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Summer August 5, 2016

Leadership & Communication in The Bhagavad Gita

Jon P. Radwan



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Leadership & Communication in the *Bhagavad Gita*: Unity, Duty, & Equanimity

Jon Radwan, Ph.D.
Seton Hall University
Academy of Management 2016

Looking into the Bhagavad Gita for Managing Organizations to Become Meaningful

1

Meaning

- Humans as Social Animals, Relational Beings, Interpersonal Reality (Stewart, 2012)
- Meaning as Vital Resource for all organizations
 - Focus, Shared Frame
 - Group Dynamics – maintenance, growth, disintegration
- Enacted through
 - Communication
 - Leadership

Looking into the Bhagavad Gita for Managing Organizations to Become Meaningful

2

Context

- Here
 - AOM '16 – “Making Organizations Meaningful”
 - Crime as lack of shared meaning (Smith, 2012)
 - Wisdom Traditions as resources
 - Religion and the Marketplace (Gandhi, n.d.)
- Now
 - *Bhagavad Gita* – Song of the Blessed One
 - Arjuna's Battle, Krishna's Guidance
 - Leadership, Challenges
 - Attitude (Burke, 1970) -- Unity, Duty, Equanimity

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3

Unity

- Ultimate Quantities?
 - **One** ←-----→ **Many**
 - Song of the Blessed One – Unity
 - “I am the beginning and the end, . . . all that is and is not.” (9.19)
 - Divine interdependence and balance
 - Division as illusion
 - “. . . he sees himself in all beings, and in all beings himself.” (6.29)
 - Ethical Leadership – social reality, impartiality and equality
 - Personal focus, enlightenment

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Duty

- Ultimate Chronology?
 - Future – Outcomes, Desire, Stress
 - Now – Process, unfolding moments
 - “Know what your duty is and do it without hesitation.” (2.31)
 - Training, Support
 - “In the zone” (Galleway, 1997)
 - the “wise man lets go of all results, whether good or bad, and is focused on the action alone. Yoga is skill in actions” (2.50)
 - Work as skillful process, worker merges with moment
- Surrender Desire, Grow Beyond Individualism
 - Shared Divine Nature, Devote action to God
 - Divine standards, action as worship
 - “He who acts for my sake, loving me, free of attachment, with benevolence toward all beings, will come to me in the end” (11.55).

Equanimity

- Ultimate Attitude?
 - Facing Change, Challenges
 - Failure Problems, Success Problems
 - Ideal Leader
 - Merciful, Selfless, Forgiving, Contented, Firm, Devout, Pure, Skillful, Disciplined (Gandhi, n.d.)
 - Persuasive?
 - Lead by example
 - Life is immediate and immanent, not linguistic, mediated, or referential
 - All words, including scripture, are superfluous

Applications: Meaningful Leadership

- Faith
 - Good organizations with meaningful leadership *can* be achieved
 - “no one who does good work will come to an evil end.” (6.4)

Leadership Function/Gita Value Matrix

Yukl's Leadership Functions	Gita Values: Unity	Duty	Equanimity
1. Help interpret the meaning of events	X		X
2. Create alignment on objectives and strategies	X	X	
3. Build task commitment and optimism		X	X
4. Build mutual trust and cooperation	X	X	
5. Strengthen collective identity	X	X	
6. Organize and coordinate activities	X	X	
7. Encourage and facilitate collective learning	X	X	
8. Obtain necessary resources and support		X	X
9. Develop and empower people		X	X
10. Promote social justice and morality	X	X	X

Conclusion

- Values like Unity, Duty, and Equanimity can make our organizations more meaningful
- Courage
- “Consciousness precedes being” (Palmer, n.d.)
 - Choices form, deform, and reform social reality
 - Responsibility, hope for change