

# Glimpses of Management Ethics from Our Heritage

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*Managers must take responsibility to continue to contribute even after completing the assigned work. This is a responsibility beyond the call of normal duty. This work beyond the call of duty becomes a great offering and a great contribution. The Manager's position should be viewed not as a position of power and prestige but as a position of responsibility and service. Work will no longer be a burden but will be more meaningful and enjoyable.*

Indian civilization is the only one surviving of all the ancient civilizations on earth. However it is multicultural and has added value to its ancient wisdom, philosophy and thoughts from other countries and other religions in the true sense of its own philosophy:

*Aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah I*  
(RgVeda)

*Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere.*

India is the birth place of four great religions and it has welcomed many other religions including Christianity and Islam. Indian

heritage values and ethics are deep-rooted in the great philosophical thoughts and teaching of ancient Rishis and Sages of a time when there were no religions, as we understand today. Some of these are available to us in the form of Upanishads, Vedas, Yogasuthras, Puranas and Ithihasas. Some consider these as Hindu scriptures. But the fact is that these belong to a period much before the religion of Hinduism and these are Indian heritage and are contribution to the world. Teaching of Buddha, Mahaveer, Gurunanak, Adishankara and influence of other religions and other sages have added value to our heritage. Modern day sages of India who attract devotees from all over the world and who preach Universal Brotherhood and Adherence to truth, spirituality, duty to God, environment and society, are continuing to add values to our life and social conduct. The purpose of this article is not to dwell in detail on the subject but to bring out relevance of our heritage values and ethics which emphasise dharma

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i.e. duty, service to society, respect for people, animals, nature and environment, concern for well being for all etc to professional ethics.

### 1.1 Work culture

Our heritage values and ethics consider **“Work as Worship”**. But Managers are taught that man is basically lazy and needs to be motivated to work through incentives. Workers and managers have to face many conflicts such as work content, work environment, on the adequacy of monetary compensation and other incentives etc. Motivational techniques such as higher wages, monetary incentives, power, perks etc are neither lasting nor sustainable as the expectations keep on growing. Such conflicts disappear only when there is an emotional involvement, a commitment for a higher purpose. Work becomes worship when it is done as a mission, as an offering to God, and as a spiritual endeavor.

***Yasya sarve sama rambhah:***

***Kaama sankalpa varjitaah:***

***Gnaanaagni dagdha karmaanam***

***Tamaahuh panditam budaah***

(Bhagavadgita –IV-19)

Seers say that a learned person works, free of desire.

A responsible manager should be task oriented and focus on completing the work for the overall benefit instead of considering his/her own returns. A manager should be a **“Karmayogi”**. He should not only complete the task but must continue to be innovative and improve for common good. Krishna told Arjuna in Bhagavadgita that God has no pending work but still continues working.

***Na me parthaastikartavyam***

***Trishu lokeshu kinchana***

***Nanavaptamaptavyam***

***Varta eva cha karmani***

Bhagavadgita –III-22

Partha I have no pending works in all the worlds, Nothing to attain and nothing to do, but I always work.

Managers must take responsibility to continue to contribute even after completing the assigned work. This is a responsibility beyond the call of normal duty. This work beyond the call of duty becomes a great offering and a great contribution. The Manager's position should be viewed not as a position of power and prestige but as a position of responsibility and service. Work will no longer be a burden but will be more meaningful and enjoyable than leisure.

***Karmanyevadhikaraste***

***ma phalesu kadacana I***

***ma karmaphalaheturbhuh***

***ma te sango astvakarmani II***

Bhagavadgita -II-47)

You have every right to perform your duty but you should not claim the fruits of action for your personnel gains, never consider yourself as the cause of the result/achievements.

There would have been many in your team to work along with you to achieve the goal. Great leaders give the credit for success to their team and always accept responsibility themselves whenever there are failures.

Managers should work with devotion and commitment in a mission mode. The importance of hard and dedicated work is emphasized in another shloka.

***Udyoginam purusasimhamupaiti laksmih I***  
***Daivena deyamiti kapurusa vadanti I***  
***Daivam nihatya kuru paurusamatmasaktya I***  
***Yatne krte yadi na sidhyati ko'tra dosah II***

Prosperity woos the lion of a man who is perseverant. Only ignorant and lazy fools say that prosperity is bestowed by God. Forget God and put forth your sincere efforts with will power and confidence. Even if your efforts fail where is the harm? You can learn from your failure and try again.

Importance of righteousness in work and avoiding exploitation of others are emphasized in the following:

***Svasti panthamanu carema***  
***suryacandrasamaviva I***  
***Punardadatagnata janata***  
***sam gamemahi II***

(Rg Veda)

May we always follow the path of righteousness, even as the Sun and the Moon adhere to their appointed paths unswervingly. May we always willingly serve humanity without demanding the price of our service.

***Maham rajan anyavrtena bhojam I***  
 (Rg Veda)

Oh, lord, may I not eat from the toils of another.

## 1.2 Universal wellbeing

Our moral values and culture emphasize universal brotherhood, oneness with others and universal wellbeing.

***Ayam nijah paro veti***  
***ganana laghucetasam I***  
***Udaracaritanam tu vasudhaiva***  
***kutumbakam II***

(Hitopadesha)

It is only the petty-minded who entertain thoughts like "This person is from my clan, This person is an outsider etc...In contrast, the large-hearted look upon the entire world as their own family."

***Lokassamastah sukhino bhavantu I***  
 (Rg Veda)

Let there be happiness for all in the universe.

***Sarve bhavantu sukhinah***  
***sarve santu niramayah I***  
***Sarve bhadrani pasyantu ma kascit***  
***duhkhabhag bhavet II***

(Kausitaki Upanishat)

May all be happy. May all be free from disease. May all realize what is good. May none be subject to misery.

## 1.3 Team work

Team Work, Love and avoidance of hatred are emphasized in the following Upanishat prayer.

***Om saha navavatu saha nau bhunaktu***

***Saha viryam karavavahai I***

***Tejasvi navadhitamastu***

***Ma vidvisavahai II***

***Om Santhi santhi santhi:***

(Taittiriya Upanishat)

May He protect us both, may he nourish us both, may we both work together with great energy. May our study be enlightening and fruitful. May we never hate each other. Peace forever.

#### 1.4 Reverence for people and nature

Our ancient wisdom and heritage value emphasized “Self” within as the 'Self' in others. The life energy in you is the same as life energy in all and in nature. This philosophy enables us to respect others and respect nature. We shall not cause injury to others and injury to nature. We shall not hate anyone; have no jealousy towards any one.

***Yastu sarvani***

***bhutanyatmanyevanupasyati I***

***sarvabhutesu catmanam tato***

***na vijugupasate II***

(Isavasyopanishat)

The wise man who perceives all beings as not distinct from his own self as the self of every being does not, by virtue of that perception hate any one.

***Asmin sarvani bhutanyatmaivabhud***

***vijanatah I***

***tatra ko mohah kah soka***

***ekatvamanupasyatah II***

(Isavasyopanishat)

What delusion, what sorrow is there for the wise man who sees the unity of existence and perceives all beings as his own self?

***Sarvabhutasthamatmanam sarvabhutani catmani I***

***iksate yogayuktatma sarvatra***

***samadarsamah II***

(Bhagavadgita –VI-29)

A true yogi sees God in all beings and every being in God. Such a person with self-realisation discovers the supreme Lord every where. Such a person cannot cause harm to anyone, such a person should delight in serving others, as in the process he is serving God.

Indian Philosophy believes that the Universal energy and consciousness pervade in all living and non living things. The Universal divine energy connects nature, animal, plant life and all. The Zoroastrians worshipped sun, *giver of life and giver of energy*; so did the ancient Indians worship *Savitha, Sun God*. The Greeks worshipped earth as *Goddess Gaia*, so did the Indians worship the earth as *Bhumidevi*. The ancient Indians worshipped not only sun and the earth but also nature: rivers, seas, plants, trees, animals and birds. Reverence for all was the underlying spirit. This was a very ingenious way of building environmentalism into a way of life in our civilization. Hinduism, which evolved as a religion, adopted some of these values and practices. Apart from religions and spiritual interpretations, it is fundamentally an acceptance of the symbiotic relationship between man, animal and nature.

Professional ethics demand every professional to practice his/her profession with a responsibility to ensure avoiding hazard to man, animal, environment, avoid over-exploitation of earth and ensure sustainable development. Indian sages sanctified the earth and nature with spirituality and divinity to ensure respect to earth and nature.

### 1.5 Responsible leadership

Professional ethics for managers demand managers to act as responsible leaders, with courage, integrity, learning, teaching and motivating the team for achieving the goal using knowledge, skills, technology and all resources at his/her command for the benefit of all and avoiding harm to others and nature.

In Bhagavadgita, Krishna advises Arjuna to shed his weakness and be wise to do his duty of destroying the evils, even if the evildoers are his own kith & kin.

***Klaibyam ma sma gamah paartha***

***Naitatva yyupa padyate***

***Kshudram hridaya daurbalyam***

***Tyaktvottishta parantapa***

(Bhagavadgita -II-3)

Oh Partha do not yield to weakness, it is not fit to be feeble and weak in heart, it is very unwise, so arise and be a terror for the enemies (evil doers).

Professional ethics demand you to become “**Whistle Blowers**” and go public if your advice is not accepted and there is wrong doing by others such as superiors, contractors, employers etc., causing hazard to society and

environment. It will be good to remember the following and emerge yourself as an avathara, an incarnation to save society and environment.

***Yadaa yadaahi dharmasya***

***Glaanir bhavati bhaarata***

***Adhyutthanam adharmasya***

***Tadatmanam srijamyaham***

(Bhagavadgita-IV-7)

Whenever there is a decline of Dharma and the rise of Adharma, then I incarnate myself.

A great sage once told his devotees to do God's crook through their hands. He said God has no eyes except yours, no ears except yours, no hands except yours. He sees, hears, feels and works through you.

Doubts lead to procrastination, lack of decision and action in time. Doubts create conflicts. Managers are often confronted with doubts especially when they face conflicts of interest. Analysis of facts on professional ethical consideration and clearing of doubts is important. “Use the Sword of knowledge and wisdom and destroy the doubts” so said Krishna to Bharata.

***Tasmad agnyaana sambhootam***

***Hristham gnyaanasinaatmanah***

***Chittvainam samshayam yogam-***

***Atishthottishtha Bharata***

(Bhagavadgita -IV-42)

Therefore resort to Karma-yoga and cut the ignorance-born doubt abiding in your heart by the sword of Self-knowledge, and get up.



Humility is an important virtue for all professionals. While engineers contribute to society using technology remember those who gave you the knowledge, the opportunity and your team members and associates who helped you to achieve the goal, do not take credit solely **“Vidya Vinayana Shobitam”** - Knowledge shines with Humility.

A responsible leader must treat all his team mates, his subordinates with equal care and consideration as he will for himself. He/She should endeavor to be an excellent teammate and team leader with respect for

each other, sharing and caring for the well being of all.

***Devaan bhavaya taanena***

***Te deva bhaavayantu vah***

***Parasparam bhavayantah***

***Sreyah param avapsyantha***

(Bhagavadgita -III -11)

Let the Divine wish you well and you wish the Divine well. Thus wishing each other well, supporting each and working with each other you will reap the best for all and live well.

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## GOD & YOU

God won't ask about the colour of your skin, but will ask about the content of your character.

God won't ask what kind of car you drove, but will ask how many people you drove home who don't have transportation.

God won't ask what you did to help yourself, but will ask what you did to help others.

God won't ask in what neighbourhood you lived, but will ask how you treated your neighbours.

God won't ask about the fancy clothes you had in your closet, but will ask how many of those clothes helped the needy.

God won't ask what you did to protect your rights, but will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.

God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words, but will ask how many times they didn't.

God won't ask what your highest income was, but will ask if you compromised your character to obtain that income.