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THE BHAGAVAD – GITA AND BUSINESS ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

During the past few decades, we have witnessed an increase in application of ancient wisdom which are given in literatures in the context of business. Now a days, study of ancient wisdom has become a subject of growing interest. Moreover ancient literature of India is filled with lessons that are relevant and useful for day to day activities of business houses. Among all of them, lessons of The BHAGAVADGITA are most popular in the field of business due to their immense relevance in human life. This research attempts to incorporate the ethical principles found in the Bhagavad-Gita into businesses. The Gita advocates the spirit centred approach to the business ethics based on eternal values and moral principles that should govern the code of conduct of business houses.

KEYWORD

Ethics, Business Ethics, Bhagavad_Gita, Ethics approach.

INTRODUCTION

Generally it is observed that most of Indian organisations are not able to do much well internationally. The reason cited is failure of Indians to develop an indigenous business management style. Most of our ethics are based on western principles. Very less number of business schools' curriculum explore the eternal values as presented in some of our ancient Indian literatures. However, there is no harm in studying the ethics of western countries but it is also equally important to not forget our own literatures. That's why the study of ethics has been gaining more and more importance with the passage of time. Even some of business schools has classified the course of Ethics as compulsory for every student. Their main purpose is to promote ethics through education, inculcation and nurture of values such as honesty, integrity, transparency, self-regulation and understanding of generally accepted business norms, ethical percepts among students.

OBJECTIVE

Over the years, business ethics have become one of the most discussed topics around the World due to increasing need of it because many scandals has been happening in the Businesses all around the world. Many studies has been done on the basis of Vedic literatures, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Upanisads.

Therefore in this paper an attempt is made to Explore the ethical principles found in the Bhagavad – Gita to fill the literature gap in the Wisdom literature in Indian business organisations. It tries to reinforce the Bhagavad-Gita Ethics in business organisations and make them aware of code of ethics. This paper provides

- The basic understanding of the concept of Business ethics.
- Issues related to application of business ethics.
- Basic aspects of Bhagavad – Gita.
- Relationship between Bhagavad-Gita and business ethics.

ETHICS

The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word ethikos meaning custom or character. The Oxford Dictionary defines ethics as the treatment of moral questions. In general we can say That ethics means good and bad, right and wrong, should and should not(Grace and Cohen 1998 pp.3).Ethics are the moral principles. These provide the logical reasons or justification For what is wrong and what is right. Ethics are part of normative science because it is Concerned with the norms of human conduct.

Samson and Draft (2008) says that ethics are social standards which involves a conflict Between the needs of the part and the needs of the whole.

There are mainly 4 approaches which are applied generally namely Individualism approach , Utilitarian approach , Moral rights approach , Justice approach , the Common good approach.

1 .Individualism approach: It says that acts are considered moral when they promote the Individual's long term interests in best way.

2. Utilitarian approach: According to it , a decision is considered morally right when it brings the greatest amount of good for the largest number of people.

3.Moral rights approach: As per it, moral decisions are those that best maintain the rights of people affected by decision including free consent , life and safety , freedom of conscience, free speech etc.

According to Immanuel kant: rights = Duties.

4. Justice approach: It says that all persons should be treated with equality , fairness , Impartiality and a decision will be ethical if there is justice.

5. The Common good approach: It says that every person in the world is responsible to contribute and enrich the life by taking the decisions which he think are good for him and others also.

BUSINESS ETHICS

Due to globalisation and liberalisation there is less control of government over business Organisations which emphasis on more and more need of ethics in business activities. The Principle objective of ethics has always been to produce morally upright leaders with good

and acceptable behaviour(Abu-Tapanjeh 2008).In context of businss organisation , ethics

Involves the application of moral principles , code of conduct , standards in business Decisions to provide value to all stakeholders. It covers all the aspects of management Functions such as finance , accounting , marketing , human resource etc. By applying business Ethics a firm can improve its performance , expand opportunities for future growth and also Contribute to the economic development of the country and realize specific benefits like Enhanced goodwill , stronger competitive position in the market , more and easy access to the Credit facilities and most importantly sustainable long term growth.

In crux , business ethics are art and discipline of applying principles to examine and solve Complex moral dilemmas in business organisations.

ISSUES RELATED TO BUSINESS ETHICS

In the current dynamic environment business houses face ethical dilemmas in their day to day Workings. Some of these dilemmas are bribery , nepotism , discrimination , conflict of

Interest , Abuse of shareholders' funds , falsification of information and issues relates to

Environment pollution and sustainability(Abuznaid,2009).One of the major arguments against

The use of ethical standards is that the primary objective of business is to earn profits , not to handle questions of ethics and values and along with it , Managers are not given any education in this regard in their training so basically they do not know how to take ethical decisions. They say that

BUSINESS OF BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.

n the past few decades series of scams like Harshad Mehta scam, Satyam scam , Nirav Modi scam led to public outrage. The gap between the society's expectations and actual business ethics in practice has been increased. Drastically. falling stock exchanges , doubtful accounting practices , corporate failures , abuse of corporate power are all outcome of unethical practices.

So now more focus is on doing almost all the activities of business in an ethical manner. That's why it is said

BUSINESS OF BUSINESS IS ETHICAL BUSINESS.

THE BHAGAVAD – GITA

The Bhagavad – Gita is a sermon given by Lord Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the field of battle of Kurukshetra regarding correct technique to live life. It is universal and non-sectarian because its teachings are applicable not only to Indians, but to whole mankind. The original version of it is written in one of the oldest language of world that is Sanskrit. The first English language translation of it was done by 'Charles Wilkins' in 1785. Till now, it has been translated in more than 500 languages of the world. The most important works of Mahayana

Buddhism are taken from the teachings of Gita :

(A) MAHAYANA SRADDHOTPATTI.

(B) SADDHARMA PUNDARIKA.

The background of Gita is the epic 'Mahabharata' whose main theme is 'DHARMA' meaning righteousness and virtues. It was composed by 'Sri Vyasa Muni's Gita appears in 700 verses (of which 575 were uttered by Sri Krishna) in Bhismaparva of the Mahabharata and consists of 18 chapters.

First 6 chapters explain the 'KARMA YOGA' namely the selfless actions, wisdom in action, work sanctification and meditation for full consciousness.

Next 7-12 chapters are on 'JHANA YOGA' that explains the key to actions of detachment

Through the understanding of supreme truth, unity, devotion, alignment and divine qualities.

Last 13-18 chapters teach how to do 'unquestionable devotion' which are actions of Detachment, transcendental wisdom and knowledge of supreme.

Some most important ethical principles of Gita are : Dharma, Karma, Lokasangraha, Kausalam, Vividhta, Jigyasa.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA AND BUSINESS ETHICS

From Gita we have learnt that lust or desires are the root cause of all unethical practices. As

The fire is covered by smoke, as the mirror is covered by dust, in the same way leaders are covered by lust. So who took top positions in organisation must curb their lust by regulating their senses. Gita considers ethics as a road to Goodwill and Wealth.

In the beginning of Mahabharata, Lord Krishna revive the morale of Arjuna by the following

Sermon:

“O son of prtha, do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not become you. Give up Such pretty weakness of heart and arise, O chastiser of enemy.”

Therefore, when dealing with ethical issues leaders are advised to cast off their weakness of Heart in performing duties. Leaders must elevate themselves by their own mind (UddharedAtmanatmanan).

Chapter II, verse 47 says

“ You have a right to perform your prescribed duty but you are not entitled to the fruits of Action. Never consider yourself the cause of results of your activities and never be attached To not doing your duty.”

This verse of Gita gives utmost importance to the Nishkama Karma. If a person is ready to do His duty with maximum of his ability and is able to set aside the results, he will be considered As an ethical person in the organisation. Both employer and employee need to understand

Their duties to create good and harmonious industrial relations. Leaders must do right things First and continue to do right things only.

Chapter II, verse 56 says

“One who is not disturbed in mind admits the threefold misery or elated when there is Happiness and who is free from attachment, fear and anger is called a sage of steady Mind.”

It explains that a steady mind gives you the right attitude and right direction. It is generally Said that ‘for one who has conquered the mind, the mind is best of friends, but for one who Has failed to control their mind, the mind will be greatest enemy.’

Chapter IV, verse 8 says

“Paritranaya sadhunam vinashayacha dushkritam Dharma samsthapanarthaya sambahvami yuge yuge.”

It says that for the protection of good, the destruction of bad and for the establishment of, Lord Krishna will born from age to age. So in business organisations also who is doing Unethical practices will be caught and punished one day and ethical practices will be Established once again.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we made an attempt to search and incorporates the teachings of The Bhagavad-Gita in day to day activities of business houses. In the current scenario, earning profits is not Enough, they have to earn goodwill through ethical practices to sustain in the long term .We Can also say that good ethical practices are the key to the survival of a business organisation.

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ADDITIONAL READING

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