

Insightful teachings of the Bhagavad Gita for the development of Leadership

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Abstract

Bhagavad Gita projects the cultural essence of Indian life style nurished with the philosophy of values and ethics. It gives us an understanding of the deep rooted Dharma in the Indian society since from its first phase of evolution. Our all scriptural enquiries are somehow influenced by the philosophical injunctions of the Bhagavad Gita's core principles. That's why it is gaining popularity not only I religious folk but also in corporate sectors, business industries and reputed management institutes. In this sequence, we are seeing most of the studies on Bhagavad Gita, focussing on leadership development. In present paper we have also investigated the idea of leadership development in the Bhagavad Gita. In findings, we suggest that if leadership is derived from the moral values and insightful nature, it will definetly produce an environment of eqanimity and righteousness. Which is need of the society and Bhagavad Gita gives the best explanation of it.

Key words- Bhagavad Gita, Leadership, Insight, Royal sage

Introduction:

Here we will try to discuss the concepts of leadership as evolved in our ancient tradition with special reference to the Bhagavad Gita. But in these days leadership is a topic of modern management studies. Due to which when we study the ancient or Indian management system then we wrongly make it's relation with the modern management system. Off course our modern management system and ancient system are very close and recent researches in this field have shown a great affinity between these two. That's why, in our present study we have decided to understand a fresh concept of leadership as structured in the original scheme of the ancient Indian texts. For this, if we go through some ancient texts then, we will see so many references has been depicted

as the duties and virtues of a king¹. In this regard Kautilya's work is an ideal and meaningful for our study but our main stress will be on the concept of leadership in the Bhagavad Gita. Other references are only supportive.

Kautilya's Arthashastra² deals in detail with the qualities and disciplines required for a Rajarsi. According to Kautilya, a Rajarsi³ (royal sage) is one who has self-control, having conquered the inimical temptations of the senses, cultivates the intellect by association with elders, keeps his eyes

¹ In modern concept we can understand it as a leader or a person who want to influence the peoples.

² See details in Kautilya Arthashastra, Book-I, Prakaran-2, Chaper-5(vriddhasamyogah) and Prakarana-3, Chapter-6(indiyajaya-arisadavarga tyagah), Chapter-7(rajarsjivritam) and Prakaran-2, Chaper-5(vriddhasamyogah).

³ We can understand this as King, who is guided by their own pure self and their pureself is an outcome of austerities.

open through spies, ensures the observance (by the people) of their dharma by authority & example, improves his own discipline by (continuing his) learning in all branches of knowledge; and, endears himself to his people by enriching them and doing good to them. Such a disciplined king should, keep away from another's wife, not covet another's property, practice ahimsa (non-violence towards all living things), avoid day dreaming, capriciousness, falsehood and extravagance and avoid association with harmful persons and indulging in (harmful) activities. Similarly the duties and virtues of a king are not only given in the Kautilya's work but also in several other works of importance.

Bhagavad Gita in this regard is very important. Various researches have been done for the new interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita through which this text equally gained a prominent place in the spiritual practices and in modern management studies. Bhagavad Gita is considered as a text which gives solutions for many aspect of life. I have found various researches; those make a good communication of Bhagavad Gita with modern management system. Also in case of Bhagavad Gita and its role in the leadership development has gained a profound attention of the management studies. In my enquiry I have tried to stress on some important points through which one can easily understand the teachings of Bhagavad Gita in relation to leadership.

Sankaracarya in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita clearly states the purpose of the text. According to him⁴, succinctly, the purpose of the science of the Gita is to set forth the *summum bonum*, which consists in the total cessation of the transmigratory life and its cause. Sankara⁵

⁴ Sankaracarya in his introductory note, See- Bhagavad Gita Bhasya, Tr. Dr. A.G. Krishna Warriar, Sri Rama Krishna Math, Chennai, 2007, p-5

⁵ Ibid, p-6

further in his statement gives the importance of the text as its mastery yields all values of life, that's why he is endeavoring to explicate it. These values uplift a person up to the highest level of the human goal. Since our enquiry go ahead for the understanding of these values which may help us to develop the leadership ideas from this text.

It is very interesting that Krishna-the speaker of the text, says that this knowledge of immutable yoga I imparted to the Sun (Vivasvana) who declared it to Manu and Manu proclaimed it to Iksvanku⁶. Hence after a careful observation we find that all these listeners were kings. So this knowledge may be reserved for the rulers or kings. However this is not strictly followed throughout the text but this case is very important for our study. Even in the next verse it is clearly mentioned that the royal sages (Rajarsi)⁷ have shown this yoga thus traditionally transmitted. Consequently when I go into the enquiry that, why this knowledge was perished, due to which Krishna re-transmitting it to Arjuna? Sankaracarya⁸, the commentator speaks that this yoga has perished, since its practitioners have been weak and sensuous, in contradiction, world is served from the life's supreme values. He compares the ray of the sun to the courage and energy.

In our finding we can say that a good leader should be strong (physically and mentally) and detached from the sensual pleasures, energetic and courageous. This is obvious from the above statements of the text.

In the same way further readings of the Bhagavad Gita gives us an insightful vision for the development of leadership. Generally in modern sense we understand leadership as an effective part of management system but if it combines

⁶ Bhagavad Gita, 4.1

⁷ Ibid, 4.2

⁸ Sankarabhasya, 4.2

with the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, then we will understand its vastness.

Nature of a yogin⁹, tapasvi, isthitaprajna¹⁰, bhakta, sanyasi etc. attract us, if these qualities combine with a leader than he/she can make a better world. The qualities given under these will surely make a leader of stable mind and heart. One who is detached¹¹, have no desire for the fruit of the actions¹², free from all doubts¹³ can make good decisions. However, in the original scheme of the Bhagavad Gita these qualities are not for the worldly activities but for the liberation from this momentary world.

This is again very interesting that when Krishna speaks about the importance of karma, he says that Janaka and others achieved perfection through work alone, to promote the welfare of the world, you (instructing Arjuna) ought to do works¹⁴. This gives a message for the modern leaders, how can they develop the leadership through the vision of karma given in the Bhagavad Gita. According to

⁹ See- Bhagavad Gita, 3.3.

¹⁰ Cf. Bhagavad Gita, 2.55. In the second chapter of Bhagavad Gita we find a description of a sage of stable wisdom (isthitaprajna), starts from the 55th verse to 72 verses.

¹¹ For instance see- Bhagavad Gita, 2.48. This is referred not only in one place but many places in the Bhagavad Gita

¹² Bhagavad Gita, 2.47.

¹³ Ibid, 2.45

¹⁴ Ibid, 3.20

Reference:

1. Dr. A.G. Krishna Warriar, Bhagavad Gita Bhasya Sri Rama Krishna Math, Chennai, 2007, p-5
2. Bhagavad Gita, 4.1
3. Sankarabhasya, 4.2
4. Bhagavad Gita, 3.3.
5. Cf. Bhagavad Gita, 2.55.
6. Bhagavad Gita 2.55- 72 .
7. Bhagavad Gita, 2.47- 48.
8. Bhagavad Gita Sankara Bhasya, 3.20.
9. Bhagavad Gita, 2.71

Sankara¹⁵ here actions are the means of mental purification through which one get liberation from the world and perfection in the worldly actions. Leader's worldly actions are not only for their self but also for the welfare of the society because whatever works the best, the foremost man, does, other men also, following him, do. Again only the standard the best man sets up, secular and Vedic, the world accepts as authoritative¹⁶. These things are very necessary for the development of leadership in the management system.

Since the ideas behind all these aspects have been discussed in the Bhagavad Gita reflect a yogic personality and this personality, free from ego¹⁷ can bring forth the new vision of management system, truly governed by the pure self. This will be unconditional leadership, without a desire, to influence a particular population. Actually, one who is endowed with these pure virtues will automatically influence the population. Hence there is no need to influence.

We have seen that, in ancient time true leaders always influenced their society not by their discourses but by their acts, values and behavior. Now in these days also we need a leadership, should be governed by pure insight. Bhagavad Gita is a perfect guide for such type of leadership.

¹⁵ See- Bhagavad Gita Sankara Bhasya, 3.20.

¹⁶ Ibid, 3.21.

¹⁷ Cf.- Bhagavad Gita, 2.71