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## “LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA”

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### 1. INTRODUCTION : 1.1. Bhagavad Gita:

*“When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone, I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in overwhelming tragedies- and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita.”*

– Mahatma Gandhi

The background of Bhagavad Gita is fight for the Kingdom ‘Hastinapur’. Between the cousins **Pandavas** and **Kauravas**. Diplomacy has failed, so these two clans' armies meet on a battlefield in order to settle the conflict and decide which side will gain the throne.

**Arjuna**, was well known archer and prime leader of the Pandavas. He asked Krishna to take at the center of battlefield to see against whom he wanted fight. Arjuna observed that his own family members, relatives, elders, friends, were standing against him for the and willing for war. Emotionally overwhelmed, Arjuna drops down, keeping aside his bow and arrows and decides to quit. He prefers to withdraw from battle; he prefers inaction instead of being responsible for the **death** of Friends and relatives.

On observing the action of Arjuna, Krishna started convincing him for his duty as a leader and great warrior. The *Bhagavad Gita* is presented as a conversation between Arjuna and Krishna, a seeker and a knower.

The remarkable feature of the *Bhagavad Gita* is readers can easily observe and feel its philosophy is useful in their everyday lives. The *Bhagavad Gita* thus provides a complete outline for self-realization in everyday life. This helps to develop us as a strong leader.

*Bhagavad Gita* provides us with Knowledge of self. Who we are? What is the purpose of our life? The *Gita* motivates us to perform our duties. The *Gita* motivates us to perform our duties. *Bhagavad Gita* also tells us the features of a wise man, an ideal leader who performs his duties in any situation gracefully and successfully. The *Gita* list the qualities of a good leader.

## 1.2. Leadership:

According to Keith Davis, “Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals.”

Leadership is an important function of management which helps to maximize efficiency and to achieve organizational goals.

“Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could.” — Steve Jobs

Art or process of influencing people to involve willingly working with zeal and confidence to achieve objectives.

Process of influencing and supporting others to work voluntarily and enthusiastically to identify goals and motivate them to achieve objectives

Leader doesn't stand behind to push the group but place before the group to pull by inspiration to progress work.

“Managers facilitates while leader initiate, today's workplace demands both skills in an abundant measure. For a successful career managerial competence and proven leadership skills (soft skills) are equally important”

“If you receive criticism for behaviors that you either cannot change or not wish to change, then you should honestly respond to the individuals who provided the feedback”

Leadership is the act of motivating other people toward a common goal. People who have leadership skills showcase a strong personality and interpersonal skills to lead others in their direction.

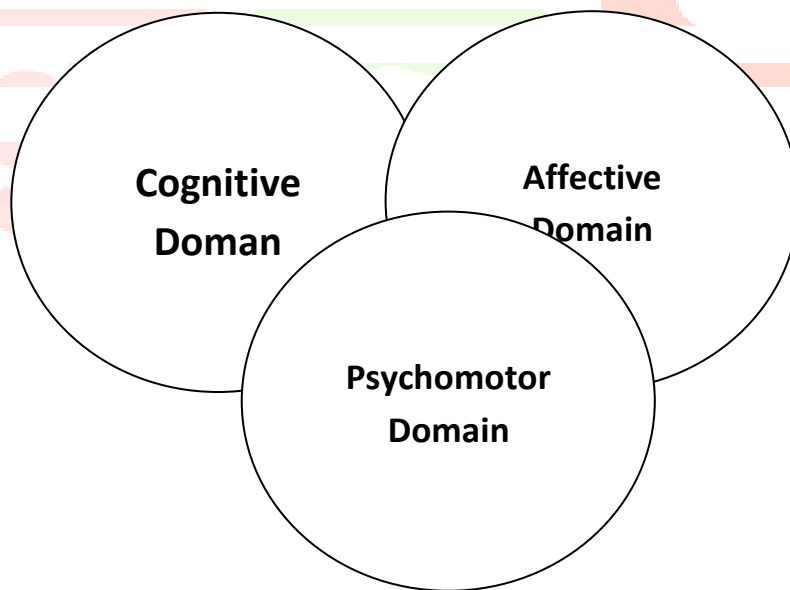
Leaders inspire others to follow a certain path. Leadership skills are important because human nature requires that somebody need to take charge and help others. Without leaders, it's very difficult to manage large groups of people, set unified goals, and make progress.

The most important quality is to understand each team member on a personal level so that they can be motivated in correct manner to improve efficiency.

## 2. Leadership and Bhagavad Gita:

### 2.1 Leadership:

Posing knowledge, skills, and personality is not adequate to become a great leader. An excellent leader is one who can demonstrate his knowledge and skills at the right time when required. Arjuna is an extraordinary leader and it was proved before the Mahabharat war. On Kurukshetra on seeing relatives and his people against whom he was asked to fight, Arjuna's attachment to them made him refuse to fight the war, for which he had prepared so much for a long time. The attachment created great sorrow and depression in him. Bhagavan Krishna started preaching to Arjuna about what is needed of the time. To bring Arjuna on track and to lead the war to gain victory Bhagavan Krishna presented a Leadership Model.



Cognitive Domain	Affective Domain	Psychomotor Domain
Brain Power	Heart Skills	Body/ Organ Skills
Knowledge	Emotions	Senses
Self and surrounding	Communication	Physical Structure
Intelligence	Treatment to others	Body Language
Ability to Understand and Analyze	Respect and recognition.	Union self to others Performance
<b>Sankhaya Yoga</b>	<b>Bhakti Yoga</b>	<b>Karma Yoga</b>

### **Mentally Sharp Emotionally Strong and Physically Active Individuals will be Excellent Leaders.**

Arjuna asked Krishna who is the emotionally balanced person. Please describe. So, Bhagavan Krishna Listed traits of a good leader at the end of Chapter- 2 Sankhaya Yoga (2/55-72) . In these eighteen shlokas, Krishna described the Ideal Leader. This part of the chapter is popularly known as ‘Stitapradnya Darshan’.

A man who give up all the desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self by the Self. (2/55)

He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who is not excited by pleasures, and who is free from all feelings like attachment (love), fear and anger.(2/56)

He who is not affected by good or evil either or not even by joy or hates/disappointment. (2/57)

One who can withdraw his sense organs from objects like tortoises. (2/58)

A man of steady intelligence, one who obtains full control over the body and organs. (2/61)

Whose senses are completely restrained from sense objects, his knowledge is steady and can lead strongly from the front. (2/68)

From the above description, the characteristics of a great leader can be listed as follows:

- A Man of Self-knowledge is always satisfied and free from all desires.
- A great leader is independent of the world and is always happy.
- Free from all feelings –attachment/ love, hatred, desire, anger, fear, depression etc.
- Living in the same world with all others, he enjoys freedom and contentment which may be unknown to others

## 2.2 Qualities of a Good Leader:

Chapter 2 describes the ideal personality, but in different chapters, Bhagavan Krishna explained the different qualities of the wise man who can lead society by setting an example. They are as follows:

- a) While performing duty one has to understand and tolerate the appearance and disappearance of Cold, Heat, Pleasure, and Pains, as they are not permanent. (2/14)
- b) The leader is not disturbed by happiness and sorrows. His mind is always stable in both conditions. (2/15)
- c) Perform your duty without hesitation. The best way is to keep yourself engaged in the duty which you are required to perform. (2/31)
- d) Engage your mind in your duty and perform action without attachment.(3/07)
- e) Set an example for others like proactive leader, by performing duty for common goal without selfish motive.(3/19)
- f) Common man always follows standards of performance set by their leaders. So, as a leader mind well that they hold ignition key of growth and prosperity of organization/ society. (3/21)
- g) Good Leader stabilize the mind of ignorant people those who are involved and attached in the action. Keep people engaged in action with devotion and dedication. (3/26)
- h) Leader must have complete Self-awareness. He must know when to act and when not to act. (4/18)
- i) A good leader is submissive and learns truth and values from his mentor to develop his leadership. ((4/34)
- j) A leader never puts anyone into difficulty and he cannot be disturbed by anyone. He is always a source of inspiration to others. (12/15)
- k) A good leader is soft-spoken and will never irritate anyone's mind. He always speaks the truth which is beneficial to others.

## 2.3 Leader and Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand and handle your own emotions, and those of the people around you. People with a high degree of emotional intelligence know what they are feeling, what their emotions mean, and how these emotions can affect other people.

A leader who is under stress, stays in control of their emotions and those of others, and calmly assesses the situation, can take the organization forward.

Good leaders can increase their influence on people by connecting people emotionally. With emotional intelligence, leaders not only control their emotions but prevent negative emotions from influencing their decision-making skills. As a result, his decisions are more mature and timely. Moreover, emotionally

intelligent leaders are great at understanding emotions and care about the feelings of others. Emotionally Intelligent leaders can handle conflict in a better way but also play an important role in conflict resolution.

The relationship between Emotional intelligence competencies and effective leadership can be described with the help of the following points :

### **i)Self-Assessment:**

This can be defined as having the ability to recognize one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values and drivers and understanding their impact on others.

This is the first lesson of Bhagavad Gita, when Arjuna was depressed and decided to withdraw himself from war, Krishna, made Arjuna realize who you are, what is your duty, what are your responsibilities, and the purpose of your life. The Bhagavad Gita suggests that leaders cannot lead effectively unless they know their selves. The understanding of the self is not only about understanding our physical and psychological states.

### **ii) Self-regulation:**

Also known as discipline. This involves controlling or redirecting our disruptive emotions and adapting to change circumstances to keep the team moving in a positive direction.

The second lesson given by Krishna in Bhagavad Gita is leaders can't afford to lose their temper. When you take on a leadership role you can no longer afford to panic when things get stressful. He must have control over his mind and body, this helps communicate more clearly with your team.

### **iii) Empathy and Compassion:**

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand how they may feel or react to a certain situation.

Tat Tvam Asi (As You Are) is one of the main messages given by Bhagavad Gita. It means: Understanding, accepting, and acknowledging the presence of the same Spirit in You and in everything. If a leader understands and follows this principle he can be connected to anyone very effectively.

### 3. Summary :

Bhagavad Gita contains many leadership lessons that are similar to existing leadership theories and practices. To summaries some of the lesions of leadership from the Bhagavad Gita are as follows:

- a) Leaders should be strong and firm in his actions and should not be weakened by pain or pleasure.
- b) Leaders achieve lasting power and glory by exercising compassion and selfless service.
- c) Effective leaders do not lead by fear or anger.
- d) Character is the core valve to be an effective leader.
- e) Leaders need to be aware of the self and the surroundings.
- f) Becoming free from likes and dislikes, and their effects like
- g) greed, anger, jealousy, and arrogance
- h) Controlling your mind by not perpetuating unwanted
- i) thoughts and by entertaining good thoughts
- j) Self in all beings and all beings in your own Self

**To conclude, Krishna described Good Leader is very appropriately in Chapter -2**

*‘Aapooryamaanam achalapratishtam  
Samudram aapah pravishanti yadwat;  
Tadwat kaamaa yam pravishanti sarve  
Sa shaantim aapnoti na kaamakaami.’ (2/70)*

‘He attains peace into whom all desires enter as waters enter the ocean, which, filled from all sides, remains unmoved; but not the man who is full of desires.’

Bhagavan Krishna described good leader by quoting example of ‘Ocean’. The Ocean is independently full and not affected by rivers entering or not entering, dirty or clean. Similarly mind of wise man (good leader) is independently full and not disturbed by favorable or unfavorable experiences. He always remains claim and controlled mind. Not respond any situation hastily.

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