

## EXPLORING FACTORS FOR DERIVING LEADERSHIP-FROM BHAGAVAD GITA

*Dantu Muralikrishna*

*Senior General Manager, Lupin Limited, Mandideep, Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, India*

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### ABSTRACT

*Leadership is an important factor as that dominates the others on many fronts if we are strong enough in this quality and then success is obvious in our lives. In Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna explained various aspects to educate Arjuna, the warrior whose mind was disturbed and was not ready to lead in the battlefield, when the battle was just about to start. Present work is the exploration of Leadership qualities essential in our lives based on the teachings of "Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita". There are EIGHT sutras essential for effective Leadership drawn from the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita and are described herein. These factors are basically 1) Decision Making; 2) Setting Standards; 3) Self-Confidence; 4) Listening and Feedback; 5) Stress Management; 6) Duties & Expectations; 7) Character & Pathway; 8) Self-Elevation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Decision Making, Character & Pathway, Leadership qualities, Stress Management*

### INTRODUCTION

The term "Leadership" is important for everyone for the betterment and for the success in the desired fields of their interest. In Organizations, usually happens that many Heads have the freedom to make the strategic plans and take decisions, the way they think. They delegate a lot to their subordinates and monitor them. In this style of leadership, intellectuals and talented people cannot come out with creative suggestions as they are not encouraged. In this case, as the leaders have high authority and power, they enjoy without taking much pain and stress and they impose their non-productive thoughts on their subordinates for execution. Ultimately, it is a loss for the organization. Another case is that, Leaders encourage and motivate the team members and because of that, the members come forward to share their novel thoughts and execute with great excitement as they are the partners of that task. Under this leadership, the members get the scope to develop themselves and deliver the results in accordance with the Organizational requirements. Ultimately, the Organization is benefited as each member acts as an Entrepreneur. There are different styles of Leadership, followed by many and that depends on the context, task and importantly depends on the quality of leadership.

The qualities needed for effective leadership, are described 5000 years back in "Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita" and the aim of the present work is to explore the leadership qualities described therein "Bhagavad-Gita" for the benefit of the readers. In "Mahabharata" Lord Krishna tried a lot to avoid the war between the Pandavas & Kauravas but the "Kauravas" did not agree for peaceful agreement suggested by Krishna. The war had become unavoidable. Arjuna of Pandavas, was in dilemma in the battlefield to take the decision of fighting against his enemies, who were his brothers, teachers, relatives, and all his own people. The decision making was an important factor and Arjuna was unable to make, though he was a great warrior and leader in the battlefield. Further, all his emotions and attachments, he was expressing to Lord Krishna who was his guide and charioteer in the battlefield at the time of just the battle was to begin. He lost all his Leadership qualities

which needed at that time of context and was in a mood of dropping the fight and for leaving the battlefield. Lord Krishna explained to him all his duties as a warrior and made him realized with his teachings. Arjuna had regained his spirit and wisdom to fight against the enemies and succeeded at the end. Bhagavad Gita is the text of all teachings of Lord Krishna, explained to Arjuna in the battle field in Mahabharata. From these teachings of Bhagavad-Gita, the following are found to be the essentials, needed for a leader and are discussed herein with relevant Sanskrit Shlokas (Verses) of Bhagavad Gita.

### Decision Making

Decision-making ability is one important factor that a leader must possess. In general, the leader can be the Head of the family or a sectional in-charge in an office or head of an organization or a lead Manager for a group or even the Chief of the soldiers, or any leader, who takes care of the society and country. The Ideal leader is the one who directs others to succeed rather his success and works for the benefit of mankind. Leaders cannot compromise in performing duties considering the difficulties in the pathway to reach the destination. Leaders cannot disobey the duties in view of their emotions. Leaders cannot away from the duties, due to the risk involved in their actions. In Mahabharata, in the Kurukshetra battle field, Arjuna, one of the five panadavas, lost his strength just before the war was to begin because of the emotions and attachments and was thinking of no use of killing his own people for the benefit of self. Lord Krishna described to Arjuna, in Bhagavad-Gita how to follow the duties with selfless actions as a warrior in the battlefield leaving all the emotions. One should be impartial in his actions to lead the right path. Lord Krishna explained that duty is the essential of all to protect the righteousness and it is the important character of a warrior. For a warrior, it does not look good to leave the battlefield like a weak hearted and weak minded person. Lord Krishna explained leadership qualities required for a warrior in Bhagavad Gita in the verses 3 and 31 of 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter and Verse 43 of 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

klaibyam ma sma gamah partha Naitat tvayy upapadyate

kshudram hridaya daurbalyam Tyaktvottistha parantapa (2.3)

sva dharmamapi chaveshya na vikampitum arhasi

dharmyaddhi yuddhachchreyonyat kshtriyasya na vidyate (2.31)

Krishna was telling to Arjuna that “Don’t be impotent. It is not right for you. Give up such faintheartedness. Stand-up and get ready to fight against evil”. Explained to Arjuna that “Considering your own duties as a warrior, you should not waver. There is nothing more righteous for a warrior than to fight for justice. So, there is no need for any hesitation”. Lord Krishna was describing the leadership qualities of a warrior such as “Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity” are the natural qualities of work for the warriors. This is the case of a leader, who goes away from his duty rather to protect righteousness. In spite of a great warrior, Arjuna has lost his courage and got weakness in his personality. He was powerless and had lost all dynamism, required to fight against evil.

sauryam tejo dhritir dakshyam yuddhe chapyapalayanam

danameeswarabhavashchya kshatram karma swabhavajam (18.43)

Lord Krishna explained the characteristic qualities of a soldier, who was standing in the battle-field to lead and to act, at that time of need to protect the righteousness. The context may vary but our decisions are important to walk on the

right path with self-less actions in our lives strengthening our spirit and strength to lead and succeed in the defined assignments. The context may be, during our academics or career or employment or in a family or in society or against for any evil or for the country but the quality of decision is important. For example, the student must face the examination, the employee must achieve the targets as defined by the company, the entrepreneur must face the business competition. All we need to have the courage and ability to take the right decisions in every context, to lead our lives happily and progressively with the right actions. If, the spirit is lost, no one can achieve the targets even though, he or she has ability to achieve. The difficulties are obvious in our pathways and one should understand that and face with right decisions. Importantly, the quality of our own decision makes the difference from others in succeeding the task.

### Setting Standards

As per the Bhagavad-Gita (Chapter 3 and Verse 21), it is said that, what leaders do, the same is followed by all and what leaders make as a milestone, the same is taken as the benchmark by all. It means, the leaders shall have the knowledge for designing the standards and shall demonstrate the same to the universe. Leaders are those who hold the principles, take initiative and are creative, innovative and are those who fight for the right with an objective for the benefit of all.

yadyadacharati shreshthah tattadevetaro janah

sayatpramanam kurute lokasthadanuvarthate

(3.21)

In Chapter 3 and verse 21 of Bhagavad Gita, it is told that, “A great man, whatever action he performs, the others follow the same. Whatever standards, he sets by his exemplary acts all the world pursues the same”. It means the actions and outcome of his/her actions define that he or she is a leader of that quality to follow him by others. In all, the leader should be the role model for many. If the leader does the wrong actions, he will be forever remembered by his such action and will be treated insignificantly in history. The leader should not be labeled and set non-standard acts for the team, who honor him a lot, who expects a lot from him and who wants to follow his foot-steps. This is described in Bhagavad-Gita in below shloka. In Shloka 34 of Chapter 2, Krishna explained Arjuna that, “if you don’t fight in this battle, People will speak stories of your dishonorable act. For a respectable person like you, such infamy is worse than death”. It is important for those people, who are educated, skilled, knowledgeable and have the position and leading many - should follow the acts in such a way that others can also follow and such acts should have the quality of that order and of that standard as described in Bhagavad Gita.

akeerthim chapi bhutani kathaishyanti thevyayam

sambhavithasya chakeerthih maranadathirityathe

(2.34)

### Self-Confidence

A leader should have the confidence in himself and should provide the confidence & encouragement to the team to act on the right with complete focus on the task in hand. If the leader is confident, the team is also energized and confident enough to face any kind of situation. In the battle of Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna was the guide to Arjuna. He injected the leadership qualities by way of his support providing the confidence to Arjuna as Arjuna was in a state of confusion and fear with a lot of doubts. Arjuna himself lost courage and became weak-hearted. He had no self-confidence on his decision and actions. At that time, how he can encourage the team to fight in the battle.

At that context, Lord Krishna was giving confidence to Arjuna (Verse 30 of Chapter 3), saying that “Dedicating all your actions to me, with full knowledge of me, fixing your mind on me, without any desire, mental agitation and without being lethargic, you fight in the battlefield”. Lord Krishna was giving confidence to Arjuna that he was there to support him and saying Arjuna just to fight with enemies with a stable mind. From this shloka, it can be understood that self-confidence is important for a leader, who must head many with providing his guidance to the team and to accomplish the task. Krishna was explaining that, do not worry on result and do not worry on action, do not get disturbed with too much of thinking and was telling to regain the energy and spirit with courage to fight. Krishna was telling Arjuna to believe him and to rest everything on him. All the way, Krishna was trying to provide confidence in Arjuna to regain the energy and spirit, needed at that time of hour. From this, it is understood that even for a great personality like Arjuna, at times, one loses the confidence and leave the task in hand with inaction. But it is important to know that action is more important than inaction and furthermore important is the quality action is more important. However, a right action comes from the ability and self-confidence only.

mayi sarvani karmani sannyasyadhyatmachethasa

nirashnirmamo bhutva yuddhasva vigatahjavarah

(3.30)

### Listening and Feedback

On the evaluation of the Character of Arjuna, it is evident that even a leader should listen to the scholars and knowledgeable persons and should take their advice for taking the right decision to proceed into a right path without any ego. Arjuna was the best student and in fact, is the good leader as he asked for the advice of Lord Krishna and obeyed directions of Krishna with a lot of discipline and respect towards him. Feedback of his own actions is important and was the reason why Arjuna asked Krishna for his advice on his actions. That explains the leader should have the courage to listen to others to take the right decisions. Without consideration of others opinion, one cannot be the leader and cannot chase the task. Arjuna had taken the advice of Lord Krishna all the way. The verse 7 of Chapter 2 of Bhagavad Gita is the evident of that, how Arjuna was seeking the guidance of Lord Krishna when he was unable to take decisions.

Arjuna was expressing, saying that “I am confused about my duties. I am puzzled and lost my character. Now I am asking you, what is certainly the best for me? I am your disciple. I surrender myself. Please instruct me. O-Krishna- please instruct me”. This shloka explains, how great warrior Arjuna, surrendered himself with great respect asking the advice of Krishna without any ego. These days, we find once obtained position and authority, many leaders/heads feel that they are great and they act as per their wish and do not take any advice or feedback from any of the team members or from anyone. These leaders usually fail in their actions and end up with negative results. Lord Krishna explained many things to Arjuna but the final decision was left to Arjuna only to fight against evil. After listening and feedback of Krishna, Arjuna had decided to fight in the battlefield, leaving all his emotions to protect the righteousness.

karpnyadoshopahathasvabhavah pruchhami tvam dharmasammudhachethah

yat shreyah syannishtam bruhi thanme shishyasthe ham shadhi mam tvam prapannam

(2.7)

## Stress Management

The decisions with an unstable mind usually fail to succeed and give stress and pain. The leader must take many decisions on various occasions and each decision matters on the outcome. The leader must control all his emotions and feelings to avoid stress. No decision he should take when his emotions are not under control or should not be with angry or with happiness or with sadness. Once all his feelings and emotions are settled down, then only the decisions are qualitative and give better results and mental peace. Peace is very important in our lives but to attain peace, our leadership quality also important. Leadership means, in the sense, to lead our own tension-free actions to have the peace. Leadership means, in the sense, to lead our own actions, with having control of our senses, means having the self-control. Self-control means to overcome various attractions around or to overcome our disturbing thoughts. In all, leaders should have a stable mind with peace to focus on a job that may be of domestic or social or professional or devotional. As per Bhagavad-Gita, the stable minded person is called as "Sthita-Prgya". Stable minds usually manage the stress and pains but achieving the task. It is well defined about the stable mind in Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2 and verse 56. Explained as, one, who is not disturbed in mind with amid of sorrows or elevated with the excitement of happiness and who is free from attachment, fear, and anger – is called as a sage of steady mind. Lord Krishna explained, it is difficult to control the wavering mind and its thoughts. However, it is possible by way of practice and detachment. He explained this in the shloka, 35 of Chapter 6 as "Undoubtedly, the mind is restless. Very difficult to curb the restless mind. But, it is possible to control by practice and detachment".

dhhukheshvanudvignamanah sukheshu vigathaspruhah

veetharagabhayakrodhah shithadheermuniruchyathe (2.56)

asamsayam mahabaho mano durnigraham chalam

abhyasena thu kaunthaya viragyena chagruhyathe (6.35)

It is very important to keep the mind calm, stable to attain peace and derive quality actions through quality decisions. Unless you have the control on your mind, it is very difficult to take the right decisions. Usually, if a man is in anger or in emotions, the decisions are not appropriate and end up with negative results through his actions and become the factor for mental stress. In Gita, in the verse 16 of chapter 17, it is described that "Cheerfulness of mind, placidity, a habit of contemplation, control of the mind and purity of inner feelings- all this is called as the austerity of the mind. The status of the mind is responsible for all kind of tensions and stress. Through conditioning of our mind, through practice and detachment as said above in Bhagavad Gita, one can get the peace without feeling any stress. The management of Stress depends on what is needed, what is targeted and what is the time frame. Further it depends on one's ability to handle the task. If one has the lack of ability, it is certain to have the stress. If one has clear understanding on these factors, one can manage the task or even multiple tasks in time without any stress. Usually, because of the lack of knowledge, understanding and lack of mental stability, we feel stress and tension in our job.

## Duties & Expectations

The leader must perform the duties to handle the task without previewing the end results. This is the principle to avoid the stress, without thinking on end results but acting on the task with concentration. Usually, we think on, whatever not in our hands and we don't think on, whatever is in our hands to take an action. It is obvious that, end results depend on

our actions. If we worry about what will happen at the end, we cannot focus on our work. As we don't know about the future, why to worry? Further, it disturbs our mind and we cannot conduct our work. The task was there before Arjuna but he was thinking of the end result. In Bhagavad Gita, in Verse 47, Chapter 2, it is said that—"You have the right to perform your duty but not on the end result of your action. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the result of your actions. Therefore, without hoping on the end results, you perform your duty".

karmanyevadhikarasthe ma phaleshu kadachana

ma karmaphalahethurbhuh ma the samgothvakarmani

(2.47)

Explained that one must accept the results without compromising the duty in Verses of 37 and 38 of Chapter 2 of Bhagavad Gita. Krishna explained Arjuna that, "If you will be killed on the battlefield, you will attain heavenly planets. If you will win the battle, you will conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom. Therefore, get up with determination and fight". It means whatever is the end result, we cannot be away from our duty. One should be ready for the failure as well, but for the protection of righteousness without compromising in life. Krishna told Arjuna, to treat equal and alike for all such as for - victory or defeat, for gain or loss, for pleasure or pain and finally asked Arjuna to get ready for battle without any hesitation. Krishna said that, by doing this way, you will never incur any sin. Acceptance of the result is the key to avoid the stress and to focus on the job in hand, rather expecting and worrying on end result, which is not known and which is not in our hands. However, if our actions are appropriate, it is obvious to have positive results. Therefore, we need to focus on our actions without expecting on the fate of our actions and end results.

### Character & Pathway

Leadership is part of the management of our lives at every context. In a broader way, there are two kinds of leadership exists. One for the benefit of oneself and the other is for the benefit of others or Organization or Society or for the Country or for the Universe. Is it, really, the leadership, responsible for only success? Not at all. It is essential quality required not only for the betterment but also to stop and avoid the wrong acts. This is the case in the epic, Mahabharata. Duryodhana also managed by depriving of the kingdom of Pandava's and sending them to forests for 12 years. This was the way he managed by throwing away the right candidatures and occupied the kingdom with a selfish motive. This is the way, we find even in Today's world with many. At the same time, the other party, Pandavas had learned and acquired all kind of knowledge and went on the right path and tried to get their kingdom back. This is the difference in the character of both the parties in the dispute for the kingdom. In Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishnad described about two types of people. One brings the character of Devatas (Pious people) and the other brings the character of Rakshasas (Cruel people). We find these characteristic qualities appear in the leadership of many and in their actions. These are well described in the Shlokas 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of Chapter 16 of Bhagavad Gita. Sublimity, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, no enemy to anyone, and absence of self-esteem- these are the marks of the person, who born with the divine endowments. Pride, arrogance, conceit (self-respect), anger, harshness, and ignorance – these are the marks of the person, who born with demoniac properties. From these verses, it is obvious for us to follow, what and what not. To derive our own path with our own decisions, our character is most important. Our character decides our path to lead our life on right path or lead to a path that ends up with infamy and insignificant actions in the history. In all, need to focus on self, for improvement.

thejah kshama dhrithih shoucham adroho nathimanitha

bhavanthi sampadam diveem abhijathasya bhāratha (16.3)

dambho darpobhimanashcha krodhah parushyameva cha

ajnanam chabhijathasya partha sampadamasureem (16.4)

These days, the technology is advanced and therefore many are influenced indirectly by many means, such as media, TV, theaters, magazines, books, internet, etc. Individual personalities are developed in such a way with that knowledge and influence. Therefore, it is essential to display the useful and directive material only in public means and the media. In Today's context, the neighboring effect and external influence is so powerful on us and we involuntarily get many things into us to follow. But the question remains, what we hold? what we ignore? This is the challenge in the current scenario. To overcome, the selection of your guide or mentor is an important factor. Arjuna had chosen Lord Krishna as his guide and followed his directions and acted as a leader in the battlefield. Lord Krishna inspired Arjuna to lead the team and fight against Kauravas to restore "Dharma" (Righteousness). In all, the character is important and then even God stands along with you when you walk in the right path. It is very important to know that, in fact, everyone is a leader in some context either at home or at the office or in society or at battlefield like Arjuna. Therefore, it is essential to have those qualities to execute our duty effectively for intended results with right character and behavior.

### Self-Elevation

Everyone is a leader for leading his or her own life. It is true, as each one of us makes our own decisions in our lives. We put our own efforts for our success or for our growth in many fronts. In few, we may succeed and in few, we may fail. We take many decisions every day on different aspects. Few may be of right decisions and few may not be, if we analyze the outcome of our actions. We are responsible for, wherever we are Today, and we are only responsible for the progress and for our future as well. In Bhagavad-Gita, in Verse 5 and 6 of chapter 6, it is explained.

uddharedathmanathmanam nathmanamavasadayeth

aathmiva hyathmano bandhurathmiva ripurathmanah (6.5)

bandhurathmathmanasthasya yenathmivathmana jithah

anathmanasthu shatrutve varthethathmiva shatruvath (6.6)

Our own decision and self-control will lead to our future. Many feel that, if something goes wrong, the world is responsible and if it happens good, all because of his own intelligence and hard work. That is not the case. We are only responsible for all our progress or for our destruction. The same is explained in these Shlokas of Bhagavad-Gita. In all, we are the leaders of our own life and where we take it, depends on us only and depends on our leadership on our self-controls. It is explained in Bhagavad Gita as "One should lift high himself by his own efforts and should not degrade himself. Because, he is the friend for him and himself is the enemy also for him". "The person, who has conquered his mind, the mind is the best friend for him. But for one, who has not conquered, his mind will become the greatest enemy for him". In all, the practice of controlling all senses and mind within ourselves is important to make the best useful for us to have the peace and happiness in life. Our own thinking and our own actions will lead to our lives and we are responsible for our own progress and elevation in life. One can either elevate oneself or degrade oneself.

The conquered mind is the best friend for self-elevation in life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Explored eight sutras from Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, those are essential for effective leadership to deliver very positive results in our lives. These sutras are: 1) Decision Making; 2) Setting Standards; 3) Self-Confidence; 4) Listening and Feedback; 5) Stress Management; 6) Duties & Expectations; 7) Character & Pathway; 8) Self-Elevation. These are important for a leader or in other words differentiate a leader from others, which bring the name & fame in the Organization or in Society and in Life.

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