

# An Effective Manager - a Spiritual Perspective

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Today we live our lives, in the fast paced twenty first century, in the midst of a knowledge revolution accelerated by rapidly evolving technology. The modern day manager is confronted by the ethical problem of how to manage and lead a productive and efficient team without compromising on the quality of life, quality of environment and the spiritual and moral growth of the members of his organization.

A student of management history is today inundated by a deluge of theories, strategies and jargon like market forces, stakeholders, and performance indices. Thousands of books describe the people and leadership of good, great and successful organizations. But it is a paradox that many such companies are born, grow, fructify and often many of these most admired companies simply vanish from the list of topmost companies compiled by various Business journals around the world.

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In India which today is admired as a rapidly growing economic powerhouse, we are also inheritors of a spiritual legacy which has been current for thousands of years. The spiritual legacy most treasured is the Bhagawad Gita - which is a compendium of thoughts, directives and contains everything that a practical manager needs for his effectiveness based on moral and spiritual nourishment. This spiritual treasure house continues to guide the Indian manager, and workforce as a practical do it yourself compendium of knowledge. This is not a religion specific holy book but a universal fountain head of wisdom for entire humanity at large.

While many scholars have given various interpretations - there are two very important exhortations for every manager in the Gita namely

(i) *Yogah karmasu kaushalam* (Yoga is dexterity in action).

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(ii) Developing on all embracing spiritually integrated personality by developing sattva (spiritual balance) and transcending rajās (restlessness) and tamās (inertia).

The modern day manager may well ask - It is true that the Gita is a respected treasure house of wisdom, but how do I make it relevant in my real day to day work environment? To answer this profound question one has to clearly understand that while a person who is physically efficient, and has great comforts has often in the course of time become a sad broken person without developing his inner spiritual life. Lord Krishna has a simple answer - Yoga is dexterity in action - to be productive physically and with inner growth. The clarion call is - *Do not separate the two aspects of life. Integrate your personality by offering all your work as worship.*

But one persists with the question - is there a practical way in our daily work lives, in our daily interaction with people and in our joint endeavor to bring a sense of fulfillment in our lives. The answer is a clear and unequivocal - yes, we can do this by leading an ethical, value based life, irrespective of the station we occupy in life.

**What are values?** Values are principles, and guidance which are absolute in nature and lead to an admirable and desirable level of perfection in life. Today even modern temples of learning life like IIM Kolkata have a vigorous and active Management Centre of Human Values. Prof. SK Chakraborty of this centre, whom I had the privilege of knowing, has done much research, and taught thousands of practicing managers all over India and abroad. Every time and again in all organizations and locations, the desirable values of a manager have been repeatedly identified namely - integrity, sincerity, honesty, purity, and truthfulness. He has also used a term - "disvalues" describing negative characteristics like *falsehood, anger, hatred and jealousy*. These lead us to a conclusion, that eternal truths enshrined in all sacred wisdom literature are always the basis of a man's value based actions.

It is nice to be intellectually aware of values but can they be taught or acquired and how does one operationalise these learnings? The answer again from all wisdom literature is - dive deep within One's Self. Deep within all of us is our Higher Self. This Higher Self is eternally strong, eternally pure and eternally effulgent and eternally self sufficient. As a manager, as a father, brother, colleague, spouse, if one connects with one's Higher Self and realizes the presence of the same Higher Self within himself; one really becomes effective in all his activities. One automatically becomes sincere, loving and truthful in his interaction with others. The great Swami Vivekananda had this simple yet powerful message - See Shiva (God) in all Jivas (Men). Once this truth is realized, all our work and interaction with our co-workers becomes an offering to the Higher Self. One becomes dexterous, in his skills when tempered with this spiritual insight!!

But how do I identify my Higher Self? Here again all wisdom literature exhorts us to go inwards. Achieve this by stilling your mind, by controlled breathing and consciously connecting with your Higher Self. Draw strength, draw courage, draw wisdom from your own inexhaustible repertoire and perform your duty in your workplace, in your home. Remember that by simply giving an intellectual assent to such ideas, nothing will be achieved. Swami Vivekananda has said, 'Unfurl the sails and gather the breeze of His Grace'. Whose Grace? - None but your Higher Self. This is nothing but identifying with your own spiritual reality.

Let us remember that life is a three sixty degrees twenty four continuum. We may be a doctor, an accountant, or a Municipal supervisor. All these professions require some degree of managerial competence. One has heard of good professionals and crooked professionals. What distinguishes and identifies an effective manager are good skills pivoted on an axis of human values. Without this pivot, skills can be misused and often result in terrible consequences. Today in this world there is an

abundance of highly skilled individuals but lacking values. The organizations they lead often cause untold harm to the lives of their employees, customers, and society in general.

The recent happenings on Wall Street and many Indian firms whose Corporate Governance had been admired, are now affecting the lives of people who trusted them. Absence of values shows up starkly in today's economic melt down scenario.

Let me conclude with a personal memoir. I have often asked Prof. SK Chakraborty - does a value based organization always have a healthy bottom line? He always smiled and said - find out yourself! I know of a case where a new person who was chosen to head a high tech government organization after a series of unfortunate happenings within the organizations.

This was a sick organization characterized by constant losses, obsolete machinery, a militant multi-union work force, a non-innovative and stagnant product mix and above all a demoralized executive manpower at all levels. The Government wanted it to be merged with another larger organization so as to bring to an end the stigma of an unproductive, loss making enterprise. The parent ministry was also growing indifferent to all requests for assistance.

To cut a long story short, let it be said that after much introspection, consultations and brainstorming amongst all levels of employees and managers, a

conscious decision was taken to create a value based work atmosphere. One of the initiatives and agreed by all, was to undergo a small course in managerial and spiritual effectiveness in a highly regarded Institute of Human Effectiveness in that city. From the Chairman to his office attendant, everybody attended this course. This was done throughout the year to cover every single employee in that organization.

Ofcourse the problems did not vanish overnight but an effort was made to create an atmosphere of trust and integrity. There was a perceptible improvement in production, product mix, product quality, product delivery schedules, customer care, realization of outstanding dues and above all human relations. There were hiccups and obstacles, yet in the first year the company was able to wipe out all previous losses, pay a maiden dividend to the Government first time in 33 years and secure an 'Excellent' rating in its MOU with the ministry. Two of its major customers seeing the tremendous increase in productivity, advanced hundreds of crores for a modernization program. Today it is a MINI RATNA after being labeled for years as a loss making PSU.

Was it only a spiritual value based approach or was it skills that transformed this organization? The skills had existed before but the human wealth of the organizations found itself nourished by a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Today they are proud to work in that organization.

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### **Spirituality and Prosperity**

Prosperity comes to those who honour the disciplines demanded by it. Wherever there is organisation or power, there we find people prosper. Prosperity is not the measure of one's success.

The basis of prosperity is industry, responsibility, honesty, organisation, common sense and alertness in life. Prosperity reduces ignorance and illness. Desire for prosperity without its basic requirements is wishful thinking. Prosperity is energy organized. Spirituality is prosperity. The greatest prosperity issues out of spirituality. Spiritual prosperity is harmonious. Spiritual prosperity increases mental peace. Spiritual prosperity is ever lasting, knows no diminishing.

Prosperity and freedom are in direct proportion.

Prosperity rises as we rise in the scale of human values – from the physical to the vital, from the vital to the mental, and finally from the mental to the spiritual.

*Compiled by Ragini S.Kumar from Sri Karmayogi's Spiritual Opulence – courtesy: Consecration*