling our duty which we owe towards the Supreme Self (Mulla & Krishnan, 2007). By doing so, we liberate our lives and become free of all sorts of attachment and emotions, whether good or bad because irrespective of their nature, emotions hold us back from delivering our duty and serving the cause of the Almighty. Cautious and diligent followers know it well that Lord Krishna is watching their efforts and thus attempt to follow the path as laid by him for Arjuna for awakening his soul and detach from such emotions which were acting as deterrent towards fulfilling his duties. Gratification is a vice which should be avoided at all costs as it is due to its presence that human beings never feel satisfied in life (Srirangarajan & Bhaskar, 2011).

### Creating Public Expectation Towards the Gita

The Gita does not only delve upon human emotions and deals with public situations, it also sets the benchmark as to how the society can benefit (Mishra et al., 2010) by following the below-mentioned tenets:

*Be Aware of the World Reality and About Thyself*

**vedavinasinam nityam ya enam ajam avyayam  
katham sa purusah partha kam ghatayati hanti  
kam**

*He who knows the Self to be indestructible, eternal, unborn and immutable, how can that person, O Partha, slay anyone or cause another to slay?*

**(Bhagavad Gita 2.21)**

O Partha, knowing the fact that the human soul is immutable, indestructible, eternal and unborn; how could anyone kill anyone?

These lines were uttered by Lord Krishna to convince Arjuna that soul is indestructible and the hesitation which was evident on his part owing to the act of taking someone's life was nothing but ignorance on his part for the reason that a soul never dies (Edgerton, 1944; Murthy, 1985).

Further, he said that everyone and everything which exists in this universe, does so for a reason and hence is useful.

The knowledge of something implies its utility to be derived from its application. For this simple reason, violence, no matter how unnecessary or destructive it is, has its application in human life as well. Resorting to violence should be coupled with rationale for the same. Thus, it is to practise with restraint and reason, these need to be ensured rather than refraining from violence altogether when the situation justifies its usage.

A person in position who orders an act of violence against someone who has did wrong to someone else is not doing anything wrong. S/he is simply performing their duty and should be seen in that light. Manusamhita, the guidebook for law, propounds if a person commits homicide, s/he should be prosecuted and awarded capital punishment because that is their destiny owing to the crime committed by them. Not doing so would be grave injustice to the person who died. Thus, it is only just to hang a murderer on the order of the king and serves the cause of justice. Similarly, to serve the cause of justice and do what is right, Arjuna must fight when asked by Lord Krishna to do the same. Violence which serves a larger goal is not at all violence (Runkle, 1976). It is the means to achieve the right end, to right the wrong. In medicinal science, surgery evokes pain but it serves the purpose for which it was done. Similarly, violence which is done to serve justice is not wrong. In corporate setting too, the leader has to set an example by punishing the wrong doer or else the mistake, which went unpunished, would set the wrong precedent thus encouraging others to do the same. On the other hand, the right amount of punishment would act as a deterrent for others to copy and for the defaulter not the repeat it.

#### *Strive for Buddhi (Knowledge) and the Composure of Mind*

**sukha-duhkhe same krtva labhalabhau jayajayau  
tato yuddhaya yujyasva naivam papam avapsyasi**

*Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, prepare yourself for battle. Thus you will incur no sin.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 2.38)**

Fighting for the purpose in which one believes and justifies is something which is only natural and hence not a sin. Any emotion, whether good or bad, arising out of it is not to be thought about much because it is obvious that there are consequences to everything which we do in our lives. Thus, a manager or leader should not feel bad if they have punished the wrong doer. It is essential for the success of the firm to set the right examples (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1954).

Money ought to not be parameter to gauge how much successful a person is. Rather it should be a “sense of abundance” as enjoyed by an individual or an organization. Mere resources, sales or profit should not be equated with

abundance. This term should encompass everything synonymous with tranquility, content and synchronization. More importantly, this should not be applicable just to the coterie of top management but to every member of the organization to realize the true sense of team. Principles pertaining to ethical and spiritual realms are not only connected to the motive of profit, but also are means to attain it (Worden, 2005).

Buddhiyoga is of much assistance when it comes achieving a certain level of emotional stability as well as learn how to work with a flawed mind and achieve stability (Antonov et al., 2010). This helps in remaining stoic even under extremely emotional circumstances thus not clouding our judgement. Perumpallikunnel (2013) expressed that the Lord convinces Arjuna to fight the battle for the sake of it as it is he who desires the same on the lines of Nishkaam Karma which emphasizes fighting for a cause which is noble and just. It is to be understood and ingrained that it is he who is to be kept in mind when performing any such act which we might perceive as something which we would not do otherwise. Those surrendering to Lord Krishna should think only about Him and not about what they think or what others think about them.

As per the Bhagavad Gita, one ought not to care about the end result. Rather the focus centre on the work itself. The commitment ought to always be there in combination with passion and intimacy (Dhamija et al., 2019). When the result starts to show, a sense of content ought to be there without getting too much associated with it as it is the time to march forward without losing the perspective of the larger goal. Also, the sanity as well as character of the person ought to be always kept into perspective while doing this all along. To summarize, expectations are bound be there. Nothing is wrong with that. What is important is that attachment to the outcome should not be there. This is for the simple reason that the outcome is not in one’s hands. Only the effort is (“How Bhagavad Gita has charmed US corporate”, 2006).

#### *Action and Inaction: Know Their True Nature*

**karmany akarma yah pasyed, akarmani ca karma  
yah  
sa buddhiman manusyesu,sa yuktah krtsna-karma-  
krt**

*He who perceives inaction in action, and action in inaction, is wise among men. He is a yogi and he performs all actions in a harmonious manner.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 4.18)**

Intelligent is the man who sees action in inaction and vice versa. S/he is transcendental, yet performs all activities.

Those acting as per the Krishna consciousness are delivered from all materialistic pursuits for they are

released of all bonds. The outcome becomes immaterial as the activities are being performed by Krishna himself. The person performing them is just a means who has been chosen by Krishna for the same thus making the performer of the act intelligent yet detached from the surroundings for they are committed to the cause of the Almighty. Inaction or no reaction to the work being done is termed as Akarma thereby highlighting that the path for self-realization should not be hindered owing to the thoughts on resultant action. The person performing the act on the behalf of Lord Krishna enjoys transcendental happiness (Moffitt, 1977) as everything is done by the Lord himself, the doer is a mere means towards achieving the goal as decided by the Almighty. Thus, fear or favour is not to be found with those performing the task on behalf of Lord Krishna. Nor does disinterest or gratification associated with their work as they know well that they are doing the work of the God. A sense of immunity pervades through the performer knowing fully well that it is the Lord who is being served through their action thus rendering such notions as success or failure meaningless.

*Cultivate the Satva or Purity by Knowing the Supreme Self*

**udarah sarva evaite,jnani tv atmaiva me matam  
asthitah sa hi yuktama,mam evanuttamam gatim**  
*Noble indeed are all these but the man of wisdom I  
regard to be My very Self; for he steadfastly trusts in  
Me alone as his highest goal”.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 7.18)**

These devotees are all large-hearted beings but they are situated in comprehending Me, I dwell in Me. On the virtue of serving my cause, they attain Me.

As the expectations go, one expects blessings on the part of the Almighty when one prays or performs rituals. This ought not to be the case. Those working towards purity of mind and body and serving the cause of the Lord would be noticed well as they contribute towards making life more meaningful (De Klerk, 2005). They know how they should lead their lives and have a standard belief about the Almighty which is not contingent upon situations, whether good or bad, in life.

The God never differentiates between those who are less capable from those who are privileged for the simple reason that these notions have been developed by humans to create boundaries among themselves. Moreover, a great soul is one who has devoted to the cause of the Lord, irrespective of their social standing. Thus, in that sense, everyone is a large-hearted person who is dear to the God.

## Fulfilling the Public Expectation Towards the Gita

The next logical step is the necessity to live up to the expectations of the public as per the principles of it. In today's times of maddening competition and a never-satisfying urge to reach at the echelon, people need to keep looking such opportunities wherein they gain knowledge, enhance their way of living, eliminate such vices as greed, anger, lust as well as learn how to sacrifice. For achieving such things, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are to be looked up to thereby assimilating the universal message as well as making it a mission to be followed by those who seek to achieve a balance in their lives (King, 1989). In order to enhance the decision-making abilities of its employees, Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation of India (MMTC) initiated motivational soft skills programme. “When employees become push-start managers, learnings from the Gita help them become self-start leaders”, says Bindra. “This is precisely what Krishna did—he guided Arjuna to decide why fighting the battle was necessary”. This is very much an example of how a religious text is judiciously used by a corporate house to bring out the best in its employees (Pratap, 2014).

The following verse of Gita highlights the conflict which has come to characterize different sections of the society. Additionally, it underlines the role of Lord Krishna as the arbiter who brings harmony among them thereby striking the balance among the warring sides.

**sri-bhagavan uvaca idam tu te guhyatamam  
pravakasyamy anasuyavejnanam vijnana-sahitam  
yaj jnatva moksyase ’subhat**

*To you, who do not disbelieve, I shall declare this most  
profound secret of wisdom accompanied by knowledge  
and discrimination. Once having learned this, you  
shall be released from evil.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 9.1)**

Arjuna was addressed by Lord Krishna that being never envious of the Supreme Lord is a virtue unto itself and owing to the same, Lord Krishna would provide his secret wisdom thus relieving Arjuna of all the material instincts and the frivolities arising out the same (Murthy, 1985).

The quality of life, as we know it, could be improved tremendously if we follow the teaching as propounded in the verse delivered by Lord Krishna, as mentioned above. Two instrumental paths have been shown by the Lord thus resulting in spiritual practice, namely the path of self-knowledge and selfless work (Das Gupta, 2007). These virtues could very well rein in the vices such as gluttony, anger, rage, lust and others known to the mankind.

When one embarks on the path of providing something of meaning to others, it characterizes selflessness, a state of “Seva” or “Karma Yoga”. People, like Arjuna in the

battlefield, become confused with what they expect from life and what they think is good and just. They need to devote their lives to the greater good and to the cause of the right deed. They need to contemplate what is just and hence should be done. They need to be knowledgeable, studious, virtuous and work on the ways which would lead them to attaining spirituality rather than merely performing their duties (Oman & Paranjpe, 2018).

An individual who is the true devotee of the Almighty and lives to fulfil his cause, considers himself as an instrument who should work towards attaining the role of fulfilling the purpose of the Lord, not anything else. One can rely upon selfless work and/or knowledge to attain the Almighty thereby becoming knowledgeable about the metaphysical. Contrary to popular belief, these two paths do not contradict each other, rather they complement. A successful life is the one which is embodiment of both of them.

**tri<sup>1</sup>-vidham<sup>2</sup> narakasyedam,dvāram<sup>3</sup> nāśanam<sup>4</sup>  
ātmanah<sup>5</sup>  
kāmah<sup>6</sup> krodhas tathā<sup>7</sup> lobhas,tasmād etat<sup>8</sup>  
trayam<sup>9</sup> tyajet<sup>10</sup>**

*The gateway to hell which destroys the soul is three-fold: lust, anger and greed. Therefore, one should renounce these three.*

**(Bhagavad Gita 16.21)**

The three vices which are seen as the sure shot way to the gates of hell are those of anger, lust and greed. The sensible people renounce them to the best possible extent thereby avoiding their downfall (Edgerton, 1944; Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1954). Those who are entangled with them can be sure that they would find it difficult to achieve greatness. On the other hand, those who can control them would not only live a better life but also have a real chance to achieve actual happiness and success in the true sense. Corporate excellence is something which can be achieved when one is delivered from the above-mentioned vices. It can be seen from the history that those corporate citizens who have made a difference to the cause of the humanity are the ones who are compassionate, selfless, driven by their character, in short, virtues which are the opposite of these vices. The

frivolous nature which one associates with these vices is not to be found with those in the corporate world who live by the principles of the Gita.

To illustrate, the 12 sutras (verses) of Kautilya pertaining to self-control and including the significance of being in command over the senses by getting the better of kama, krodha, lobha, mana, mada and harsha, i.e. lust, anger, pride, arrogance and foolhardiness. Conquering the internal enemies before one thinks of the outer ones is the first teaching of Kautilya. As per him, by getting rid of the six enemies he (the ruler) would be in a position to manage the senses well, enrich the intellectual and thinking ability on the virtue of wisdom of elders, keep a watchful eye and be vigilant with the assistance of spies, prevail a sense of security and well-being by (vigorous) action, ensure the adherence to their individual responsibilities (by the subjects) by fulfilling (his own) duties, obtain authority by (receiving) teaching in the sciences, accomplish reputation by involvement with what is of object-based benefit and uphold (appropriate) behaviour by (doing) what is advantageous (Muniapan & Dass, 2008).

Knowing one's inner self and living by the virtue which would enrich the same is something which has become quite difficult in today's materialistic world. Thus, it becomes all the more necessary for a person to strive for the same (Pandoi et al., 2019). The path leading to self-realization is to be devoid of the above-mentioned three vices and the piousness which characterizes one's life is directly commensurate with the ability to stay away from these three vices. The one who is able to do so would be the person who can be the master of their own destiny and raise the level of the life which they live thus leading to the realm of spirituality. The art of giving is something which would define their personality at this juncture. In the corporate world, such traits are rare to be found and those who exhibit the same are the ones who make the actual difference. Lord Krishna and the way propounded by him towards self-consciousness is the path towards achieving success in true terms (Narayanan, 2010).

Purity is something which is characterized by our inner and outer selves and guides our action. This is mentioned in our Vedas which help us in renouncing the three vices as mentioned above. The highest level of self-consciousness becomes attainable (self-awareness) for those who are pure in their mind and, by its virtue, their action (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2005; Marcuse, 2013). The people who want to be delivered from the shackles of materialistic living should aspire for devotional service.

The Vedas have propounded a system of four orders, better known as the caste system, or better still the four statutes of life which could help a person achieve spiritual well-being. (Hodge, 2004). For a person capable of adhering to the various rules and regulations, as laid down, s/he would be in a position to achieve the highest spiritual realm. Liberation and deliverance from vices would be natural follow

<sup>1</sup> <http://vedabase.net/t/tri>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://vedabase.net/v/vidham>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://vedabase.net/d/dvaram>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://vedabase.net/n/nasanam>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://vedabase.net/a/atmanah>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://vedabase.net/k/kamah>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://vedabase.net/t/tatha>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://vedabase.net/e/etat>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://vedabase.net/t/trayam>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://vedabase.net/t/tyajet>.

through. The corporate world can learn to succeed similarly given the challenges which occur in it.

### **Prudent and Swift Decision-Making Courtesy the Bhagavad Gita**

The corporate environment of today is vastly defined by the ability of management to take such decisions which are effective as well as quick thereby justifying their existence. In this regard, the various teachings of the Bhagavad Gita can help them to take decisions which are rational as well as taken swiftly. The holy epic propounds many learning which are very much applicable in contemporary corporate scenario and could be outlined as the following points:

#### **Possess and Exhibit Lively Enthusiasm**

Living to the fullest is something which we all desire and yearn to have. Having lively enthusiasm helps us in terms of achieving the same. A life where we have no regrets or complaints helps us to achieve a certain level of positivity in our personality thereby influencing our learning capability (Watson, 1988). Having a positive outcome justifies our hard work and provides us the energy to keep continuing doing such work. Irrespective of the outcome, a person never has a dull moment in their life thus inspiring others to do the same. A corporate leader would do well to emulate this lifestyle as it would encourage their subordinates to do the same thereby opening channels of communication. As per this school of thought, life should be complete, healthy and happy, a way of living which is promoted in every corporate house (Sessa et al., 2007).

#### **Set Pristine Goals**

A good leader knows the significance of setting the right goals for the team to achieve as clear targets result in that extra push which would put the person out of their comfort zone and go for the kill (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Such a thing makes the practitioner younger at heart thus inspiring them to excel no matter what the situation is and the state of mind. Achieving success in life is contingent upon how well we have defined our goals. Dreaming big is the pre-requisite for achieving big. To get ahead in life, scintillating thoughts have to be made the order of the day. Herd mentality never does good for those who crave originality and dare to go beyond the chartered territory. In corporate too, those who dare to think different are the ones who are noticed and patted on the back for their hunch. Setting the right target makes success just a function of time, to be attained sooner or later (Knapp, 2001).

### **Give Audience to Your Mind, More so when it is Quiet**

Elbow (1987) proposed that it is a sensible thing to listen to one's mind especially when it is quiet because then there is no such rush or hurry under which it has decide. Having all sorts of information on irrelevant things might do more harm than good for a person especially when they have to take crucial decisions in their lives. Reacting to everything is a trait of a confused mind which is not quiet thus resulting in situations of remorse and regret. Over-analysis results from a mind which is too busy thus making things hazy for us. On the other hand, a quiet mind knows how to differentiate and tell chaff from wheat. Its ability to make sense and logic is something which enables prudent decision-making. Decisions taken on impulse are more likely to fail. Corporate citizens can practise this and benefit from the same (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).

#### **Strive for Suitable Knowledge (and Use it Judiciously)**

When one talks about how to succeed in today's testing times, knowledge, which is appropriate, and information, which is correct, come to mind instantly. This is so because it is not enough to acquire any knowledge and rely on every piece of information (Davenport et al., 1998). They should be appropriate and correct, respectively. A great human being possesses a mind which never takes things for granted but applies their own perspective to it. Logic should be there for every decision taken and if not be looked upon. Simultaneously, over-analysis should be avoided (as mentioned earlier). Staying connected with the pulse of the society reaps dividends. Thinking on similar lines, Swati Piramal, Vice Chairman of Piramal Enterprises, shares her views. "I think the importance of value is being recognised worldwide now". For many years, her group has been practising the teachings of Gita, namely knowledge (gyan), action (karma) and care (bhakti). Further she points out how the partner firms exhibit their willingness to work with Piramal Enterprises because they are known to walk the talk and deliver on the value system which they endorse (Pratap, 2014).

#### **Stand Out from Others, Stand Apart from Similar**

One should know how to carve a niche for themselves among others as well as know how to make their work count. At the same time, we should not judge others based on prior information as we would not prefer the same for ourselves as well. Learn, unlearn, than learn again (Miller, 2002). Repeat this cycle endlessly to remain wise and relevant. Standing out from others helps us to get noticed on the virtue that we see things in a different manner. Instant reactions should be avoided as they cloud our judgement. Decision-making is a trait which should not be left to rash judgements and should



reflect the true nature of the organizations. Hence, leaders should practise equity and justice. At the same time, one must remember not to get too attached with the task itself and not invested in the outcome. Perform and forget. The outcome would be as good as your efforts for it.

### Stay Motivated and with a Right Reason

Being motivated is an essential trait for an individual to succeed in life. There should be a constant source of inspiration which motivates us to give our best shot in life. Being motivated in itself is not sufficient. A person should be driven by the right reasons. Full potential could be realized when the person has an inner urge to excel in life. Others' perception towards us should not influence our ability to perform. Motivation, coupled with selflessness, is the recipe to success as they push us to go that extra mile (Pargament, 2013). Confidence is the key in this regard. A life which is not driven by the right reasons would not be witness to true successes. Being self-centred results in below-par standards in life as we cannot see beyond ourselves thus resulting in triggers which are detrimental for our growth. Empathizing with others is the way ahead for those who want to grow beyond a certain level in their lives. Living for others is the trait which essentially makes our lives meaningful.

### Think Holistically

It is always a good thing to have a larger perspective towards doing things because it pays in the long run. Caring for others enables us towards thinking of the greater good and how to give back to the society. Happiest people are not those who have tons of money. The happiest folks are those who know how to give back to the society and this could be done in a number of ways. These traits are to be found in the most successful people and organizations in the world. Having a short-sighted approach, thinking about short-term gains, self-centred approach, all this result in a mindset which cannot comprehend beyond a certain limit (Purdy & Dupey, 2005). To err is human and it is only natural if a person fails because the taste of victory becomes sweeter after failure.

### Discussion

To put things into perspective, the gist of this paper is further explained with numerous illustrations which have been globally sourced thus highlighting the various instances when the learning of Bhagavad Gita has been put into practice by management gurus under numerous scenarios of corporate climates.

*American-Indians are by far the most prominent ethnic group to find place in such seats of learning like Harvard*

*Business School, Northwestern's Kellogg School of Business, and the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business what with almost 10% of professors belonging to this tribe. This has to do with the seeping in of the Indian value system and ethical orientation, that is, way of living, in one or the other, in their teaching. As per Dipak C. Jain, Dean of the Kellogg School, "When senior executives come to Kellogg, Wharton, Harvard, or [Dartmouth's] Tuck, they are exposed to Indian values that are reflected in the way we think and articulate". Apparently, expansiveness characterizes the backgrounds and philosophies of Indian theorists. At the same time, many of them admit that their work is characterized by common themes. One such is the presence of an intrinsic motivation, other than money, which should drive the executives (Singh & Choubisa, 2010).*

Prahalad, a consultant and University of Michigan professor who ranked third in a recent Times of London poll about the world's most influential business thinkers, opines that such a phenomenon could be best described as inclusive capitalism wherein the corporations believe in creating value and serving the cause of social justice at the same time.

Another way of putting thought process could be done by naming it as Karma Capitalism where the turmoil which marked the Enron crisis, the tech bubble burst as well as the Mortgage crisis results in shaping up of ethos which is far more gentler and empathetic than its predecessor both for the corporate as well as ordinary citizens.

Lord Krishna is being seen as the new Peter Drucker to the managers in India as they believe they could take a leaf out of his teachings and apply to their situation thus arriving at a solution for the same. This is so because they feel that the timeless wisdom which was imparted by Lord Krishna to his disciple Arjuna helped him break the barrier of indecisiveness regarding fighting his clan by taking up arms in the epic battle which took place at Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata. The same could be seen as a model example for inculcating leadership traits in modern-day managers where they could come to the rescue of their subordinates/colleagues in their hour of crisis (Pratap, 2014).

When one talks about the Indian corporate scenario, plethora of them such as State Bank of India, NTPC, NHPC and MMTC are getting inspired from the Bhagavad Gita which they have found quite useful for solving management-related issues as well as to work for the greater good. The scripture, apparently, has been embraced by such organizations for the reason that they believe it contains answers for anything, be it value-based management, mind control, leadership or motivation.

The Sixth Century B.C. Chinese Classic, *The Art of War*, has been the de facto choice for many in the corporate circles to quote its various teachings. Apparently, Bhagavad Gita is being picked up by many for the way it talks about various ways of life. Recently, a manager at Sprint Nextel

Corp. came up with a guide which is seen by many as an indispensable one talking about leadership going by the name *Bhagavad Gita on Effective Leadership*. It has been projected as a how-to guide by the author thus highlighting various aspects related to leadership (“How Bhagavad Gita has charmed US corporate”, 2006).

## Conclusion

The paper presented various perspectives as found in the Bhagavad Gita and the interpretations of its verses which could be applied in the corporate setting. The relevance of this text has only increased in today’s hyper-competitive times when people are looking for means to validate their point of view. The four levels, as propounded by this epic and explained in this paper, have been done so with the perspective that the readers would be able to get the larger picture and base their expectations on various aspects of life. Decision-making under various circumstances has been mentioned on numerous occasions in this research paper as it has a place of prominence in the holy book too. The levels, as mentioned, help a person to decide what the best possible way of living for them is and it has been highlighted that the greater good takes precedence over everything else. It has been mentioned how leaders and managers can ensure their own happiness by caring for others because an organization is as good as its employees. The four levels help us to connect with our inner self thus ensuring that we do things which we should actually do, not just for the heck of it. The various appearances as made by the shlokas, sermons, teachings, principles, texts during the course of the paper have been there for specific reasons so as to make the reader understand their relevance in today’s world.

The Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi looked up to it as source of inspiration during the independence movement of India and gave it the moniker of “Song of the Lord”. He acknowledged the tremendous inspiration which he derived owing to the pragmatic nature of this pious piece of literature. Other leaders, intellects of his ilk believed similarly in the judicious learning of the holy scripture thereby utilizing its astute approach towards solving day-to-day problems in a pragmatic manner. They expressed their amazement on the practical approach as propounded by the sacred text (Rao, 2018).

All through the research paper, it is to be understood (as had been pointed out numerous times) that the Gita is a scripture which doesn’t provide any substitute to hard work or arduous nature of it as we face on a daily basis. This holy book is seen by its followers as the beacon of light which enables them to face typical situations with aplomb. As we seek salvation as the highest goal of our lives along with excellence in professional lives, the Bhagavad Gita enables us

towards establishing the same. Apart from the spiritualism arising out of scriptures as well as traditional norms, learning by self based on life experiences and exposures. The ancient texts in the form of Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana, etc., have had a profound effect on belief system which we have towards our tradition thereby resulting in a robust value-based mechanism.

The paper also highlighted that failing in doing one’s job is something which is natural and should not be seen as something which is non-negotiable (Silcock & Duncan, 2001). What matters is that we learn from our mistakes and do not repeat them. As we know well, error does not become a mistake unless we refuse to correct it. Likewise, we should keep on trying unless we succeed. Another important point pertaining to this paper was that we should practise detachment. By doing so, we would be helping our cause thus letting go of emotions, good or bad, resulting in rational behaviour. Proper motivation is needed to accomplish in life and it becomes apparent to select the motivating factors carefully. True happiness is not dependent on materialism alone. Serving the cause of the Supreme Lord is something which we should look forward to and should not be contingent upon successes or failures. On the part of the authors, it is anticipated that the present research work would make a seminal contribution towards the related literature. More such work related to different domains of management, for example, strategic management, financial management and human resource management can be inspired from Bhagavad Gita as well as other holy texts of the world.

**Funding** No funding.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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