Transformational Leadership from the Bhagavad-Gita and the Significance for Human Capital Development

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Abstract

The significance of transformational leadership has received great deal of attention in the leadership literature during the last two decade as the current business environment requires organizational leaders to be transformational. This is also due to several studies, which have been done in this area, leading to a wider recognition that transformational leadership style is extremely essential for organizational growth and development as it is the quality of the leaders and their leadership determines the quality of the organizations. In this paper, an attempt has been made by the authors to explore transformational leadership from an ancient Indian Vedic philosophy and provide the significance to human capital development. A review of literature in transformational leadership shows that there are thousands of articles which have been written by several academics on this subject from numerous perspectives, but limited articles have been written from the philosophical perspectives. As a result, this paper not only fills the gap in the literature of transformational leadership, but also provides some significance and insights on human capital development from the ancient Indian Vedic philosophical perspective. For this purpose, the authors have selected the Bhagavad-Gita, which provides the essence of the Indian Vedic thought to explore transformational leadership concepts for human capital development. This paper is based on hermeneutics, a qualitative research methodology which involves study, understanding and interpretation of ancient or classical text. The Bhagavad-Gita is more than 5,000 years old and is written in Sanskrit language. In a nutshell, the Bhagavad-Gita provides an inside-out approach to leadership and human capital development which is the self leadership first before leadership of every other thing. The organizational leaders are advised to firstly conquer the enemies within such as desires, anger, greed, arrogance, infatuation, envy, pride or ego and foolhardiness as it is often said that a leader who conquers the enemies within will be able to conquer his self and also others. The prospects of analysis of the Bhagavad-Gita in other areas of organizational leadership such as strategic management, organizational behavior, human resource management and employment relations can be considered for future research.

Key words: Transformational leadership, leadership philosophy, Bhagavad-Gita and Human Capital Development

INTRODUCTION

Leadership theories and concepts from the west have dominated the world for over two centuries. This dominance is due to colonization and the widespread use of English in many countries and the readily available of leadership literatures in English language. However, a careful analysis reveals that many of the recently popularized western leadership theories and concepts have been in practice in east especially in Asia for centuries. These practices however were not in the context business organization but in the state or political governance. Sharma[1] argues that for a leadership system, to be effective, it has to be rooted in the cultural soil of the country, where it is practiced. Many communities and countries in the world are now trying to discover and explore their own system of leadership and management, which includes financial management, human resource management, customer relationship management, corporate social responsibility and also corporate governance.

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[1] Sharma, G.D, (2001), *Management and the Indian Ethos*, Rupa & Co, New Delhi, p.1

In recent times, Maruyama was one of the authors who explored the Asian context of leadership beginning with wide understanding of Japanese leadership three decades ago[2]. Besides Japanese, the interest in exploring other Asian philosophies and also religion in the context of leadership has seen a tremendous growth over the past two decades. As such, several research studies and books had been published to explore Islamic perspective, *Vedic* perspective, and Confucianism perspective in the context of leadership. In the Malaysia, the current Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has promoted and promoting an approach called Islam Hadhari or civilization Islam, in which leadership is also included[3]. The Islamic perspectives of leadership have also been written extensively by several scholars such as Tayeb[4], Berkun and Badawi[5] and also Abuznaid[6].

The present growth in the studies of Asian leadership is also due to the growth of the many Asian economies especially Japan, the four tigers (Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, which is now a part of China), China and India. India, in terms of geography, population size and cultural influence, is currently the most important nation in Asia due to the consistent high economic growth rates over recent decades. As a result an interest in studying leadership systems, culture in the Indian context is necessary not only for the foreign multinational operating in India but also the Indians themselves who live in India and around the world, including in Malaysia. The Indian civilization is also one of the oldest civilizations in the world, with recorded history of more than 5000 years. The contribution of India and Indians to this world is enormous in various fields of knowledge[7]. Several ancient Indian classics such as the Valmiki Ramayana[8], the Mahabharata[9] , the Upanishads[10] and also the Puranas[11] offers several leadership lessons which are be useful even in the modern context, although many of these literature were written more than 50 centuries ago.

THE BROAD PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

From the perspective of the authors the research and writings on leadership lessons and concepts from the Asian context although is growing but still limited. Most of the researches are general in nature and not in-depth studies. Even this paper is also not an in-depth analysis of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and transformational leadership as it only attempts to explore the transformational leadership from the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the

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[2] Maruyama, M. (1994), Mindscapes in Management: Use of Individual Differences in Multi-Cultural Management, Aldershot, UK

[3] Swee-Hock,S., Kesavapany K.,(2006), *Malaysia;Recent Trends and Challenges*, Institute of SE Asian Studies, Singapore, p. 36

[4] Tayeb, M., (1997), *Islamic revival in Asia and human resource management*, Journal of Employee Relations, Vol 19, Issue 4, pp. 352-364, Available at :
http://www.emeraldinsight.com/10.1108/01425459710170086

[5] Beekun, R and Badawi, J., (1999), *Leadership process in Islam* (Unknown), Available at www.islamist.org/images/ldrpro.pdf

[6] Abuznaid, S., (2005), *Islam and management: What can be learned?,* Thunderbird International Business Review, Vol 48 Issue 1, pp. 125-139. Available at
http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117946257/grouphome/home.html

[7] Rosen, J.S, (2002), *The Hidden Glory of India*, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles, p. 7

[8] The *Ramayana* was written by Sri Valmiki Muni and contains 24,000 verses in seven *kandas* (books). The *Ramayana* is about a Raghuvamsa prince, Rama of Ayodhya, whose wife; Sita is abducted by demon Ravana. The *Ramayana* provides the essence of the Vedas.

[9] The *Mahabharata* is one of the two major ancient Sanskrit epics of India, the other being the *Ramayana*. The *Bhagavad-Gita* contains in *Bhisma Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* was composed by Sri Vyasa Muni and written by Sri Ganesa. The full version contains more than 100,000 verses, making it around four times longer than the Bible and seven times longer than the Illiad and the Odyssey combined.

[10] The *Upanisads* are part of *Vedic Shruti* scriptures, which are philosophical. They are the commentaries on the *Vedas*

[11] The *Puranas* are old stories and histories written in the form related by one person to another. Sri Vyasa Muni is considered to be the compiler of the *Puranas*. There are 18 main *Puranas*

significance for human capital development. Asian leadership in particular, to a larger extent are still focusing in applying western models of leadership practices due to the wealth of western leadership literatures and concepts available. Besides, many of the new generation of Asian managers have received their education in leadership and management from western countries (especially in the UK, USA and Australia)[12]. Furthermore, there are also some fears among the Asian academics that the leadership philosophy, concepts and ideas from Asia will not be able to get acceptance from the West due to the western dominance and also the mentality of the Asian themselves[13].

In the context of India, the Indian leadership for example, according to Arindam Chaudhuri, one of the preacher of Theory "I" Management or Indian management, although India has some of the best management schools in the world, most Indian organizations have not been able to do well internationally. Among the reasons cited is the failure of Indian management to develop the indigenous leadership style, which revolves around Indian cultural roots and upbringing. He further asserted that an Indian grows up in a system, where family ties and sense of belongingness gets top priority and with this type of background, he[14] may not be able to adjust or fit into the job environment practicing American philosophies of individualistic, direct, low power distance and contractual style of leadership[15].

Recently, western countries have begun to take Indian management and leadership seriously. Indian organizations are being mentioned and discussed in MBA classes of various international business schools. Western academic community is investing time, resources and intellect to understand Indian culture, leadership and organizations[16]. According to a Goldman Sachs (one of the world's most prestigious investment banks) report recently, Brazil, Russia, India and China can become a much larger force in the world economy over the next 50 years. The report said India could emerge the world's third largest economy as it had the potential for achieving the fastest growth over the next 30 to 50 years[17]. As a result, it is imperative that Indians should focus their effort on human capital development, among which leadership development is essential.

In an earlier study by Hofstede in 1983 on "National Cultures in Four Dimension"[18], India is high in power distance as employees acknowledge and respect the authority of the leader based on his legitimate power and they seldom bypass the chain of command. Besides high power distance, India has a low uncertainty avoidance, which means leaders have a propensity for low risk aversions and employees exhibit little aggressiveness in businesses. India also has low masculinity and low individualism, which means group, family and society, are more important than the individuals. As such a leadership culture, which is based on high individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and low power distance, might be limited in the context of Indian leadership and management culture[19].

As a result ancient text such as the *Bhagavad-Gita* can be useful to develop and provide lessons in the Indian context of leadership. Swami Chinmayananda asserted that from time to time an ancient philosophy like the *Bhagavad-Gita* needs intelligent re-interpretation to apply effectively in the context of modern

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[12] Muniapan, B., Shaikh,J., (2007), *Lessons in Corporate Governance from Kautilya's Arthashastra in Ancient India*, World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development (WREMSD). Special Issue on: "Accounting Standards Convergence, Corporate Governance and Sustainability Practices in East Asia", Volume 3, Number 1, 2007, p. 50-51

[13] This includes the attitude and belief that anything from the west must be good.

[14] Please note that "he', "his" and "man" used throughout also means "she", "hers" and "woman" in the context of this paper.

[15] For details see http://www.arindamchaudhuri.com/theory.htm

[16] Panda, A. and Gupta, R.K. (2007), "*Call for developing indigenous organizational theories in India: setting agenda for future*' International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management, Vol 1, Nos.1/2, pp. 205 -243

[17] The Star, Monday September 11, 2006

[18] Hofstede, G. (1983), *National Culture in Four Dimensions*, International Studies of Management and Organization, 13(2), 46-74

[19] Gorden,A., Thomas S., Schmit,V., (2007), *Impact of culture on style and process of Management and Leadership in India,* Grin Verlag

times[20]. A careful study of the text will reveal several lessons in leadership; however there are many corporate leaders from outside India and Indians themselves who are not aware of what *Bhagavad-Gita* can offer to enhance their leadership effectiveness. The purpose of the paper is to explore the transformational leadership lessons from the *Bhagavad-Gita* for human capital development and also to create awareness to readers of leadership on the existence of many ancient literatures from India such as the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which provides many valuable lessons in efficient and effective organizational leadership.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a qualitative research methodology called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is related to the name of the Greek god Hermes in his role as the interpreter of the messages of the gods. In the current context, hermeneutics can be described as the interpretation and understanding of ancient literatures and religious texts. It is also used in contemporary philosophy to denote the study of theories and methods of the interpretation of all texts and systems of meaning. The concept of "text" is here extended beyond written documents to any number of objects subject to interpretation, such as experiences. A hermeneutic is defined as a specific system or method for interpretation, or a specific theory of interpretation. The scope of hermeneutics also includes the investigation and interpretation not only of ancient texts, but of human behavior generally, including language and patterns of speech, social institutions, and ritual behaviors. Hermeneutics is widely applied in many field of social science such as philosophy, religion and theology, law, sociology and also international relations[21].

For this paper, the *Bhagavad-Gita* was analyzed by using the above methodology. The *Bhagavad-Gita* was written in the *Sanskrit* language, one of the oldest languages in the world. The translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* requires a good mastery of *Sanskrit*. As the authors only have some knowledge of *Sanskrit*, the main English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* verses quoted in this paper is based on the authoritative translation of AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (*Bhagavad-Gita* As It Is) is one of the most authoritative editions and also one of the best selling *Bhagavad-Gita* in the world and has won praises of some of the world's leading scholars in religious studies, philosophy, theology, history and literature not only in India but around the world[22]. Besides, the authors, also have the knowledge and experience of human resource management, leadership and Indian civilizations as a lecturers, consultants and of the *Bhagavad-Gita* as students for many years.

LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Leadership is one of the most researched subjects and an interesting topic of discussions around the world. Leadership is generally defined as the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts towards achieving certain goals. The word "influencing" can be substituted with other words such as transforming, empowering, driving, motivating and inspiring. In leadership the leader is the key in transforming the followers. The leader is the most important element in leadership. The personality, behavior and character of the leader are an important determinant for success of any organization, society and country. Napoleon Bonaparte once said that he would have an army of rabbits led by a lion than an army of lions led by a rabbit[23]. It is the leader who navigates and provides vision and mission for his people. In most organization, societies and countries, the failure or poor performance whether economically, politically or socially are not due to poor administration but poor leadership. Therefore, leadership is the life force and the spirit of an organization that holds everything together. The wise leader uses the force from within to inspire and motivate his people. Without the leader, an organization, a society and a country are merely collection of people.

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[20] Chinmayanda, S, (2003), *The Holy Geeta*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai

[21] For details see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutics

[22] Prabhupada, Swami (2003), *Bhagavad-Gita as it is*, (2nd ed), The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, London

[23] Sheh, S.W. 2003, Chinese Leadership: Moving from Classical to Contemporary, Times Edition,

Singapore, p. vi

The study and research in leadership has evolved from the great man theory to the current transformational leadership theory. The main schools of thought can be divided into eight theories as follows:

- **The Great Man Theory**: The great man theory were the earliest theory especially of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The great man theory is based around the idea that the leader is born with innate, unexplainable and incomprehensible leadership skills. They are, therefore, elevated as heroes.

- **The Trait Theory**: This theory is an extension of the great man theory. This is the attempt to understand leadership centered on determining the specific traits or characteristics of an effective leader.

- **The Power and Influence Theory:** This approach chooses to concentrate on the networks of power and influence generated by the leader. It is, however, based on the assumption that all roads lead to the leader, and neglects the role of the follower and the strength of the organization.

- **The Behaviorist Theory**: Leadership research in 1950s emphasized behavioral forms leaders demonstrated when the trait theory failed to provide complete explanation. The behavioral theory focuses on *what leaders do* rather than *what leaders are* as proposed by the trait theory. Among the studies conducted were the Ohio University studies, University of Michigan studies and the Leadership Grid studies by Blake and Mouton[24].

- **The Situational Theory**: Situational theory views leadership as specific to a situation rather than a particular sort of personality. It is based around the plausible notion that, different circumstances require different forms of leadership. For example, the Hersey and Blanchard Situational Theory prescribed different types of leadership style to match the follower's level of maturity[25].

- **The Contingency Theory:** Developed from situational theory, contingency approaches attempt to select situational variables, which best indicate the most appropriate leadership style to suit the circumstances. Robert House's Path-Goal Theory is an example of contingency theory[26].

- **The Transactional Theory:** Transactional theory places emphasis on the relationship between leaders and followers. It examines the mutual benefit from an exchange-based relationship, with the leader offering certain things, such as resources or rewards, in return for others, such as the followers' commitment or acceptance of the leader's authority.

- **The Transformational Theory**: While transactional leadership models are based on the extrinsic motivation of an exchange relationship, transformational leadership is based on intrinsic motivation. As such, the emphasis is on commitment rather than compliance from the followers. The transformational leader is therefore, a productive and innovative visionary.

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[24] Robbins, S.P, 2003, *Organizational Behavior*, 10th edn, Prentice Hall, Sydney
[25] ibid
[26] ibid

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Burns defined leadership as inducing followers to pursue common purpose that represent the values and motivations of both leaders and followers. He was the first to define the term transformational leadership. He proposed that leadership process occurs in one of two ways; either transactional or transformational. According to Burns transformational leadership occurs when a leader engages with a follower in such a way that both parties are raised to higher levels of motivation and morality with common purpose[27]. Transformational leaders exhibit charisma, encourage followers to question their own way of doing things, and treat followers differently but equitably based on their follower needs[28].

Transactional leadership, on the other hand is a set of leadership behavior that emphasizes exchanges or bargains between the leader and the follower, and focuses on how the current needs of the followers can be fulfilled[29]. The exchanges can be economical, political, or psychological in nature; the primary characteristics that distinguishes transactional from transformational leadership. Transactional leadership behavior includes contingent reward, which involves an interaction between the leader and follower based on exchange of resources and management by exception, in which leaders intervene only when problems emerge[30]. Most leaders engage in both transformational and transactional leadership; however they do so in differing amounts.

Transactional leadership involves an exchange of valued things, based on current values and motivations of both leaders and followers. Transactional leaders emphasize the clarification of tasks, work standards, and outcomes. In contrast, Burns characterized transformational leadership as a process that motivates followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values[31]. Transformational leaders are able to define and articulate a vision for their organizations and their leadership style can transform their followers towards higher performance.

THE DIMENSIONS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

According to Bass & Avolio[32], also cited in Krishnan et al[33] (2004), transformational leadership consists of four primary dimensions. They are as follows: -

a) Inspirational Motivation (IM): This dimension is reflected by behaviors that provide meaning and challenge to followers' work. It includes behaviors that articulate clear expectations and demonstrate commitment to overall organizational goals, and arouse a team spirit through enthusiasm and optimism. Krishnan[34] asserts that inspirational leadership also involves envisioning a desired future state, making followers see that vision, and showing followers how to get to that state. Envisioning is translating intentions into realities by communicating that vision to others to gain their support as the right vision

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[27] Burns, J.M. (1978), *Leadership, Harper and Row*, New York

[28] Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. (1994), *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership*, Sage Publications, CA

[29] Maher, K.J. (1997), *Gender – Related Stereotypes of Transformational and Transactional Leadership* Available: http://202.185.23.3:2062/pqdweb?Did=000000017178587&Fmt=4&Deli=1&Mtd=1&1

[30] Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. (1994), opcit

[31] Burns, J.M. 1978 (opcit)

[32] Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. (1994), opcit

[33] Krishnan, A., Muniapan, B., Lew T.Y., and Kong E.E.F. (2004), *Exploring the Extent of Transformational Leadership in the Context of Miri Entrepreneurs*, A Paper Presented at ASEMAL 4 Conference on the 13 – 15 December 2004 in Penang

[34] Krishnan, V. R. (2000), *Training Programs on Leadership: Do They Really makes a Difference?* Proceedings of the Seminar on "Role of HR: A New Agenda", September 2000, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. Avalable: http://www.geocities.com/rkvenkat/

attracts commitment, energizes people, creates meaning and establishes a standard of excellence. Vision inspires followers to transcend the outcome and getting people to commit voluntarily and completely something worthwhile.

b) Idealized Influenced (II): Idealized influence is described as behavior that results in follower admiration, respect and trust. Idealized influence involves risk sharing on the part of leaders, a consideration of follower needs or personal needs, and ethical and moral conduct. Idealized influence also refers to the leader's charisma. Krishnan[35] defines charisma as a form of social authority that derives its legitimacy not from rules, positions, or traditions, but rather from faith in the leader's exemplary character. He further asserts that charismatic leader is seen different from an ordinary person and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least exceptional power and qualities. Only charismatic leaders, with their sense of vision and empowering behavior could address the higher order needs of followers. Charismatic leadership is characterized by followers trust in the correctness of the leader's belief, unquestioning acceptance of the leader, affection for the leaders, willingness to obey the leader, and emotional involvement in the vision and mission of the organization.

c) Intellectual Stimulation (IS): Leaders who demonstrate this type of transformational leadership solicit new ideas and creative solutions for problems from their followers and encourage novel approaches for performing work. Krishnan[36] asserts intellectual stimulation arouses in the followers the awareness of the problems and how they may be solved, and stirs the imagination and generates thoughts and insights. The intellectual stimulation provided by the leader forces the followers to rethink some of the ideas that they never questioned before.

d) Individualized Consideration (IC): This is reflected by leaders listening attentively to the opinion and feedback of their followers and pay special attention to the followers needs for achievement and growth. Krishnan[37] refers individualized consideration as the developmental orientation of the leaders towards the followers. The transformational leader gives personal attention to the followers who seem neglected, treat each follower individually, and help each follower to get what they want. These leaders have empathy or the capacity to sense intuitively the thoughts and feelings of others.

Bass[38], on the other hand found that transactional leadership consist of two factors. They are as follows: -

a) Contingent Reward (CR): This refers to leaders who reward followers for their effort, support and doing what needs to be done by clarifying the followers' roles and task requirements to meet their personal goals and the organizational missions.

b) Management by Exception (ME): This refers to leaders taking corrective action only when followers deviate from expectations or fail to meet goals.

A number of researches have suggested that transformational leaders, in general, motivate followers to perform at higher levels and to exert greater effort than do transactional leaders[39]. Transformational leaders motivate others to transcend self-interest so as to benefit the group as a whole. Transformational leaders create vision and direction for their followers around a common mission and gave them a sense of purpose.

The table below gives comparisons between two-leadership style based on finding by Bass and Avolio[40] also cited in Krishnan et al[41].

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[35] ibid

[36] ibid

[37] ibid

[38] Bass, B.M. (1985), Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectation, Free Press, New York

[39] Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. (1994), opcit

[40] ibid

[41] Krishnan, A., Muniapan, B., Lew T.Y., and Kong E.E.F. (2004), opcit

Table 1*: Comparison between Transactional Approach and Transformational Approach*

Leadership Quality	Transactional Approach	Transformational Approach
Time Orientation	Short term	Long Term
Communication	Vertical, Downward	Multidirectional
Focus	Financial Goals	Customer (Internal and External)
Reward Systems	Organizational, Extrinsic	Personal, Intrinsic
Source of Power	Legitimate, Reward	Referent, Expert
Decision Making	Centralized, downward	Dispersed, Upward
Employees	Liability, Cost	Asset
Coordination Mechanism	Rules and Regulations	Goals and Value Congruence
Compliance Mechanism	Directive	Rational Explanation
Attitude Towards Change	Avoidable, Resistant, Status Quo	Inevitable, Embrace
Guiding Mechanism	Profit	Vision and Values
Control	Rigid Conformity	Self Control
Perspective	Internal	External
Task Design	Compartmentalized Individual	Enriched, Groups

The transformational leader, unlike the transactional leader, does not use people as a means to get his organizational objectives fulfilled. In fact, he is intent on the development of the people, who in turn get inspired by him and try to emulate him. The transformational leader is able to guide the destinies of many, because he changes the very visions and perspectives of the people around him. People get so influenced by him that they are naturally transformed. Ross and Offermann[42] found that higher levels of need for change, self-confidence, and dominance predicted transformational leadership. Some of the characteristics of the transformational leaders are as follows:

(1) They identify themselves as change agents.
(2) They are courageous individuals.
(3) They believe in people.
(4) They are value-driven.
(5) They are life-long learners.
(6) They have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty.
(7) They are visionaries.

Muniapan found that a transformational approach is likely to be more effective in overcoming barriers to change in organizations than a transactional style that concentrates on technical problem solving which neglects of people and organization issues[43]. Due to the increasing environmental turbulence, every organization, society and country needs transformational leaders. Bass & Avolio[44] argued that transformational leaders instill feelings of trust, loyalty and respect from followers. Transformational leaders will be highly in demand in the years to come; they will be virtually the supermen on earth, transforming the world with their soft, soothing, golden touch[45]. The transformational leadership skills need be cultivated and nourished, as every organization, society and country needs transformational leadership.

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[42] Ross, S. M., & Offermann, L. R. (1997), *Transformational leaders: Measurement of personality attributes and work group performance*. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23 (10), 1078-1086

[43] Muniapan, B., (2007), *"Transformational Leadership Style Demonstrated by Sri Rama in Valmiki Ramayana"*, International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management (IJICBM), Volume 1, Number , pp. 104-115

[44] Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. (1994), opcit

[45] Krishnan, V.R. (1990), *Transformational Leadership and Vedanta Philosophy*, Economics Times, 11 January, p. 7, Mumbai, Available: http://www.geocities.com/rkvenkat/1990et.html

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a sermon given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna regarding the correct technique of life[46]. Over the centuries many renowned scholars and philosophers from all over the world have commented on the *Bhagavad Gita* and elucidated it's teaching in many publications and lectures. It is universal and non-sectarian and its teachings are applicable not only to Indians but to everybody. The message of the *Bhagavad Gita* is not only limited to spiritual development but also in other aspects of human capital development and also to facilitate the development of transformational leaders. The original version of the *Bhagavad Gita* is in Sanskrit language, which is one of the oldest languages in the world. Charles Wilkins translated the first English language version of the *Bhagavad Gita* in 1785[47]. At present there are more than 1000 English language versions and commentaries of the *Bhagavad Gita* written by many scholars in India and around the world. The *Bhagavad Gita* has also been translated into more than 500 world languages other than English. The *Bhagavad-Gita* has exercised an enormous influence, which extended in early times to China and Japan and lately to the western countries[48]. The two chief scriptural works of Mahayana Buddhism – *Mahayana Sraddhotpatti and Saddharma Pundarika* – are deeply indebted to the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Mahatma Gandhi who preached the *Bhagavad-Gita* philosophy, said: "I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming external tragedies – and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita*."[49].

The background for the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the epic *Mahabharata*, extolled as the 5th *Veda*[50]. *Mahabharata* is an encyclopedia of life and its central theme is *dharma* meaning occupational duty, righteousness and virtues. It deals not only with *dharma* but also *artha,* which is the acquisition of wealth, *kama* which is the enjoyment of pleasures and *moksha* which is the liberation. The *Mahabharata* was composed by Sri Vyasa Muni (son of Parasara Muni) and was written by Sri Ganesa more than 5000 years ago and it has 100,000 verses[51]. The *Bhagavad-Gita* appears in 700 verses (of which 575 are uttered by Sri Krishna) in *Bhisma Parva* of the *Mahabharata* and consists of 18 chapters.

The *Mahabharata* narrates the war between two cousins; the 5 *Pandavas*[52] and 100 *Kauravas* to claim the kingdom of Hastinapura. Sri Krishna, the champion of *dharma* offered to go on a peace-making mission on behalf of the *Pandavas* (This is a lesson to the world that peace is preferred at all costs). However the *Kauravas* refused to make peace and hence war became a certainty. Sri Krishna humbled himself into becoming the charioteer of Arjuna, the *Pandava* prince. In fact, Arjuna could choose unarmed Sri Krishna who would not engage in battle or Sri Krishna's army consisting of great warriors. Arjuna (*Pandava*) decided to choose Sri Krishna unarmed, while Duryodhana (*Kaurava*) was happy to get the large army from Sri Krishna. He (Duryodhana) felt that, without the army, and without weapons, Sri Krishna not could be of much help to the *Pandavas*[53].

The entire armies (7 *Pandava* divisions and 11 Kaurava divisions) of both sides were assembled at the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Thus the stage was set for the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The sermon was given on the battlefield before the commencement of the war. The battlefield also represent our body where an unending battle is raging between the forces of good and evil – the evil always outnumbering the good (5 *Pandavas* against the 100 *Kauravas*; or 7 *Pandava* divisions of soldiers against 11 *Kaurava* divisions). On a spiritual

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[46] Dharmaratnam, K, (1987), *Bhagavad-Gita in Action*, Nathan Publishing, Klang, Malaysia

[47] Muniapan, B., (2005), *"The Philosophy of Bhagavad Gita and its Relevance to Human Resource Development in the 21st Century"*, International Conference on Cultural and Religious Mosaic of South and Southeast Asia: <u>Conflict and Consensus through the Ages</u>, 1st South and Southeast Asian Association of Study of Religion (SSEASR) Conference under UNESCO, New Delhi, India, 27-30 January

[48] ibid

[49] Mahadevan, C.S, 2001, *The Glories of the Gita: Stories from the Padma Purana*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, India, p. 1

[50] "Veda" means knowledge. Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva are the four Vedas in the Indian tradition

[51] Rosen (2002), opcit

[52] The classical Malay texts Hikayat Pandawa Lima is derived from parts of the Mahabharata

[53] Subramaniam, K. 2001, *Mahabharata* (11th Eds), Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai

level, the focus is on the battle between the higher self and the lower self, the war between man's spiritual calling and the dictates of the body, mind and senses for material pleasures.[54]

THE GUNA LEADERSHIP THEORY FROM THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

The *Bhagavad-Gita* provides a composite framework to aid the understanding of the mental make-up of a person or a leader. This is similar to the trait theory of leadership developed in the western context. It offers the *Guna* leadership theory[55], which has also been called the tri-dimensional personality theory, to explain differences across individual leaders. There are three *Gunas—Sattva* (awareness), *Rajas* (dynamism), and *Tamas* (inertness). *Gunas* are the fundamental constituents of every being and each being is composed of all the three *Gunas*. When one of the three *Gunas* is dominant in a person, that person is said to be characterized by that *Guna*[56].

A leader could thus be *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, or *Tamasic* depending on which of the three *Gunas* is dominant. Of these, *Sattva* is free from evil, immaculate, flawless, and is expressed in qualities like purity, wisdom, goodness, fineness, bliss, and a love for knowledge. *Rajas* is characterized by egoism, activity, restlessness, assumption of undertakings, craving, passion, lust, greed, and the need for power. *Tamas* is exhibited in sloth, delusion, ignorance, heedlessness, inertia, procrastination, confusion, and perversion in thought and action[57].

According to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Sattvic* leadership behavior is quite capable of being learned through regular practice and training. A leader can develop *Sattvic* nature and can reduce *Tamasic* nature to enhance transformational leadership quality. Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (6. 5) says, "A man (leader) must elevate himself by his own mind (self), not degrade himself. The mind (self) is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well"[58]. The *Sattvic* leader performs actions, not because he is attached to actions, but with a view to set an example to the world. For, whatsoever a great man (leader) does, that alone the other men do; whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world follows (The *Bhagavad-Gita*, 3.20[59] - 21[60]). This *Sattvic* leader of the *Bhagavad-Gita* corresponds to the transformational leader, while the *Rajasic* leader corresponds to the transactional leader. The *Bhagavad-Gita* indicates that a greater influence of *Sattva* in leaders' personalities, the greater will be transformational leadership abilities.

A analysis of the characteristics of transformational leaders and those of the *Sattvic* performers or leaders has been presented below.

(a) The transformational leaders identify themselves as change agents. They will strive utmost to bring about the desired change that is felt necessary to improve the organizational effectiveness. They bring about changes not only in the organizational working, but also in the moods, images, expectations, attitudes and goals of the followers. They exert such a tremendous influence that the entire organizational structure gets meaningfully transformed. The *Bhagavad-Gita* believes that the world is in a state of constant flux and that all that we perceive keep changing continuously and we as human being has also undergone and undergoing changes (*Bhagavad-Gita*, 2. 13)[61]. So the *Sattvic* leader has to effect changes in his

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[54] Rosen (2002), opcit

[55] Guna theory is a theory of psychological energies or forces that determine individual propensities and dispositions. Gunas can be understood as attitudes with which mind functions or as influences under which the thoughts function. Guna theory provides the explanation for the innumerable and distinctive nature of people in the world. For details see http://rstpq.com/research_on_guna_composition.php

[56] Kejriwal, A & Krishnan, V.R (2004), *The Impact of Vedic Worldview and Gunas on Transformational Leadership,* Vikalpa, Vol 29, No 1, Jan – March, p. 29-40

[57] Chakraborty, S K (1987). Managerial Effectiveness and Quality of Work Life: Indian Insights, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill.

[58] *uddhared atmanatmanam,natmanam avasadayet ;atmaiva hy atmano bandhur , atmaiva ripur atmanah*

[59] *karmanaiva hi samsiddhim, asthita janakadayah; loka-sangraham evapi, sampasyan kartum arhasi*

[60] *yad acarati sresthas, tat tad evetaro janah; sa yat pramanam kurute, lokas tad anuvartate*

[61] *dehino 'smin yatha dehe, kaumaram yauvanam jara; tatha dehantara-praptir , dhiras tatra na muhyati*

environment, if he has to set an example to the world. Merely following the existing practices will take him nowhere.

(2) **The transformational leaders are courageous individuals**. Once they take a stand, they are brave enough to take risks and ensure that their objectives are fulfilled. They don't back out of a process of change once they have initiated it. Fearlessness is an essential virtue that adorns these individuals. Fearlessness is the watchword of the *Bhagavad-Gita* philosophy and the *Sattvic* leader goes about performing his actions without any fear (The *Bhagavad-Gita*, 16.1)[62]. According to Swami Vivekananda[63], if there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the *Upanishads*, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness.

(3) **The transformational leaders believe in people**. They have a very positive approach towards human beings. They believe in the innate ability and motivation of the people and work towards the empowerment of others in the organization. According to the *Bhagavad-Gita* philosophy, all beings are but the sparks of that one divinity. The infinite potential is there in every being, and a being varies from another only in the degree of manifestation of the divinity (*Bhagavad-Gita*, 17. 61)[64]. The *Sattvic* leader has imbibed this knowledge and hence spontaneously has a great regard for all human beings. He has tremendous faith in their potential and capacity and lovingly takes care of their emotional and other needs. To him, faith in people is not a virtue to be practiced, but it is a natural part of his existence. This faith in turn, generates the feeling in the people that they can dream the impossible and achieve the improbable. This is also consistent with McGregor Theory Y leadership[65].

(4) **The transformational leaders are value-driven**. They have a set of core values, which serves as their driving force and which permeates their actions. These values are regarded to be of paramount importance and are never compromised for anything; in fact, no price is regarded too heavy to uphold these deeply cherished values. The *Sattvic* leader has already transcended the state of *Rajas* denoted by passion and frenzied activity. The divine values are a part and parcel of his life and he doesn't give way to emotional upheavals. Since he is characterized by fearlessness, he has the necessary courage to stick to his values. (The *Bhagavad-Gita*, 4. 22[66]-23[67])

(5) **The transformational leaders are life-long learners**. They view mistakes not as failures but as learning experiences. They have an amazing appetite for continuous self-learning and development. The tendency of learning goes along with a sense of humility and scientific enquiry. According to Swami Vivekananda, education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man[68]. And this manifestation takes place continuously throughout a person's life. The *Sattvic* leader has a great flair for wisdom and knowledge; in fact his unique attribute is that he is endowed with both wisdom and action. He takes pleasure in intellectual indulgences, and at the same time performs actions for guiding the world. (The *Bhagavad-Gita*, 4. 33[69] 34[70], 35[71])

(6) **The transformational leaders have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty**. They have all the requirements of an increasingly complex world that demands complex problem-solving ability on the part of the leaders. They have a perfect balance between the cognitive and emotional aspects

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[62] *abhayam sattva-samsuddhir, jnana-yoga-vyavasthitih; danam damas ca yajnas ca, svadhyayas tapa arjavam*

[63] Vivekananda, Swami. (2000), *The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda* (eight volumes). Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama

[64] *isvarah sarva-bhutanam, hrd-dese 'rjuna tisthati; bhramayan sarva-bhutani, yantrarudhani mayaya*

[65] For detail see http://www.12manage.com/methods_mcgregor_theory_X_Y.html

[66] *yadrccha-labha-santusto, dvandvatito vimatsarah: samah siddhav asiddhau ca, krtvapi na nibadhyate*

[67] *gata-sangasya muktasya, jnanavasthita-cetasah; yajnayacaratah karma, samagram praviliyate*

[68] Vivekananda, Swami. (2000), opcit

[69] *sreyan dravya-mayad yajnaj, jnana-yajnah parantapa; sarvam karmakhilam partha, jnane parisamapyate*

[70] *tad viddhi pranipatena ,pariprasnena sevaya;upadeksyanti te jnanam,jnaninas tattva-darsinah*

[71] *punar moham, evam yasyasi pandava; yena bhutany asesani, draksyasy atmany atho mayi*

of their beings. The *Bhagavad-Gita* presents the concept of *Shraddha* or deep-rooted faith to attain supreme peace in the form of self-realization and ultimately realization of the Absolute. The *Sattivic* leader, because of his wisdom, is able to be constantly conscious of his infinite potential, which develops a lot of self-confidence in him. And as faith can move even mountains, the *Sattvic* leader is capable of handling any complex problem in the organization. Also, because of his cool and complacent nature, the leader will not get excited or tensed up and hence is able to tackle any issue in the best possible way. He is not at all overawed by the complexity or ambiguity of a problem because of the absolute faith or *Shraddha* that he has in himself (The *Bhagavad-Gita*, 3 31[72], 4. 39[73]).

(7) **The transformational leaders are visionaries**. They have broad and inspiring visions. They not only have the capacity to dream, but also the ability to translate those dreams and images, so that their followers are inspired by the visions that they have. The net result is that they are able to change the way people think about what is desirable, possible and necessary. The *Sattvic* leader is constantly working towards the goal of perfection and all his values and his entire personality are perfectly attuned towards achieving this objective. He is a source of constant inspiration to all those around him and he always radiates cheerfulness to his surroundings. People look up to him for guidance and because of these gradual attunements; they start sharing his visions, images and ideas. Thus a *Sattvic* leader is able to exert a tremendous influence on those who come in touch with him. (*Bhagavad-Gita*, XI. 3-8[74])

THE *BHAGAVAD-GITA AND* TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS: THE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT SIGNIFICANCE

a) Transformational leader's must strengthen their mind

In the beginning of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sri Krishna, playing the role of teacher (human resource developer), to revive Arjuna's morale embarked on the following sermon in the *Bhagavad-Gita*[75]: O son of PrthA, do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not become you. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O chastiser of enemy[76].

The leaders are advised to cast off their weakness of heart in performing duties. Leaders who are mentally weak cannot attain an organizational vision and mission. The mind of the leader must be firm in driving the organizational resources (human resources) towards vision and mission. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna[77] "he who is soft and weak minded like the puffed rice soaked in milk, is good for nothing. He cannot achieve anything great. But the strong and virile one is heroic. He is the accomplisher of everything in life".

There is also a similar advice for leaders to arise and awake from the *Katha Upanishad*. Nachiketa, a young boy was offered three boons by Yamaraja. The first two boons asked by Nachiketa were given by Yamaraja. In the third boon, Nachiketa asked Yamaraja for the knowledge of the Absolute (*Brahmavidya*). Yamaraja tried to dissuade him and offered all the other pleasures of life, however Nachiketa did not budge, and he was strong and determined. Yamaraja finally became pleased with Nachiketa and gave him the knowledge of the Absolute. In the process, he said "arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached. Although the path of realizing this goal is like walking a long distance on a razor's edge in the middle of the

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[72] *ye me matam idam nityam, anutisthanti manavah; sraddhavanto 'nasuyanto, mucyante te 'pi karmabhih*
[73] *sraddhaval labhate jnanam, tat-parah samyatendriyah; jnanam labdhva param santim, acirenadhigacchati*
[74] *niyatam kuru karma tvam, karma jyayo hy akarmanah; sarira-yatrapi ca te, na prasiddhyed akarmanah*
[75] Prabhupada, B.S, (1994), *Bhagavad-Gita as it is*, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles. Please note that the Bhagavad-*Gita slokas* (verses) quoted throughout this paper is also base on the above edition.
[76] *klaibyam mA sma gamah pArtha naitat tvayy upapadyate; ksudram hrdaya-daurbalyam tyaktvottisha parantapa Bhagavad Gita*. 2.3
[77] Chidbhavananda, S. (1992), *The Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, TN

night. That is what those sages say"[78]. This is an important lesson from leaders to be mentally strong and determined as in the case of Nachiketa.

Leaders also need to arise and strengthen their self. The concept of "self" has many meanings from many perspectives. For the purpose of this paper, the concept of "self" is limited to the individual leader. The *Bhagavad-Gita* stresses that an individual leader must uplift himself by his own self and he must not let himself be weakened under any circumstances or when facing a crisis. Leaders must elevate themselves by their own mind (*uddhared AtmanAtmanam*) and this requires effective leadership and management of our mind. For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends, but for one who has failed to control their mind, the mind will be the greatest enemy[79].

An untrained mind is very weak and unstable; as a result even a small obstacle coming in its way may make it lose initiative. Even Arjuna found that the mind is not easy to control. He told Sri Krishna that his mind was restless, very strong and difficult to control. Arjuna said that controlling his mind was more difficult than controlling the wind[80]. Sri Krishna agreed that the mind is not easy to control, however he said that it is possible to control the mind by constant practice and detachment[81].

In the practical world leaders have to fight so many opposing elements, it is certainly very difficult to control the mind. Leaders need to use their intelligence effectively to direct their mind. In this aspect *Katha Upanisad* also for example describes the position of individual self as a passenger in the car of the material body, and intelligence is the driver. Mind is the driving instrument, and the senses are the horses. The self is thus the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses[82]. Therefore it is essential that a leader uses his intelligence in an effective way to control the mind and achieve the equality of mind or even mindedness. The intelligence (*buddhi*) gives the power to the leader to discriminate and decide what is good for and what is not. It is the force behind the leader's wisdom. A leader of lesser intelligence is constantly driven by the senses and the desire for sense objects.

The practice as asserted by Sri Krishna to control and strengthen the mind in context of the leadership is "self" training and development. This also implies the importance of training and development in individual employees and organizational development in achieving competitive advantage. Leadership development programs in organizations should therefore focus in creating and developing leaders and organizational members to be strong and be mentally fearless.

b) Transformational leadership through duty and setting example

The concept of duty is given great importance in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Duty in the organizational context goes beyond contractual agreement in the employment relationship. Both employer and employee need to understand their duties in order to create good working relationship and harmonious industrial relations. Sri Krishna motivates and encourages leaders to do their duties and not to run away from the duties - Perform your prescribed duty, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one's physical

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[78] *uttiSThata jAgrata prApya varAn nibodhata kSurasya dhArA nizitA duratyayA durgaM pathas tat kavayo vadanti, Katha Upanisad 3. 14*

[79] *bandhur AtmAtmanas tasya yenAtmaivAtmanA jitah anAtmanas tu satrutve vartetAtmaiva satru-va t-* Bhagavad-Gita 6.6

[80] *caNcalam hi manah krsna pramAthi balavad drdham; tasyAham nigraham manye vAyor iva su-duskaram* - Bhagavad-Gita. 6.34

[81] *asamsayam mahA bAho mano durnigraham calam; abhyAsena tu kaunteya vairAgyena ca grhyate* - Bhagavad-Gita 6.35

[82] *AtmAnam rathinam viddhi, sariram ratham eva ca; buddhim tu sArathim viddhi, manah pragraham eva ca. indriyAni hayan Ahur, visayAms tesu gocarAn; atmendriya-mano-yuktam, bhoktety Ahur manisinah-* Katha Upanisad 1.3.3-4

body without work[83]. Sri Krishna further stressed that duty needs to be done without attachment and for those who do their duty without attachment will attain the supreme goal[84].

In his explanation, Sri Krishna gave the example of King Janaka (father of SitA and father in law of Sri RAma in *Ramayana*) who attained perfection solely by performance of his prescribed duties. Therefore leaders need to perform their work (duty) for the sake of educating the people in general (leadership by example)[85]. The leader in the context of organization needs to set example to their followers as whatever the leader does, the followers will follow and whatever standards or example the leader sets people in general will follow[86].

This lesson in leadership is not only limited to leaders in the work organization but each and every leader, including kings, ministers, community leaders, fathers or teachers. People in general always follow the leader and the leaders teach the public by their practical behavior. If the leader wants to create a healthy work environment by leading "no smoking campaigns" in their organization, firstly they should themselves stop smoking to set the example. Sri Krishna reminded Arjuna, if he runs away from the battlefield, all others will follow and if he fails to do his duty, others will also follow. The leaders must always set example, this is a simple but important lesson for leaders to be transformational leaders.

c) **Transformational "self" leadership**

The *Bhagavad-Gita* stresses the importance of self leadership first before leadership of other. Self leadership includes all aspects of management of oneself such as managing life, time, stress, anger, fear and self-control. The ability to lead others depends on the leader's personality traits such as self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy and other traits. Besides personality traits, other psychological attributes such as perception, values, attitudes, motivation, etc will also influence leadership effectiveness. The leader should be able to manage his anger and should not let anger gain control over him. Sri Krishna described that from anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence will be lost and when intelligence is lost one falls down[87]. The control and the management of anger effectively, is a vital aspect of human relations management not only in organizations but also in our everyday life. Anger resides in *Linga Sarira* (astral body) but it percolates into the physical body just as water percolates through the pores to the outer surface of an earthen pot and just as heat melts lead, so also *krodA* (anger) melts the individual[88].

Besides anger, the leader in the organization must also be able to tackle his worries, anxieties, fear, stress etc. These are the enemies of a leader. Even Arjuna, before the commencement of the battle had worries, anxieties and fear and he was forwarding a lot of argument to Sri Krishna on the negative outcome of the war. Arjuna was speaking learned words, yet he was grieving for what is not worthy of grief. He **was** lacking in real knowledge, the knowledge of the self. One who is in knowledge would not grieve in any circumstances. The *Bhagavad Gita* defines this stage as *brahma-bhUtah*. At this stage one will becomes

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[83] *niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyAyo hy akarmanah; sarira-yAtrApi ca te na prasiddhyed akarmanah* *Bhagavad-Gita* 3.8

[84] *tasmAd asaktah satatam kAryam karma samAcara; asakto hy Acaran karma param Apnoti pUrusah* *Bhagavad-Gita* 3.19.

[85] *karmanaiva hi samdiddhim AsthitA janakAdayah; loka-sangraham evApi sampasyan kartum arhasi* - *Bhagavad-Gita* 3.20.

[86] *yad yad Acarati sresthas tat tad evetaro Jana; sa yat pramAnam kurute lokas tad anuvartate* - *Bhagavad-Gita* 3.21

[87] *krodAd bhavati sammohah sammohAt smrti-vibhramah; smrti-bhramsAd buddhi-nAso buddhi-nAsAt pranasyati* - Bhagavad-Gita 2.63.

[88] Sivananda, S. 1990, *Sure Ways for Success in Life and God Realization*, Divine Life Publications, U.P

fully joyful. He will not lament nor desire anything. He will be in an equal and consistent state of mind and will be equal to all[89].

The *Bhagavad Gita* has elaborated many aspects of self leadership. In explaining the position of a self realized leader (*Bhagavad Gita* 18.51- 18.53), among others, Sri Krishna stressed the aspects such as controlling the mind, determination, giving up sense gratification, being free from attachment and hatred, body and mind control, power of speech, free from false ego, false pride and anger as essential part of self management. In describing qualities of *brAhmanas* (intelligent managers) (*Bhagavad-Gita* 18.42), Sri Krishna stressed the qualities such as peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness and in describing the qualities of *ksatriyas* (administrative managers) (*Bhagavad-Gita* 18.43), Sri Krishna identified qualities such as heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership.

Sri Krishna also described that fearlessness; purification of one's existence; cultivation of spiritual knowledge; charity; self-control; performance of sacrifice; study of the *Vedas*; austerity; simplicity; nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquility; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; vigor; forgiveness; fortitude; cleanliness; and freedom from envy and from the passion for honor are among the essential qualities which are needed for our self development. These qualities are in the mode of goodness (*satva guna*) and are considered essential not only for leaders but also auspicious for progress on the path of liberation.
It is clear that the *Bhagavad-Gita* gives the importance self leadership before any other types of leadership. In this context the *Bhagavad-Gita* provides an inside-out perspective to leadership as compared to the western out-side in perspective.

d) Transformational leadership by renunciation
The eighteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* culminates with an important transformational leadership lesson for effective leadership; this lesson is about leadership renunciation. The *Bhagavad Gita* defines renunciation as abstaining from selfish acts (*sanyasa* in *Sanskrit*) and detaching from the results of an action (*tyaga* in *Sanskrit*). Sri Krishna mentions specific areas where true renunciation must be practiced, such as:

- Renounce negative thoughts, words, and actions
- Renounce inequality and promote equality
- Renounce selfish desires and exercise selfless service
- Renounce indiscipline, dishonesty, and lazy attitude; and exercise integrity and pro-activeness
- Renounce arrogance and ignorance, and be open-minded
- Renounce momentary happiness that is derived from selfish behaviors. Instead, seek happiness that is long-lasting and beneficial to all.

The definition of renunciation, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*, suggests that leaders must practice selfless giving and strive for the common good. This concept is ironic in today's context as leadership in general is shrouded with deceit, dishonesty and selfish acts. We hardly see leaders who sacrifice their authority, position and incentives for the benefit of their people. Many leaders lure their followers with hefty promises only to be forgotten once they capture their leadership positions. Many leaders promise prosperity only to lose focus on people and their well-being.

Practicing renunciation requires focusing on people and demonstrating compassion toward them. Today, we know servant leadership as a popular leadership concept. Servant leadership is similar to the concept of leadership renunciation. Servitude and compassion enable leadership renunciation, and also enable effective leadership.

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[89] *brahma-bhutAh prasannAtmA na socati na kAnksati; samah sarvesu bhUtesu mad-bhaktim labhate parAm* - Bhagavad-Gita 18.54.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sri Krishna defines the meaning of true renunciation. He says, true renunciation is one that is undertaken with courage and without selfish attachments. By acknowledging one's responsibilities and doing everything in his or her capacity to fulfill those responsibilities, a person performs a true renunciation. When leaders acknowledge their responsibilities, there is no judgment of the nature of work. They do not worry about the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the nature of work. This is true leadership renunciation according to Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.[90].

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership is about leading an organization through change. As the world continues to change and progress through the twenty-first century, we will without doubt need transformational leaders to spearhead this change, leaders that can effectively guide and direct their subordinates through this transformation, and to serve as agents of change. Transformational leaders will be in great demand in the years to come. In this paper, some concepts and lessons on transformational leadership have been highlighted from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This provides a great significance for human capital development. After hearing the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Arjuna's ignorance was dispelled. He had regained his memory by Sri Krishna's mercy, and he was free from doubt and acted according to Sri Krishna's instruction[91]. This itself is an exhibition of transformation leadership, as quoted by Narayana (1998)[92] who explained what happened after the *Bhagavad-Gita*. He (Arjuna) stood steady on the ground with bow and arrow in hand. He lifted his arms ready to fight the war. Sri Krishna demonstrated transformational leadership qualities in developing and guiding Arjuna to victory in the war[93].These transformational leadership lessons as described in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, attest that the subject of leadership was profound in the ancient Indian text and its principles are still applicable and relevant to transformational leadership and human capital development even today. The prospects of analysis of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in other areas of organizational leadership such as strategic management, organizational behavior, human resource management and employment relations can be considered for future research.

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[90] For details see Pujan Roka at www.pujanroka.com

[91] *nasto mohah smrtir labdhA tvat-prasAdAn mayAcyuta; shito smi gata-sandehah karisye vacanam tava Bhagavad-Gita* 18.73.

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