

**Research Article**

## **Organizational Effectiveness through the Lessons of Bhagwat Gita**

Shreshtha Yadav<sup>1\*</sup>, Neena Kohli<sup>2</sup>, Anupam Kumar Yadav<sup>3</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

Most of the business theories and models were developed and examined in western culture. So, they give their best result in western culture but their applicability in Indian culture has a matter of inquiry. India has a very different value system from other western countries. So, establishment of cultural validity of western business theories and establishment of indigenous business theories are much needed in present scenario. Present paper aimed to recognize the significance of ancient Indian literature in modern business management. For the same purpose Bhagvad Gita (one of the oldest Indian text) was chosen for this study. Bhagvad Gita is one of the epic literatures of India and has such a vast content in itself. That is why many researchers have studies Bhagvad Gita in different contexts like management, educational philosophies, art of living, personality development and many more. Present paper explored the significance of the knowledge of Bhagvad Gita in business management. Hermeneutics method has been used to analyze the content of Bhagvad Gita. Preliminary analysis showed that Bhagvad Gita has many important lessons for management. Lessons like incorporating self into work and Karma yoga (attitude towards work) was discussed in detail. This paper mainly focused on establishing the significance of Indian literature in management rather empirically examines the role of these lessons at workplace.

**Keywords:** Indian culture, business management, Bhagvad Gita, Hermeneutics

**H**istory of organizational behavior is decorated with many classical theories. Many of these theories are intended to find out the possible ways, how employees can work more efficiently. But there are many theories those do not have concern for efficiency only but focus on the effectiveness. Organizational efficiency and effectiveness both are essential for the development of any organization. Here question is at what cost of effectiveness; efficiency can be considered. Efficiency measures how maximum output we can get having investing minimum input. An organization is called efficient if it is able to reach the maximum output, after investing the minimum resources. As, India was ruled by British

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, India

<sup>2</sup> Faculty, Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, India

<sup>3</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, India

**\*Responding Author**

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Empire for almost two hundred years; industrial development of modern India is highly influenced by the management thoughts of western countries. Today's business world is full of competition, diversity and instability. In this scenario organizational effectiveness gives edge effect in the success of any organization. Organizational effectiveness indicates that organization is doing right thing in a very right way. Organization does not consider shortcuts to achieve immediate goals but focuses on sustainable strategies to achieve long term goals. At first view organizational efficiency seems more beneficial for productivity and success. But in reality, organizational effectiveness produces the sustainable benefits for the organization.

For that reason, it is important to develop an organizational climate which contains the promoter of effectiveness to compete with others organizations. Classical western approaches preliminary focused on the efficiency but later many western management theories talked about importance of efficacy. So, there are many theories of organizational effectiveness but none of theory has a universal validity. There is no theory or model of organizational effectiveness that can be equally applicable in different culture or nations; especially in Indian culture which is very different from other cultures. Therefore, an indigenous model of organizational effectiveness is extremely required for the Indian organizations. Bhattacharjee (2011) also discussed the relevance of Indian philosophy in modern society and argued that Indian ancient texts can help to develop management principles to construct more sustainable business environment. Sinha (1972) discovered the beginning of industrial psychology in India; he believed that industrial psychology in India follows the same path as other branches of psychology. Development of Psychology in India follows the footsteps of western countries. Different psychological theories were copied from western countries and implemented in Indian culture; without authenticated their cross-cultural validity. This trend followed by many Indian scholars which proved completely irrational for the industrial development in India.

India is known for its rich value system and very insightful literary texts. Each and every area of life is discussed in Indian texts. Area of business management is also described in details in many Indian texts. Atharvaveda, Arthashastra, are very few to name which focuses mainly on management of wealth. Despite these texts there are many other scripture those are not written for management people but they have very significant teachings for management people; Bhagwat Gita is one of them. Many authors have analyzed the text of Bhagwat Gita from many perspectives. Many management scholars also had written a well description of Bhagwat Gita. Many scholars have talked about how teachings of Bhagwat Gita are important in running a successful business. Bhagwat Gita is not only researched by Indian scholars but also many western scholars took an interest in Bhagwat Gita and they also found that this text has the ability to guide the whole world. Many western authors have explored the relevance of Bhagwat Gita in different functions of management. Now a question can be arise that if Bhagwat Gita is analyzed by number of scholars than is there any need to work on it again. So, answer itself in Bhagwat Gita, it is a very lengthy conversation between the

two (Arjun and Krishna). This text has very deep meaning therefore there is a continuous need to rediscover its meaning.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As a qualitative research methodology hermeneutics was applied to unfold the meaning of Bhagwat Gita. Hermeneutics is qualitative inquiry which can be applied to interpret the text, especially the texts those are very meaningful in nature. Originally, hermeneutics was used to interpret the religious texts like Bible, later it also applied to human sciences also (Dilthey, 1910). Basically, hermeneutics used to interpret the meaning of ancient literature. It involves following advantages (a) it focuses on thoughtful rather details; (b) it admires the context of literature; (c) it analyses the language of literature; (d) clarifies the ambiguity of literature.

### ***Lessons from Bhagwat Gita***

Incorporating self in to work:

Fundamentally organizations have three levels (a) individual level; (b) group level; (c) organizational level. All the functions of an organization operate on these three levels. Incorporating self in to work encompasses the individual level functions of an organization. Self is defined in many ways in literature but Bhagwat Gita gives a completely different meaning of self. Here, self does not mean the body or bodily experiences. Self means the atman; a source of power which gives all the energy to our body so that it can function. Atman is superior to all bodily senses. It controls the functions of our body and directs the senses. So, understanding and management of atman (self) is very important. Bhagwat Gita describes the importance of atman in this way:

*indriyāniparānyāhurindriyebhyahparammanah  
manasastu para buddhīryobuddhehparatastusah.*

This verse says that subjects of body are inferior to the affairs of senses; mind deals with higher functions of senses; budhi (intellectual ability) is greater than mind and atman (self) is superior to all of the above. Many business tycoons and management gurus have already discussed the importance of self management but they did not tell how to manage self. Bhagwat Gita enlightens us with the meaning of self as well as the process to manage the self. Some people take atman as sixth sense but it is not; it is a master of sense. Your atman determines what you are; what you should do, and how you should do. Now, it is up to a person to pay attention the call of atman or avoid it. If a person follows the every call of atman, it is very sure that he/she will achieve sustainable well-being. Managing self involves three steps; first there is a need to understand what you are? It starts with identifying your strengths and weaknesses. Second step is to transform your strengths into uniqueness. In the corporate world, it is called as USP (unique selling point); your unique competencies are your USP. Third step involves to do the right thing in a right way. It is very important step, if you want to achieve great success; function correctly is not sufficient but function in proper way means according to the demands of context and situation is a key point. Incorporating self in to work was prioritizing by many business organizations and they found a good result of it. If an employee incorporates self in to work; it results in honesty, compassion, integrity, sense of

responsibility, engagement and citizenship behavior. These employees show energy, thriving and found meaningfulness in their work. Sriranganjan and Bhaskar (2011) also claimed that bringing spirit at work involves considering work as a prospect toward excellence and meaningfulness.

### **Karma Yoga (Attitude towards work)**

Karma yoga is a very magnificent doctrine of Bhagwat Gita. Karma yoga is very useful for every aspect of life and its relevance was discussed by some authors (eg. Zubin R. Mulla and Venkat R. Krishnan, 2008, 2009, 2012; Pandey N. and Naidu R. K., 1992). This doctrine is equally important in organizational setting. Doctrine of Karma yoga emphasizes on the Karma, here Karma means duty or responsibilities. Karma yoga does not differentiate the type of duty or responsibilities; all Karmas have equal importance. Here, none of the Karma is superior to other and any Karma can lead to salvation (Moksha). Either someone is officer or peon; every one can get salvation (Moksha) by doing their Karma through a path of Karma yoga. If we look at around, we find that every individual is engaged in some work or simply we can say every individual is doing their duty. Kramayaga also says that doing ones duty is sufficient for salvation; than what is the problem. Why this materialistic world is full of dissatisfaction and worries. So, answer lies in the explanation of Karma yoga itself. Karma yoga does not tell that just doing karma is enough. Karma yoga teaches us how to do our duties and if someone follows the principles of karma yoga she/he will find the ultimate goal of life. Karma yoga basically emphasizes on two characteristics.

1. Yoga karmshukaushlam.
2. Nishkam karma.

Yoga karmshukaushlam stresses on the perfection in the work. No matter what you do; do it with perfection. Perfection in work leads to satisfaction and respect. Employees those who work with perfection always get respect and success in his life. Sometimes perfection needs more time and resources but at the end it gives magnificent results. So, do not compromise with perfection only for achievement of short term goals. Think and engage yourself in perfection. Bhagwat Gita describes the importance of perfection in this way:

*buddhiyuktojahaateehaubhesukritadushkrite /  
tasmaadyogaayayujyasyavayogahkarmasukaushalam //*

This shlok (phrase) says that a person who maintains the balance in every aspect of life (pleasure and worry) need not to concern about merit and wrongdoing. They always engage in yoga that lead to perfection in work.

Here, meaning of yoga is completely different from what we understand generally. Generally yoga is described as physical activities (Asana and pranayam) but it is not a complete depiction of yoga. Yoga is a different way of living; it tells us how to live our life. Yogic way of life includes maintaining equanimity and achieving perfection.

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Second basic characteristic of karma yoga is nishkam karma. Nishkam karma means detachment to the outcome of work. Every action has some outcome and the nature of this outcome challenges the equilibrium of individual. If the outcomes are fruitful; people feel happy and worthy. Inversely, if outcomes are not as expected; people feel sad and worthless. Karma yoga says that people should not be attached to the outcomes of actions; it helps to maintain the equilibrium. If individual is not attached to the outcomes; he/she will not be affected by the nature of outcome and experience equanimity in every situation. Equanimity is a basic characteristic of yoga; an individual who live a yogic life do not experience the excessive emotions. This state of balanced emotions show the way of perfection in every action which is the main indicator of yoga. So, to achieve the perfection, nishkam karma is very essential. Nishkamattitude toward outcome of action reaches to equanimity then it makes the way of perfection. This is the basic process of karma yoga. Bhagwat Gita describes the importance of nishkam karma in this way:

“KarmanyevaAdhikaraste Ma PhaleshuKadhachana  
Ma Karma-phala-heturbuhu Ma The’ SangabAsthuAkarmani”

This means that individual is only having the permission to act; he/she does neither have the right to decide the outcomes of respective actions nor to have expectations for desired outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper does not aim to ignore the value of western literature on management but stresses the applicability of Indian literature in the field of management. Indian culture has very distinguished characteristics so Indian population have. So that, managing Indian workers is different from other population. Managing Indian workers through merely western principles channels the many problems at workplace. The aim of incorporating the Indian ethos at workplace is extracting better and more work from Indian workers and improve the bottom-line of the organization. The worker has become a hirable commodity, which can be used, replaced and discarded at will. Absence of Indian values in management style makes workers annoyed that lead to less productive work environment. Many strikes and clashes between management and workers are only caused by implementing the western thoughts without making any modification according to Indian context. In this situation workers feel themselves only as mean to make profit that makes environment of distrust. Workers and management become two contrary segments. Management and workers are expected to work together for the betterment of organization but in this situation they got engage in counterproductive work behavior. Human values lost their place in organization and make organization only a mean to make profit. At large this situation harms the society as well; strikes and clashes make disturbances in the functioning of society also. As organizations are the integral part of society; any breakdown in organization results in trouble in society.

It is completely true that western management ideas have produced prosperity for organizations at a particular time; but it did not find the same results when it comes to the

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everlasting good for individuals and society at large. It has remained by and large a soulless edifice and an oasis of plenty for a few in the midst of poor quality of life for many.

Hence, there is an urgent need to reexamine prevailing management disciplines, their objectives, scope and content. Management should be redefined to underline the development of the worker as a person, as a human being, and not as a mere wage earner. With this changed perspective, management can become an instrument in the process of social, and indeed national, development. This can be earned only by incorporating the Indian ethos in to workplace.

### ***Limitations***

Indian literature is not only limited to Bhagwat Gita; there are many other texts those need to be investigated in this context. This paper just through the light on the importance of Indian ethos at workplace; no practical attempt is made to examine the benefits of Indian knowledge in real situations.

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