

Work-Life Management Practices in Bhagavat Gita: A Good Strategy of Work Life Integration in IT sectors

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Abstract

The Bhagavad Gita is a message addressed to each and every human individual to help him or her to solve the vexing problem of overcoming the present and progressing towards a bright future. This holy scripture is not just an “old scripture”, nor is it just a book of “religious teachings”, nor even a Hindu holy book. It transcends the bounds of any particular religion or race, and is actually divine wisdom addressed to mankind for all times, in order to help human beings face and solve the ever-present problems of birth and death, of pain, suffering, fear, bondage, love and hate. It enables man to liberate himself from all limiting factors and reach a state of perfect balance, inner stability and mental peace, complete freedom from grief, fear and anxiety.

Management is a systematic way of doing all activities in any field of human effort. It is about keeping oneself engaged in interactive relationship with other human beings in the course of performing one's duty . IT sector is a fast growing economy in our country in this current environment. The Services Sector constitutes a large part of the Indian economy both in terms of employment potential and its contribution to national income. Among fast growing developing countries, India is distinctive for the role of the service sector. The changing economic conditions and social demands have changed the nature of work throughout the world. The managers of this organisations experience stress, struggle for power and control, cynicism and a work environment that stifles rather than releases human imagination, energy and commitment.

Work- life Integration has emerged as a hot topic in recent years. Although there is no blue-print for work-life balance, there is a need to assist employers and employees jointly in finding ways to accommodate the competitive needs and the personal concerns of the individual worker in a manner consistent with their particular circumstances. Work life Integration is an outcome of people exercising control and choice in their life to meet life's challenges. This can be in terms of managing work responsibilities alongside their personal and family needs. Due to present complexities, challenges in personal and work life, individuals are unable to balance between work and life. And so to balance work and life the internal independence and status of an individual should be harmonised with the external world.

Gita offers a framework for stimulating high levels of motivation, utilization of the available resources, lessons of Time management , work commitment, work culture and definition of work and efficiency. It has got all the management tactics to achieve the mental equilibrium and to overcome any crisis situation. The Bhagavad Gita can be

experienced as a powerful catalyst for transformation. The major findings that principles of Bhagavat Gita help managers of IT sector in forming a vision, planning the strategy to realize the vision, cultivating the art of leadership, establishing institutional excellence, building an innovative organization, developing human resources, building teams and teamwork. Gita teaches lessons of delegation, motivation, communication, reviewing performance and taking corrective steps when called for. Gita advises "detachment" from the fruits or results of actions performed in the course of one's duty. Being dedicated work has to mean "working for the sake of work, generating excellence for its own sake."

The study also highlights the support provided by Bhagavat gita to the IT sector in setting up HR systems that not only promote transparency, but also help to develop and grow the organization's human resources. Good quality and context-rich training is yet another need in IT management which will be easily achieved through the proper understanding of the principles of Gita.

For the harmony and sound health of body it is important that all three gunas like sattava, rajas and Thamas are aligned, because an imbalance can make human being sick physically or psychologically. Hence there is a necessity to have an inner balance between the personalities which would also seen external health. But inward peace will only be attained when our external relationships are balanced. A balance between individual and his external elements like nature (fire, earth, water, air and ether), climatic conditions, relationship with other individuals, work and many other such things which constitutes the external environment of individual. Bhagavad-Gita says that life is always a battle, where there is a constant battle between cosmic energy and individual energy. A higher level of Sattava guna –balancing guna of an individual- ensures that we are balanced in an inner level as well as outer level to the extent that we are delighted, joyful and happy. On the other hand a higher level of Tamas guna leads to upsetting of individual with the outer world. And this may lead to absence of joy, grief and sorrow. The third guna, Tamas means indifference. It means resistance to action which gives many evil effects like death, destruction and loss. Bhagavad-Gita and other scriptures are made available to human beings as these are the individuals in who is planted a light of reason and a flash of insight. And so these ancient scriptures also help managers to balance between work life and family life through very simple and fruitful strategies which we tend to forget at times .

For achieving the objectives of this article, a survey will be conducted among different managerial levels of top 10 IT companies in Kerala with a sampled population of 50 employees through a structured questionnaire. The secondary data will be collected and compiled from published articles and theory reviews of literatures.

Keywords: Bhagavat Gita, Management, IT sector, Work Life Integration, HR systems, Gunas

1. Introduction

The Services Sector constitutes a large part of the Indian economy both in terms of employment potential and its contribution to national income. Among fast growing developing countries, India is distinctive for the role of the service sector. The changing economic conditions and social demands have changed the nature of work

throughout the world. The concept of Work life balance is becoming more and more relevant in an ever dynamic working environment. IT sectors is committed to create a workplace culture and environment where employees can integrate their responsibilities to work, family, education and other personal needs better and enhance their productivity.

One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is Holy Gita which is considered to be one of the first revelations from God. Arjuna got mentally depressed when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight.(Mental health has become a major international public health concern now). To motivate him the Bhagavad Gita is preached in the battle field Kurukshetra by Lord Krishna to Arjuna as a counseling to do his duty while multitudes of men stood by waiting . It has got all the management tactics to achieve the mental equilibrium and to overcome any crisis situation. The Bhagavad Gita can be experienced as a powerful catalyst for transformation. Bhagavad gita means song of the Spirit, song of the Lord. The Holy Gita has become a secret driving force behind one's life. This divine book will contribute to self reflection, finer feeling and deepen one's inner process. What makes the Holy Gita a practical psychology of transformation is that it offers us the tools to connect with our deepest intangible essence and we must learn to participate in the battle of life with right knowledge.

The primary objective of the current research is to examine how personal and environmental characteristics contribute to the dynamics of work-life balance. In particular, the focus is on how various factors in an individual's work and non-work life act as facilitators (resources) or barriers (demands) and collectively contributes to the perception of work-life balance. Also, this study aims to determine how the resultant perception of work-life balance impacts upon the individual's general health, wellbeing, work and life satisfaction and finally, work performance. The aim of this research study is to find out the impact of Work life balancing practices in Bhagavat gita as a good strategy for employees' work life integration with reference to IT sectors. I have made a pilot study in this regard at various IT companies and expected outcome is incorporated in this paper.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Finding out the impact of principles of Bhagavat Gita on employees' work life with reference to IT Sector

2. Literature Review

WORK-LIFE BALANCE: DOING IT RIGHT AND AVOIDING THE PITFALLS by *Jim Bird*; The demand for work-life-balance solutions by employees and managers is expanding at an unprecedented rate. As a result, work-life balance is an increasingly hot topic in boardrooms and government halls today. Over the coming decade it will be one of the most important issues that executives and human resource professionals will be expected to manage. This article provides the methods to accelerate the implementation of a very successful work-life strategy within the organization. First they cover why work-life is critical to the key objectives of our organization and its executive team. A brief history of work-life efforts follows so we can learn from the trial and error of others and avoid their mistakes. Finally, they describe the two parts of a successful work-life strategy and how they can most quickly and effectively implement them.

Bhagavad Gita and Management by *M.P. Bhattathiri*, *Retired Chief Technical Examiner, Govt. of Kerala*; In this article, author describes the management guidelines from the Bhagavat Gita.

Management Lesson from the Bhagavad Gita by *B MAHADEVAN*; This article point to the endless list of benefits that the Gita offers to a management practitioner and illustrate it by culling out some ideas that one may find very useful to apply.

An Interface between Bhagvad Gita and work life balance by *Mitu Agarwal & Dr. Ipseeta Satpathy*, *School of Management KIIT University, Odisha*; This article explains various strategies, derived from the Vedas and Gita that can be adopted by both man and woman to have a balanced life.

BHAGAVAD GITA by *SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA*; The author is giving a very good introduction of Bhagavat Gita and explains practices of harmony in the Gita

3.Integrated Work Life/Work Life Integration: Definition

Work life Integration is an outcome of people exercising control and choice in their life to meet life's challenges. This can be in terms of managing work responsibilities alongside their personal and family needs.

Why is it important?

Work and life stressors will continue to increase, as heightened expectations and choices around us compel us to seek for what is a “good life”. As this requires continuous self clarification of one’s core values and life goals, work - life balancing becomes a necessary skill set that enables us to live and work efficiently and effectively. If an organization takes cognizance of this work - life imperative and designs a conducive work environment for achieving a work - life integration outcome, it is likely to motivate its employees to work more efficiently and productively.

4. Bhagavat Gita and Principles of Work life Integration

The Holy Gita is the essence of the Vedas, Upanishads. It is a universal scripture applicable to people of all temperaments and for all times. It is a book with sublime thoughts and practical instructions on Yoga, Devotion, Vedanta and Action. It is profound in thought and sublime in heights of vision. The Bhagavad Gita is a message addressed to each and every human individual to help him or her to solve the vexing problem of overcoming the present and progressing towards a bright future.

Management has become a part of everyday life and management principles come into play through the management of resources, finance and planning, priorities, policies and practice. Management is a systematic way of carrying out activities in any field of human effort. It creates harmony in working together - equilibrium in thoughts and actions, goals and achievements, plans and performance, products and markets. It resolves situations of scarcity, be they in the physical, technical or human fields, through maximum utilization with the minimum available processes to achieve the goal. Lack of management causes disorder, confusion, wastage, delay, destruction and even depression. Managing men, money and materials in the best possible way, according to circumstances and environment, is the most important and essential factor for a successful management.

4.1. Management guidelines from the Bhagavad Gita

- Forming a vision
- Planning the strategy to realize the vision.
- Cultivating the art of leadership.
- Establishing institutional excellence.

- Building an innovative organization.
- Developing human resources.
- Building teams and teamwork.
- Delegation, motivation, and communication.
- Reviewing performance and taking corrective steps when called for.

Thus, management is a process of aligning people and getting them committed to work for a common goal to the maximum social benefit - in search of excellence.

Bhagavad-Gita is delivered on the field of war in the context of Mahabharata. And the intention of Bhagavad-Gita is not to be read as a story but a handbook for the salvation of soul of humans, solving their inner conflicts and letting go ego which sometimes lead to hampered relationship with near and dear ones, stress during work and misbalancing of work and life. Bhagavad-Gita is a scripture of yoga which means that the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita can be practiced when one finds oneself at a conflict situation in one's life. Mahabharata is a story of war, or to say, conflicts of emotions arising because of relatives, friends and course of life and Bhagavad-Gita has helped overcome this conflict by practice of yoga and balancing of purposes (priorities) in life and thus is also helpful in attaining work life balance. As human beings, everyone has an external urge towards action, societal relationship and contacts of various kinds, and at the same time they also have a dominant impulse to maintain our integrity and status. The societal status is gained through the paid work that one does and the internal status and integrity is earned through our leisure activities, friends and relatives. But due to present complexities, challenges in personal and work life, individuals are unable to balance between work and life. And so to balance work and life the internal independence and status of an individual should be harmonised with the external world. In our pursuit to balance our life, we are also compelled to perform well at our work front so that there is balanced relationship.

According to Indian philosophy, especially the Vedanta, the original substance of all types of creation is 'Prakriti'. Prakriti is classified into three gunas known as sattava, rajas and tamas. For the harmony and sound health of the body it is important that all three gunas are aligned, because an imbalance can make human being sick physically or psychologically. Hence there is a necessity to have an inner balance between the personalities which would also be also seen external health. But inward peace will only be attained when our external relationships are balanced. A balance between individual and his external elements like nature (fire, earth, water, air and ether), climatic conditions, relationship with other individuals, work and many other

such things which constitutes the external environment of individual. Bhagavad-Gita says that life is always a battle, where there is a constant battle between cosmic energy and individual energy. Life is a fight from birth to death. It is a course of tackling something or the other every day, an obligation that we undergo every moment of time to resolve a situation that may have arisen in front of us. The moment an individual wakes up in the morning, he or she is face to face with many realities that have the potential to cause imbalance in our lives. A higher level of Sattava guna – the balancing guna of an individual- ensures that we are balanced in an inner level as well as outer level to the extent that we are delighted, joyful and happy. On the other hand a higher level of Tamas guna leads to upsetting of individual with the outer world. And this may lead to absence of joy, grief and sorrow. The third guna, Tamas means indifference. It means resistance to action which gives many evil effects like death, destruction and loss. In the first verse of the Bhagavad-Gita we come across two important words, ‘Dharmakshetra’ and ‘Kurukshestra’. Dharmakshetra is derived from the word dharma which means justice and the law of nature which abides all human beings. ‘Kurukshestra’, literally means war field. But in this context it means our day to day conflict with work, attitudes of people, perceptions and society pressures. Bhagavad-Gita teaches us the ways to balance; samatva-equanimity i.e. putting things in order and reaching ; between ‘Dharmakshetra’ and ‘Kurukshestra’ so that we neither become busy-bodies who have lost their souls nor we are like hibernating frogs deep in our individualities and disconnected from the outer world. There is struggle everywhere, in everything, at all times, a struggle, to maintain a balance. This entire struggle is an attempt towards the maintenance of equilibrium in any field of life, in any plane of existence. For example, when there is a lack of balance in any part of our body then anxiety creeps in our body. Even a single incoherent element is sufficient to disturb the entire balance, just as an ear-ache is enough to make us grieve the whole day. Similarly imbalance in any part of human society, leads to anxiousness. And to curb this anxiousness, we have various kinds of law – government laws, state laws, society laws etc. Just like we are unhappy if even a little thorn pricks the sole of our foot, similarly small intractable element in society, which disturbs the peace of the mind of people has the power to create disharmony and so we are obliged to be conscious of its existence and are also compelled to see what means can be adopted in setting right the situation. The aim is that there should not be any instance for misbalance even in the least manner, and so the whole of yoga is an all-inclusive approach to the situation of cosmic conflict which sympathetically reflects itself in every individual, also.

Traditionally, the work was divided between man and woman based on the convenience and work complexity. Man of the house was always the bread earner for the house. And woman took care of household activities like taking care of children, elders, cooking etc. But with changing dynamics, the working scenario of the households is changing. With the increase in education and professionalism in women, the income and living standards of individuals also improved. Now every married couple wants a better standard of living and quality education for their children. And so husband and wife are working for a double income and to give better facilities to their dependent. But this change has also brought with it certain set of problems. Now that women have also started earning, also she is burdened with more responsibilities. She has to go out to earn and she also has to take care of the family members and do household chores.

The Bhagavad-Gita says that just like Arjuna individuals are faced with warring situations everyday and our activities are our efforts to face the battle. The work that individuals do in office, the labour that is put forth in a factory, or any other work that women do at homes or in any walk of life, is the effort individuals put forth to resolve a conflict and solve a situation. Man and woman have to tactfully do their work, without thinking about their results, in order to maintain a balance between their work and life. There are various strategies, derived from the Vedas and Gita that can be adopted by both man and woman to have a balanced life.

(i) Focusing on work regardless of result

Bhagavad-Gita has always advocated that we should focus on our work and do work with complete honesty regardless of result. And when couples work with utmost honesty and are productive for the organization then they get support from the organization to balance their family life, working hours and family friendly parties etc.

(ii) Work is God

We are always taught that work is worship. And so we should always value our work. When we derive meaning from work, we enjoy our work and feel a sense of purpose which propels our life in correct decision.

(iii) Valuing family and partnership

Married and working couples should view everything at large and strive for a larger purpose. The purpose is to give quality life to their family members. But in the run for making more money couples should not forget to value their family. Husband and wife should support each other in both family and career life. And especially husband should take pride in their partners who support them financially, emotionally and physically.

(iv) Simple living and prioritizing family

For couples it is important that they should give priority to family first and try to spend more and more time with family. Controlling unnecessary expenditures can help couples to save money and give quality education to children.

(v) Valuing time

Time is an important element which can never be gained back. And married couples should focus on spending more and more quality time together. In this fast paced life, husband and wife get very less time to spend with each other and their children. So couples should make strategies to make optimum utilisation of their time.

(vi) Making proactive decisions

In order to make important decisions about their finances and life couple should spend time together and so should make proactive decisions. Decision making for couples should be a joint effort rather than one influencing the other.

Now let us examine some of the modern management concepts in the light of the Bhagavad Gita which is a primer of management-by-values. support. This episode gives us a clue as to the nature of the effective manager - the former chose numbers, the latter, wisdom.

4.2. Management principles from the Bhagavad Gita

1.Utilisation of available resources

A good manager should know how to choose wisely and utilise scarce resources optimally. During the Mahabharata War, Duryodhana chose Sri Krishna's large army for his

help while Arjuna selected Sri Krishna's wisdom for his support. This episode gives us a clue as to the nature of the effective manager - the former chose numbers, the latter, wisdom.

2. Work commitment

Working only with an eye to the anticipated benefits, means that the quality of performance of the current job or duty suffers - through mental agitation of anxiety for the future. In fact, the way the world works means that events do not always respond positively to our calculations and hence expected fruits may not always be forthcoming. So, the Gita tells us not to mortgage present commitment to an uncertain future. Thus the best means of effective performance management is the work itself. Attaining this state of mind (called "nishkama karma") is the right attitude to work because it prevents the ego, the mind, from dissipation of attention through speculation on future gains or losses.

3. Motivation and self-transcendence

Gita offers a framework for stimulating high levels of motivation. Otherwise how can one explain the magic transformation that Arjuna has gone through from a state of fear, mental agony and hair raising experience to one of waging a war against a battery of most credible and competent leaders in the society and eventually winning the war. A careful study of Gita from this perspective will lead us to important principles that managers must inherit to create rightful and long living organizations. Such a study will help us discover certain aspects of high performing organizations and may provide vital clues for alternative paradigms of management.

Self transcendence involves renouncing egoism, putting others before oneself, emphasising team work, dignity, co-operation, harmony and trust "Work must be done with detachment." It is the ego that spoils work and the ego is the centrepiece of most theories of motivation. We need not merely a theory of motivation but a theory of inspiration. A concept which is described as "disinterested work" in the Gita where Sri Krishna says, "He who shares the wealth generated only after serving the people, through work done as a sacrifice for them, is freed from all sins. On the contrary those who earn wealth only for themselves, eat sins that lead to frustration and failure."

Disinterested work finds expression in devotion, surrender and equipoise. The former two are psychological while the third is determination to keep the mind free of the dualistic (usually taken to mean "materialistic") pulls of daily experiences. Detached involvement in work is the

key to mental equanimity or the state of 'nirdwanda." This attitude leads to a stage where the worker begins to feel the presence of the Supreme Intelligence guiding the embodied individual intelligence. Such de-personified intelligence is best suited for those who sincerely believe in the supremacy of organizational goals as compared to narrow personal success and achievement.

4. Work culture

An effective work culture is about vigorous and arduous efforts in pursuit of given or chosen tasks. Sri Krishna elaborates on two types of work culture - "daivi sampat" or divine work culture and "asuri sampat" or demonic work culture. Daivi work culture - involves fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice, straightforwardness, self-denial, calmness, absence of fault-finding, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy and pride. Asuri work culture - involves egoism, delusion, personal desires, improper performance, work not oriented towards service.

The principle of reducing our attachment to personal gains from the work done is the Gita's prescription for attaining equanimity. It has been held that this principle leads to lack of incentive for effort, striking at the very root of work ethic. To the contrary, concentration on the task for its own sake leads to the achievement of excellence - and indeed to the true mental happiness of the worker. Thus, while commonplace theories of motivation may be said to lead us to the bondage or extrinsic rewards, the Gita's principle leads us to the intrinsic rewards of mental, and indeed moral, satisfaction.

5. Work results

The Gita further explains the theory of "detachment" from the extrinsic rewards of work in saying: If the result of sincere effort is a success, the entire credit should not be appropriated by the doer alone. If the result of sincere effort is a failure, then too the entire blame does not accrue to the doer.

The former attitude mollifies arrogance and conceit while the latter prevents excessive despondency, de-motivation and self-pity. Thus both these dispositions safeguard the doer against psychological vulnerability, the cause of the modern managers' companions of diabetes, high blood pressure and ulcers.

Assimilation of the ideas of the Gita leads us to the wider spectrum of "lokasamgraha" (general welfare) but there is also another dimension to the work ethic - if the "karmayoga" (service) is blended with "bhaktiyoga" (devotion), then the work itself becomes worship, a "sevayoga" (service for its own sake.)

6. Notion of time

One of the pressing problems that modern organizations face arise out of their notion of time. Modern organizations suffer from extreme levels of 'short termism' and have to meet dead line that always make a pressurised situation. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna's first lesson to Arjuna is to train his mind to the notion of time that is essentially long term (Chapter 2, Slokas 11-13). A good understanding of this helps managers to feel less pressurized of performance targets in the short run and instead develop some conviction to engage in activities and decisions that seek to create a balance between short term and long term.

7. Performance Metrics and Assessment

The biggest constraint for modern management is the mindset towards performance metrics and assessment. Slokas in Gita provides the important attributes pertaining to the world of duality that a leader/manager must possess to be successful in his/her work place. If managers can develop a sense of equanimity as indicated in the Gita, the quality of leadership will dramatically improve and so will the quality of management.

8. Work and Efficiency

Perhaps the most profound insight that the Bhagavad Gita offers to managers in modern corporations is the definition of work and efficiency. There are four aspects to the definition of work that Shri Krishna articulates:

- (a) The doer has the right to work
- (b) The doer has no control on outcomes/ fruits of action
- (c) The doer has, no control on the root causes of the fruits of action
- (d) There is no choice to revel in inaction

Results and outcomes are a matter of future and work is a matter of present. Therefore with excessive result orientation one tends to escape the dynamics of 'present' and go after 'future'.

6. Manager's mental health

Sound mental health is the very goal of any human activity - more so management. Sound mental health is that state of mind which can maintain a calm, positive poise, or regain it when unsettled, in the midst of all the external vagaries of work life and social existence. Internal constancy and peace are the pre-requisites for a healthy stress-free mind.

Some of the impediments to sound mental health are:

- Greed - for power, position, prestige and money.
- Envy - regarding others' achievements, success, rewards.
- Egotism - about one's own accomplishments.
- Suspicion, anger and frustration.
- Anguish through comparisons.

The driving forces in today's businesses are speed and competition. There is a distinct danger that these forces cause erosion of the moral fibre, that in seeking the end, one permits oneself immoral means - tax evasion, illegitimate financial holdings, being "economical with the truth", deliberate oversight in the audit, too-clever financial reporting and so on. This phenomenon may be called as "yayati syndrome".

In the book, the Mahabharata, we come across a king by the name of Yayati who, in order to revel in the endless enjoyment of flesh exchanged his old age with the youth of his obliging youngest son for a thousand years. However, he found the pursuit of sensual enjoyments ultimately unsatisfying and came back to his son pleading him to take back his youth. This "yayati syndrome" shows the conflict between externally directed acquisitions (extrinsic motivation) and inner value and conscience (intrinsic motivation.)

7. Management needs those who practice what they preach

"Whatever the excellent and best ones do, the commoners follow," says Sri Krishna in the Gita. The visionary leader must be a missionary, extremely practical, intensively dynamic and capable of translating dreams into reality. This dynamism and strength of a true leader flows from an inspired and spontaneous motivation to help others. "I am the strength of those who are

devoid of personal desire and attachment. O Arjuna, I am the legitimate desire in those, who are not opposed to righteousness," says Sri Krishna in the 10th Chapter of the Gita.

5. Research methodology

For achieving the objectives of this article, a survey will be conducted among different managerial levels of top 10 IT companies in Kerala with a sampled population of 50 employees through a structured questionnaire. The secondary data will be collected and compiled from published articles and theory reviews of literatures.

6. Conclusion

Achieving a good balance between work and family commitments is a growing concern for contemporary employees and organizations. There is now mounting evidence-linking work– life imbalance to reduced health and wellbeing among individuals and families. It is not surprising then that there is increasing interest among organizational stakeholders (e.g. CEOs, HR managers) for introducing work–life balance policies in their organizations.

As the career choices and decisions of a spouse have a direct influence on the career decisions of the partner. In such scenario, the working couples have to face many challenges and struggles every day. Bhagavad-Gita and other scriptures are made available to human beings as these are the individuals in who is planted a light of reason and a flash of insight. And so these ancient scriptures also help couples to balance between work life and family life through very simple and fruitful strategies which we tend to forget at times .

Based on these illustrations from the Gita, managers can take away some simple yet powerful lessons. Developing a good sense of neutrality is an important pre-requisite for discharging one's work very effectively. Embracing the overarching principle of karma yoga will have to be the alternative paradigm for improving the quality of management in organizations. If managers can take these two important lessons from the Gita, we can not only build an alternative paradigm of management but also succeed reasonably in the practice of management. That can be the greatest tribute we can offer to the sacred text of Bhagavad Gita.

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