

## OPERATIONALISING VEDANTIC CONCEPTS IN MANAGERIAL LIFE

**PRADEEP CHHAJERH**

Research Scholar, FMS, BHU, Varanasi.

**Dr. RADHA KRISHAN LODHWAL**

Professor of Management, FMS, BHU, Varanasi.

### Abstract

Beyond the group of deficiency needs (first two and partly the 3<sup>rd</sup>) in Maslow's need hierarchy namely-

1. Physiological
  2. Safety
  3. Love and belonging
- Lie the higher needs viz
4. Esteem and
  5. Self-Actualisation.

In fact, there is enough reference from Maslow's incomplete works available on the internet, suggesting that in his later days, he wanted to redefine the hierarchy and include the Self- Transcendence as a need higher to that of self-actualisation. **These needs can be considered vital for one's sense of fulfilment and accomplishment as well as of those that one is managing, towards achievement of organisational goals.** While we receive enough and more training as management students and practitioners on managing the externalities, it is largely left to a leader-manager to train him/herself to lead, motivate and manage oneself. This paper argues that Advaita Vedanta fills this gap by offering a powerful framework for management practitioners- present as well as future, to form a wholesome perspective on professional and personal lives and choices to be made during the same. The study is conceptual in nature relying on Exegesis and Hermeneutics, as well as literature review, to derive and define this framework. The authors hope to motivate management practitioners and students to explore more on the subject of philosophy in general and Advaita Vedanta in particular., in order to equip them for a fulfilling professional and personal journey.

**Keywords:** Goal of Life Fulfilment Advaita Vedanta Management Self-Actualisation and Self-Transcendence Upanishads Bhagavad Geeta.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

With our combined exposure to business management practice and education of over 25 years each, the researchers have come to believe that professional life follows Maslow's' need hierarchy theory closely -

1. Physiological- while it could be taken as granted that most of us would not face a challenge in keeping ourselves fed & clothed, in the modern context, physiological needs could be stretched a little to include needs for comfortable housing and transport, which, for the purpose of this paper, is not considered as an unmet need at least in the long-term

2. Safety: Provided one makes reasonable choices in one's place of living, working etc, this is not expected to be a major or persistent concern either, in modern society.
3. Belonging/Love- One comes across varied interaction opportunities in one's professional as well as personal life. In modern society when communication has transcended physical, spatial, and temporal boundaries and new ways to relate to each other emerge, it could be that much more difficult to create deep, enriching and fulfilling relationships. As the cliché goes, "one could be alone in the crowd" if one doesn't have the right perspective on deep and meaningful relationships (vis a vis a large in number but often superficial connections). and doesn't take care of this aspect.

The first two definitely, and the third one partly, belong to the group called 'deficiency needs.' It goes without saying that without these having been met to a reasonable extent, we cannot be focussing on higher needs. As Swami Vivekananda famously said in his 1893 address to the World's Parliament of Religions - ***it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics*** (Vivekananda, 1989).

However, it can be assumed that in a reasonably self-sufficient society, to which the target audience of this paper is considered to belong to, deficiency needs are already met, and therefore, our focus is on 'higher needs' which determine one's sense of fulfilment, or, happiness in other words. The sense of fulfilment and way to achieve it, is the focus of this paper.

4. Esteem- The need for esteem drives one to excel in one's profession and progress in career/ business and as a result, acquire social repute also. Both esteems based on recognition and respect from others, as well as self-esteem in the form of self-confidence in one's own capabilities foster each other. However, as we know, hyper exposure to media, social and otherwise, has the potential to distort this need in a detrimental way. (Jan, Soomro, & Ahmad, 2017) (Jiang & Ngien, 2020) (Stapleton, Luiz, & Chatwin, 2017)
5. Self-Actualisation-This is the need which keeps driving a person when all other needs have been met to a reasonable extent. This is the need to realise one's potential to the fullest- to be the best one can be!

(Maslow in his later years went on to add another layer to the hierarchy i.e., Self-Transcendence and seemed to think in the later years that the hierarchy may not manifest in the same order for everyone. However, this work remained incomplete before he passed away)

Maslow posited that a satisfied need is no longer a motivator. This implies that the motivation to do anything is dissatisfaction arising out of an unmet need. Thus, if we take a pause to reflect- what drives us or even what is our goal in life, we will find that through different paths and approaches, what we try to do is-

- Avoidance or minimising of pain.
- Maximising happiness. (Walters, cited by (Veeraiah, 2015)

James (as cited by Veeraiah ) asserts that man's "*desire for happiness is the driving force behind all the countless efforts that we are always making*" (Veeraiah, 2015).

This goal of life- (param purusharth) in spiritual sciences is defined as (Advayananda, 2019) (contributors, (2023) (Gautamananda, 2012):-

- Complete eradication of sorrows (Aatyantik du:kh nivratti)
- Attainment of ultimate bliss (Paramarth Prapti or Paramanand Prapti)

Question is, is there a relevance of spiritual thought in management? The researchers' view is a firm yes. Why?

- The goal is the same.
- Management education teaches us about externalities (environment, organisation, people, methodologies); however, in the process, the subject-i.e., us, and everything that is subjective, is ignored (Livingston, 1971). The subject matter of spiritual science is the self (or the Self- the atman, as opposed to the sense of the physical self).
- Achievement of any goal requires right thinking and right perspective without which, all the other skills and resources may fail to accomplish meaningful results. In fact, Maslow, when describing the characteristics of self-actualised people, says that-

***"Acceptance and realism: Self-actualization reflects the individual's acceptance of who he/she is, what he/she is capable of, and his/her realistic and accurate perception of the world around him or her (including the people within it and how they relate to the individual). When we have an inaccurate view of ourselves or the outside world, there is a dissonant, unsettling, and deleterious disparity between our internal self and the external world. Self-actualization is achieved by those who have the most accurate view of themselves and the world around them"***  
(Korninos, 2020).

Right thinking and right perspective in which to relate to the world, is at the core of Vedanta Philosophy.

- Towards the end of one's formal education and during the initial period of one's career, the concerns of material prosperity and earning one's place in the society tend to drive one's actions. There could be a significant role of societal pressure also in the choices that one's make and as also of the responsibilities one assumes along the way. However, sooner or later, one tends to realise that material prosperity and professional success, while an important stepping stone in life, may not be enough in achieving a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment. (Ahuvia, 2012)
- *Research suggests that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty and trust, personal fulfilment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance* (Muniapan, 2021),

The researchers argue that it of utmost importance that-

- One prepares for more advanced stages of life in advance. The earlier one starts understanding the relative importance of things in life, better are the odds of staying on course.
- One takes right actions and makes right choices in one's quest to attain fulfilment, professional as well as personal (to be honest, the researchers believe such division to be artificial and superfluous. We are talking of fulfilment and not 'half'filment!)
- One takes time to define one's fulfilment goals in life, according to one's own mental makeup, instead of assuming the assuming others' goals and aspirations. The later cannot provide the fulfilment one seeks.
- One even takes time to define, what exactly is the meaning of fulfilment and happiness; especially the differentiation between lasting happiness v/s fleeting, temporary joy.

## 2. ADVAITA VEDANTA

Along with Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga & Purva Mimamsa, Vedanta or Uttar Mimamsa, forms the six Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy. Advaita Vedanta relies on the authority of the Upanishads- often called as philosophical culmination of Vedic thought. For this reason, this philosophy is also called as Vedanta. There are further sub-schools of Vedanta known as-

- **Advaita:** With oneness of all existence as the main tenet and **Adi Shankara** as the main proponent of the later times.
- **Vishishta Advaita:** of **Ramanuja**, wherein the absolute reality or Brahman contains within, two equally real but dependent realities of Chit and Achit.
- **Dvaitadvaita (Nimbarka):-** Brahman (as personal God- Krishna), Jeeva (Chit) and Jagat (Achit) are equally real and coeternal realities with former controlling the latter two- the enjoyer and the enjoyed respectively.
- **Dvaita (Dualism):- of Madhvacharya** - Brahman (in the form of personal God- Narayana), Prakriti and Jivas are coeval realities but the latter two are fully dependent on Brahman.
- **Bhedabheda, Shuddha Advaita and Achintya Bhedabheda** are some of the other schools based on the authority of the Upanishads.

For the purpose of this paper, we have considered Advaita Vedanta as the base philosophy. It is mainly because it is the more empowering as it negates any distinction between Brahman and the (enlightened) individual and putting the latter in total control of his destiny.

Although the Advaita Vedanta as a school existed before him, Adi Shankaracharya (CE 788-720) is widely credited to have brought this philosophy to prominence. The main texts or the Prasthan Trayee of Advaita Vedanta are-

- **The Upanishads:** The symbolic and sometimes literal end (culmination) of the Vedas which are philosophical in nature, dealing with ontology and self-realisation. Considered to be composed between 8<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, they are variously believed to be 108, more than 200 or even more than 1000 in number. However other than the 108, rest are believed to have been lost. Of those which have survived, the 10 on which Shankaracharya has written bhashyas (commentaries) are considered to be Mukhya (main).
- **The Brahamsutras:** Attributed to Badarayana Ved Vyasa, this is a collection of 555 sutras or aphorisms. Various scholars have dated the writing of Brahamsutras from 500 BCE to as late as 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE. They appear written with the intent of reinterpret, harmonise, and organise sometimes contradictory and often esoteric message of the Upanishads. (Harshananda, 2009)
- **The Bhagvad Geeta:** The divine song- the discourse delivered to a confused and conflicted warrior prince Arjuna, by his friend, philosopher and guide, Shri Krishna. It is one of the most and perhaps the most well-known scriptural text associated with the Sanathan or the Hindu Dharma. It is considered to prescribe the most exalted code of living for anyone coming from any sphere of life.

### 3. SUMMARY OF ADVAITA VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

ślokārdhena pravakṣyāmi yaduktam grantha koṭibhiḥ |

brahma satyam jaganmithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ |

*In half a verse, I state, what thousands of scriptural texts (volumes) quote, Brahman is the reality, the world is an appearance, the individual and the brahman are non-different! (Attributed to Adi Shankara).*

**The main tenets of Advait Vedanta for our purpose, could be inferred as follows-**

- a. The goal of life is freedom from sorrow and attainment of everlasting happiness or in philosophical terms- Moksha (**Advayananda, 2019**) (**Gautamananda, 2012**). For our purpose, we are concerned more with Jeevan-mukti (freedom while living in the world) rather than the other-worldly/ posthumous version of it.
- b. The root cause of all sorrows is ignorance of the nature of one's self and the error (of perception, judgement and action) resulting from it (**Dalal, 2021, Selvam, 2023 Citing Radhakrishnan**). Mistaking a rope as a snake, results in fear and agitation. If the error is not corrected with right knowledge, it leads to faulty action, setting off a cause-and-effect chain of painful consequences and further erroneous actions.
- c. Self-knowledge is to be gained through guidance of a learned guru and requisite self-effort. Purity of Mind (Chitta-Shuddhi) and Clarity of knowledge (Spashta Atma Buddhi) are the preconditions for realisation of true knowledge of the self (**Tejomayananda, 2022**). In order to attain these two, one must cultivate the four-fold qualifications (Sadhan Chatushtaya- Vivek or Discrimination, Vairagya or Dispassion, Shamadi-

Shatka-Sampatti or the sixfold treasures and Mumukshutva or desire for liberation) (Dalal, 2021).

- d. Attainment of self-knowledge makes one realise the unity and oneness underlying the apparent diversity and separateness. This leads to dissolution of identification with a narrow, limited existence and the sorrow one assumes due to this false concept of one's Self as limited ego.

#### 4. OBJECTIVE

This paper attempts to define the key Vedantic concepts relevant to management students and practitioners, as framework for making important choices and decisions in life to achieve greater fulfilment and satisfaction out of professional and personal journeys. In the process, this paper also purports to suggest that the study of philosophy could be a very useful addition to management education.

While in the wider scope of spirituality at workplace studies, it is either extolled as an independent virtue worthy of pursuit, or as a means to end such as grater employee satisfaction, our attempt is to interpret the rationale behind the concepts. We are convinced that the modern mind would accept traditional wisdom if only they would find logical resonance and coherence in the explanation. We also attempt to explain in what way the concepts could be put to use or operationalized.

#### 5. METHODOLOGY

Considering the nature of the subject knowledge to be not so commonplace and practice of Advaita Vedanta in management to be quite rare, any empirical study was not considered suitable to obtain non polarised insights. This researcher elected to deploy following methodologies for this conceptual research.

- Exegesis: It is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text usually of religious nature.
- Hermeneutics: Similar to Exegesis but while the former is focussed upon word and grammar, the latter is broader in scope covering written, verbal and non-verbal communication.

The following sources of knowledge were tapped into, for this purpose.

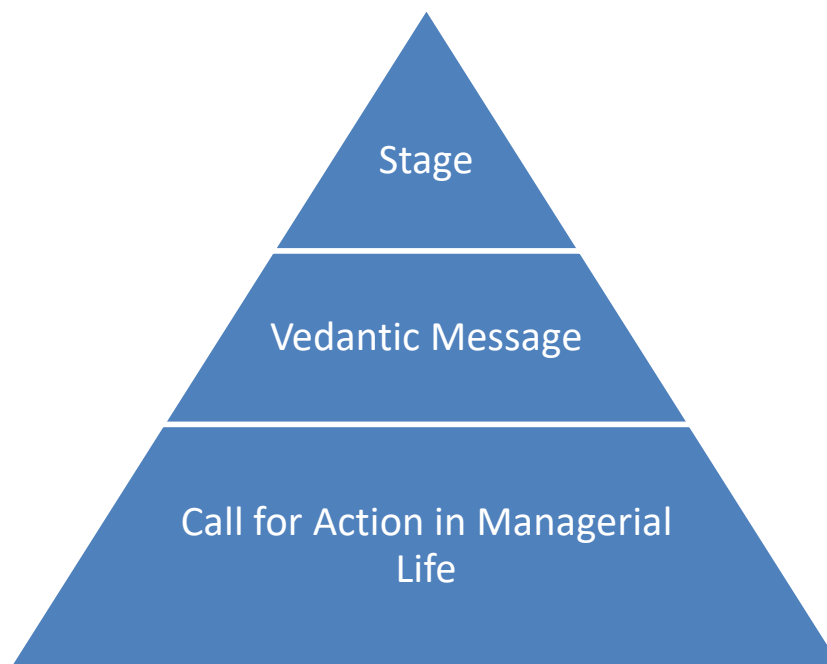
- Upanishads- original texts with commentaries from authors of Chinmaya Mission and well as Ramakrishna Mission
- Online Camps/Classes on
  - Prashnopanishad & Kathopanishad by Swami Tejomayananda
  - Bhagvad Geeta by Swami Adwayananda- an online course called Master Gita Master Life, lasting almost two years.
  - Courses on Vedanta Sara, Drig-Drishya Vivek, Katha & Mandukya Upanishad by Swami Sarvapriyananda.
  - Q&A Sessions by Swami Sarvapriyananda on youtube (Ask Swami session)

- Chinmaya Vibhooti Year End Camps on
  - Upanishad Ganga
  - Aitareyopanishad and Life of Vision
  - Aparokshanubhooti and Meditation.
- Works of Modern Vedantic Scholars such as A Parthasarathi, Prof B Mahadevan and Several Published papers and articles available online.

The key concepts that are examined are-

- I. Goal of Life
- II. Qualifying and Preparatory Practices
- III. Conduct and discipline conducive to take one forward towards one's goals.
- IV. Cautionary Guidelines for Control of mind and conduct
- V. Relating with the universe around us.

### **Theoretical Framework Deployed**



**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework Deployed**

## **6. OPERATIONALIZING OF VEDANTIC CONCEPTS IN MANAGERIAL LIFE**

With the above background, we would now see how we can reinterpret Vedantic concepts to have a more fulfilling work (as well as personal) life.

## 6.1. Defining The Life Goals and Choosing the Career

### What are the goals that one should aspire for (and which ones are to be shunned)

While scriptures mention ultimate happiness as the final goal, which is irrefutable even as a managerial goal, it is important to establish **what cannot be the ultimate goals of a human enterprise.**

**na vittena tarpaṇīyo manuṣyaḥ**

(Kathopanishad. 1/27- man cannot be satiated with riches)

As evidenced in Maslow' hierarchy also that while material prosperity solves a lot of problems of life, it is just a means and not an end by itself. Unless we realise it and give material possessions only their due import; not less, not more; we run the risk of being acquisition driven without actually being happy or content.

In fact, there is a significant downside risk in this that anything in excess, tends to become binding in nature i.e. it would demand time, attention and effort to deal with.

Ritu Chandra quotes Morris (1997, p. 7) thus

*Over 800 mid-career executives took a recent poll in which they found that they were unhappy and dissatisfied with work when they reached a 40-year. Four out of ten people who were interviewed detested their jobs. (Chandra, 2022)*

She also cites Schrage (2000),

*Study after survey affirms that a majority seek(s) to find "meaning" in their work" (p. 306). (Chandra, 2022)*

However, this is not to say that accumulation or enjoyment of wealth is prohibited in Vedanta. In fact, Krishna himself tells Arjuna that-

**hato vā prāpyasi svargam, jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahimā  
tasmāt uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛta niścaya: || (Bh.Geeta 2.37)**

*(Slain, thou wilt obtain heaven; victorious, thou wilt enjoy the earth; therefore, stand up, O son of Kunti, resolved to fight.)*

**The wisdom lies in having a balanced view and treat wealth as a means towards a greater end.**

**Where then, my goal lies: -**

- As we said before, In Vedanta, the ultimate goal is- eradication of sorrows and attainment of everlasting happiness (*atyantik du:kh nivratti evam parmananda prapti*). According to Vedanta this state is that of liberation or moksha, which can be achieved in this very life. However, the commonly held perceptions about spirituality can prevent people from appreciating the practical applicability of these concepts. Thus, it is important to understand that the scriptures do not ordain one to renounce the world or



family or profession and run to Himalayas. (sannyāsaḥ karmayogaśca niḥśreyasakarāvubhau tayostu karmasannyāsātkarmayogo viśiṣyate || Bh Geeta 5.2||) In fact, we are sternly cautioned against any premature renunciation of one's duties.

- Philosophy recognizes that one's mental constitution is at the root of the kind of desires one would have and the course one is likely to take in life, driven by such desires. The path prescribed here is careful exhaustions of inherent tendencies or vasanas (desires in the seed/unmanifested form). There are two important directives here-
  - Choose the work accordingly to one's own inherent nature (swabhava) and not acquire secondary i.e., other people's vasanas through blind emulation.
  - Very carefully choose actions and path of life, which would facilitate exhaustion of such vasanas without creating new ones and would not cause mental agitations and undesirable circumstances which can cause digression from one's chosen path.

**śreyānsvadharmāḥ viguṇāḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt |  
svadharme nidhanam śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ || (Bh.Geeta  
3.35)**

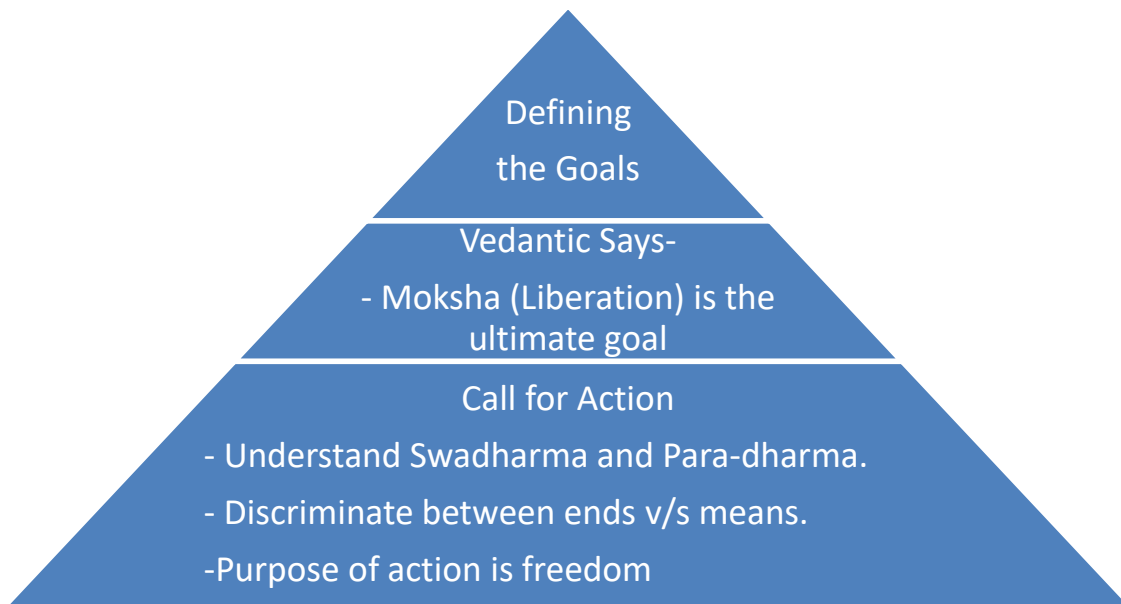
*3.35 Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit than the duty of another well discharged. Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear (is productive of danger). (Shivananda, n.d.)*

Also

**śreyānsvadharmāḥ viguṇāḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt |  
svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam  
(Bh.Geeta 18.47)**

*Better is one's own duty, though ill done, than the duty of another, though well-performed. When one does the duty ordained by his own nature, he incurs no stain. (Adidevananda, Srimad Bhagavadgita 18.47, n.d.)*

This is one lesson, the earlier one learns in life, the better-off one is. It basically states that within the purview of shastra ordained actions (Nitya or regular duties, Naimittika or situational and Kamyā or desire fulfilling actions) one should choose actions which are in line with the texture of one's own personality<sup>1</sup>. Choosing /adopting other people's goals and actions would lead to an unfulfilled life at the very least and can even have dangerous consequences at worst. This is especially relevant for impressionable minds in today's hyper exposed and social media driven life. Youngsters must take time to know themselves better and then make informed decisions about career and life paths.



**Figure 2: Operationalizing Goal Setting**

## 6.2. Preparation

As we know, a goal requires effort. The loftier the goal, the higher the effort. It is fruitful to know who is qualified (Adhikari) to attain their highest goal as per scriptures. As per Shankaracharya's Tatv bodha (also many other Prakaran Granthas-reference texts), to be qualified one must possess the following qualities (Chinmayananda, Aatmbodha (Hindi), 2014)

**Fourfold qualifications** (or sadhan chayushtaya, interpreted in a broader sense here)-

1. Vivek (discrimination between ephemeral and the eternal, the temporary and the permanent or the unimportant and the important)
2. Vairagya- Dispassion for distractions.
3. Shamadi Shatk Sampatti- Sixfold Treasures, namely
  - Control of Mind (Shama),
  - Control of Senses (Dama),
  - Commitment to once duties and therefore, withdrawal from other engagements (Uparama),
  - Forbearance (Titiksha) - ability to patiently put up with adversity without deviating from one's path or giving up.
  - Faith (Shraddha- classically in the Guru and the scriptures but for our purpose- in one's ideals)
  - Concentration (Samadhan)- Single pointedness of mind.

#### 4. Mumukshutva-Intense desire for the final goal (liberation)

Thus, we find that all the qualities indicated- are those which help the seeker (of the goal) to focus all their energies and efforts on a single goal unflinchingly and tirelessly. Without getting intimidated with technical names, if we assess, we will find that we all possess these qualities to some extent (when exams/deadlines loom, we develop vairagya for movies and TV and Uparama for studies/work.). In fact, without some application of these, no goal achievement in life is possible. However, an understanding of these concepts helps us underline, develop, and reinforce these qualities.



**Figure 3: Qualifying for Goal Achievement (Preparation)**

### 6.3. Spirit of Work

The ideal spirit for work is defined as Karm-Yoga in Vedanta philosophy. This spirit is characterized by **working in devotion to the highest ideal and without the insistence on a particular outcome.**

In his exposition of Bh Geeta 3.30, Swami Chinmayananda explains that there are three ways in which energy is dissipated while working. These are-

- Memories of and dwellings in, the past (manifested as ego)
- Hopes about the future (in the form of insistence on particular outcome. This creates anxiety and therefore, saps energy and effort).
- Excitement in the present

It is important to be mindful to plug these leaks of energy by keeping the right mental attitude, to ensure that all energy is directed to the endeavour one has taken up, without any dissipation. (Chinmayananda, The Holy Geeta, 2008)

Moreover, work, done in the right spirit and attitude, is a reward in itself. To quote **A. Parthasarathy**

*“Your business lies in action alone, not in the reward accruing from it. Let not the anxiety for enjoying the fruit disturb the course of your action.”*  
(Parthasarathy, 2015)

Also

***Your life is enriched by accomplishment of right action rather than outward success or failure.*** (Parthasarathy, 2015)

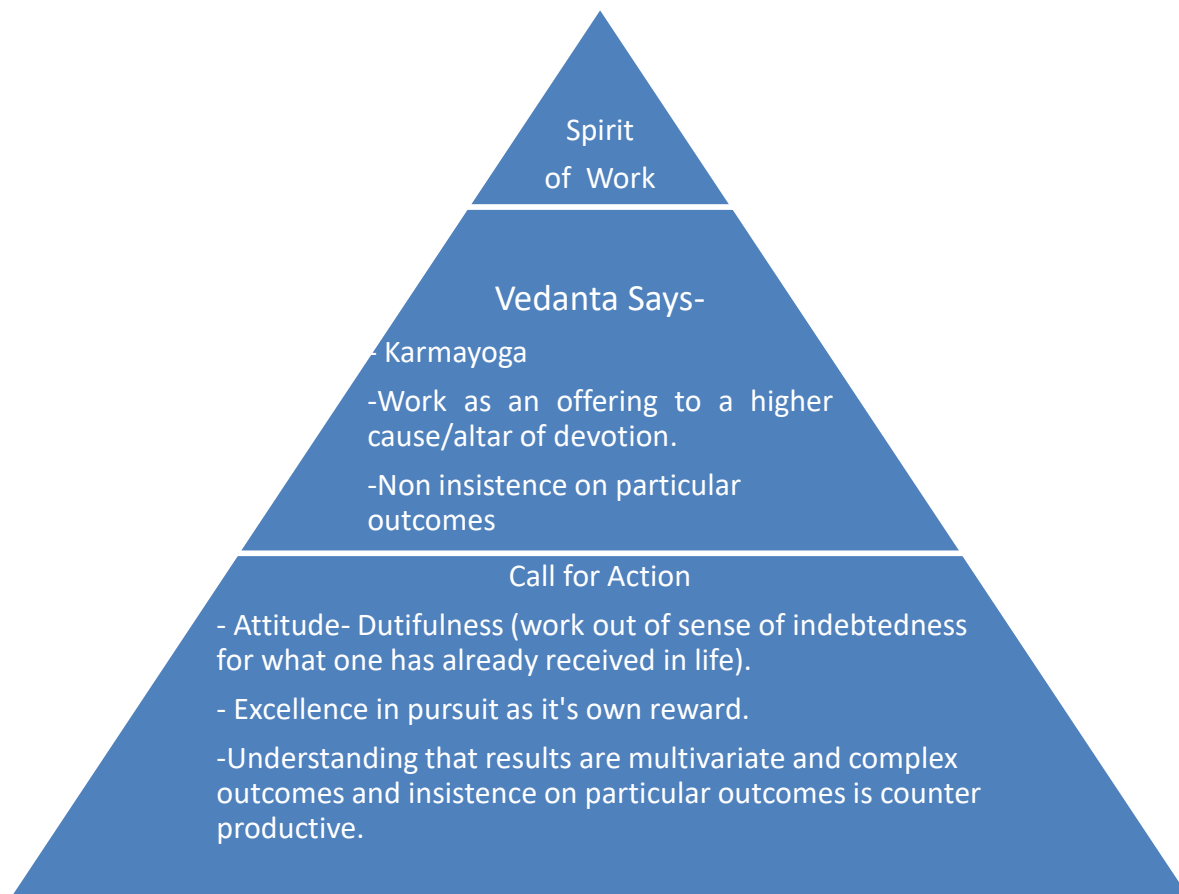
Another important aspect of Karma yoga spirit is the endeavour to overcome ego. In Spiritual sciences ego is defined **as sense of limited being** (Selvam, 2023,p.200), which leads to selfish actions. In managerial context, ego can manifest as seeking personal grandeur sometimes even at the cost of organizational success. Even from the practical, ‘enlightened self-interested’ viewpoint, one must be wise enough to realize that while travelling in an organizational boat, self-interest can never be delinked with collective interest i.e. we sink or float together. It is, therefore, important to prioritize the collective interest over individual one. Even modern game theorists have underlined the importance of co-operation through their ‘Prisoner’s dilemma’<sup>2</sup> simulation.

*Work is best when done impersonally. No sooner one asserts the selfish ego, work is spoilt.* (Parthasarathy, 2015)

*Whereas when your ego, your little self is absent, when you are unattached and impersonal, work turns out perfect.* (Parthasarathy, 2015)

*Men of achievement work in the world not for profit, nor for success, but from a feeling that they are doing the right thing, irrespective of whether or not they will be recognized in their lifetime.*

(Chinmayananda, Right Attitude for Success, 2018).



**Figure 4 Spirit of Work**

#### **6.4. Dealing with Setbacks, Strains and Stresses**

##### **Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional-**

Pain in modern life can take many forms-

- Stress
- Burn-out.
- Depression and hopelessness
- Usual problems of life- (Janm, mrityu, jara, vyadhi i.e. birth, death, old age and disease. These are considered the fundamental problems of life in Indian classical thought as all other problems have their origin in these four)

Adwait Vedanta teaches us that,

- Dualities (as in pairs of opposites) are inevitable.
- The self is beyond physical existence and therefore above pain and pleasure.

- Both pain and pleasure are transitory in nature while the self is permanent. The transitory needn't be given any more import than it is due.

It is worth examining how right thinking can alleviate the sense of suffering. However, it is important *to first understand suffering itself*. Vitaliy Katsenelson makes a reference to this in his book as follows-

*Dr Jill Bolte Taylor, neuroanatomist, in her book Stroke of Insight, discussed what became known as the 90-second rule: "When a person has a reaction to something in their environment, there's a 90-second chemical process that happens in the body: after that, any remaining emotional response is just the person choosing to stay in that emotional loop." (Katsenelson, 2022)*

This is the essence of conventional wisdom also (Buddha's second arrow simile<sup>3</sup>). If we realise that most suffering is because of the way we react to painful situation, the inevitability of such situation, as well as superficiality of the effects (not affecting the self), we are better able to manage our reactions and our balance of mind.

In managerial/professional life, pain could either be brought by changing environmental situation beyond one's control, or by making wrong/short sighted decisions. Dealing with the former, require a certain equanimity and poise wherein understanding the inevitability of pairs of opposites as well as their transient nature, comes in handy.

This is what Swami Vivekananda Says in his Jnana-Yoga

*We may verily imagine that there will be a place where there will be only good and no evil, where we shall only smile and never weep. This is impossible in the very nature of things; for the conditions will remain the same. Wherever there is the power of producing a smile in us, there lurks the power of producing tears. Wherever there is the power of producing happiness, there lurks somewhere the power of making us miserable. (Vivekananda, 1989)*

While the first kind is characterised by inevitability, it the second kind of pain/suffering which is brought on by erroneous decision making and therefore, by logic, avoidable, that we deliberate upon.



**Figure 5 Dealing with Adversity**

### 6.5. Ladder of Fall (and how not to slip on it)

What is cause of loss of discrimination leading to error in judgement and wrong decision making-

Here again we would take recourse to the teaching of the Bh Geeta-

dhyāyato viṣayānpuṃsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate I  
saṅgāt saṃjāyate kāmaḥ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate II (Bh.Geeta 2.62)

krodhādbhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmṛtivibhramaḥ I  
smṛtibhraṃśād buddhināśo buddhināśāt praṇaśyati II (Bh.Geeta  
2.63)

*Delusion causes loss of memory (values and good ways that one has learnt), which in turn leads to destruction of intellect. This is where one ends up making decisions which one comes to regret in life.*

The verse preceding it states that it is the desire/hankering which leads to delusion (via anger) and hankering is generated due to attachment, which itself is the result of persistent meditation (thinking about) on sense objects. This is what is called ladder of fall by Swami Chinmayananda. The researchers wish to leave it to the readers to draw

parallels between examples of erroneous decision making (i.e., wrong decisions made knowingly- cases like subprime lending and subsequent meltdown of financial markets, Satyam computers, more recent happenings in Videocon-ICICI cases) that they might have witnessed in their professional journey, and see if ultimately, they fit this template of 'ladder of fall'.

The solution to developing such perilous attachments is prescribed as absorption of mind in positive and healthy pursuits while being very watchful and alert about letting any negative tendencies taking root. This is termed a purifying the mind through sadhanas- i.e. practices suiting to one's temperament.

Also, it is important to have faith in natural justice- Law of Karma; and work towards long term rather than the short. Kejriwal and Krishnan (Kejriwal & Krishann, 2004)quote Chakraborty (1995) "the cause-effect chain, thus, engenders a long-term orientation as it establishes that any action cannot escape the corresponding compensation in the future. Thus, instead of going for short-term and ephemeral gains, a longer-term and more balanced outlook can enhance the overall welfare."



**Figure 6: Ladder of Fall**

## 6.6. Managing People-

There are several lessons in the scriptures, but we wish to touch upon three as representative samples.



### 6.6.1. Leadership

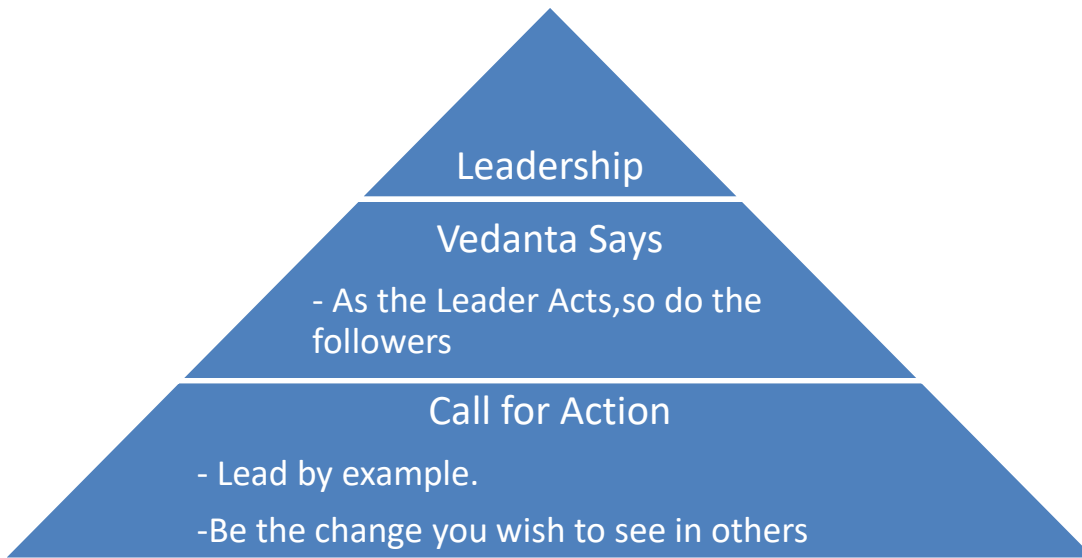
yadyadācharati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janaḥ I  
sa yatpramāṇaṃ kurute lokastadanuvartate II (Bh.Geeta 3.21)

*Whatever a great man does, other men also do. Whichever standard he sets, the world follows it.* (Adidevananda, Srimad Bhagavadgita 3.21, n.d.)

**Swami Chinmayananda (2018)**, interprets that

*Krsna says that the best way to bring about a renaissance, is by having the leaders of society express the divinity in themselves and thus attract a following. By precept and practice, the masses should be gradually guided towards the right path".* (Chinmayananda, The Inspired Leadership, 2018)

**Thus, the insistence is on leading by example, instead of any other style of leadership.**



**Figure 7: Vedantic Leadership**

### 6.6.2. Relating with others-Oneness

Swami Chinmayananda says that

*Equal vision is the hallmark of Realisation. The perfected one cannot make distinctions based upon likes and dislikes. In and through all forms and situations, he sees the expressions of the same dynamic Truth which he experiences as his own Self".* (Chinmayananda, The Holy Geeta, 2008, p. 374)

In Advaita Vedanta philosophy, the oneness of all existence is considered to be the ultimate reality. The one who realises all beings as one, cannot but treat everyone, the way he would treat himself. (Anderson, 2012)

shrūyatām dharmasarvasvaṃ śrutvā caivāvadhāryatām I  
ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣām na samācaret II  
(Padmpuran Srishti- 19.356)

*(Listen (understand) the essence of all religion, listen and apply.*

*The conduct one considered hostile to oneself, should not be perpetrated unto others.)*

In fact, Swami Vivekananda explains that (Advaita)Vedanta affords the only logical explanation on desirability, even inevitability of the ethical conduct (Vivekananda, 1989, p. 192). If all is one, none need to be treated like other.

On a more transactional level Ramya Ranganathan (Ranganathan, 2015), while examining the concept of evolution of identification (self-concept) through perspective taking (taking another persons' viewpoint), argues that perspective taking leads to blurring of self-other distinction in the person's mind. Thus's someone considerate enough to take into account, others' viewpoints, already starts to perceive homogeneity and is likely to more receptive and open.

Carvalho and Mulla, in their paper on Power of Love in Leadership , cite Ferris (1988) to define Agape as referring to a "consciously chosen mind-set that allows us to see others differently- a deep respect based on a sense of oneness with others" (Carvalho & Mulla, 2020).

They go on to cite Kant, 2011, explaining that Agape is based on a universal categorical imperative of treating a person, whether your own or that of the other, never simply as a means but always as an end at the same time. (Carvalho & Mulla, 2020)



**Figure 8: Relating with Others: Oneness**

### 6.6.3. Relating with others-Diversity

However, this is not to say that Vedanta denies transactional imperatives and diversity. It in fact, makes ample allowance for it. Not only that, but it is also realised that in the course of fulfilling one's duty, one may be required to be cruel in order to be kind. Making such fine discrimination, requires a fine and sharp intellect (which is why **viveka** is the first prerequisite of a qualified seeker.)

This is why in Bhagvad Geeta, Sri Krishna elaborates on three different textures of personality. Understanding these would be valuable for managerial repertoire of knowledge and insights as managers deal with people first and foremost.

The three Textures of Personality are defined as - **Satvik, Rajasik and Tamasik**

sattvātsañjāyate jñānaṃ rajaso lobha eva ca I  
pramāda-mohau tamaso bhavato' jñānam eva ca II (Bh.Geeta  
14.17)

*Knowledge arises from SATTVA, greed from RAJAS, heedlessness, delusion and also ignorance arise from TAMAS. (Chinmayananda, The Holy Geeta, 2008, p. 974)*

**Satvik Personality**- Driven by dutifulness. Endowed with harmonious and unifying vision, ability to understand and analyse the situation as it is (yathavat janati), unwavering in fortitude and adherence to values.

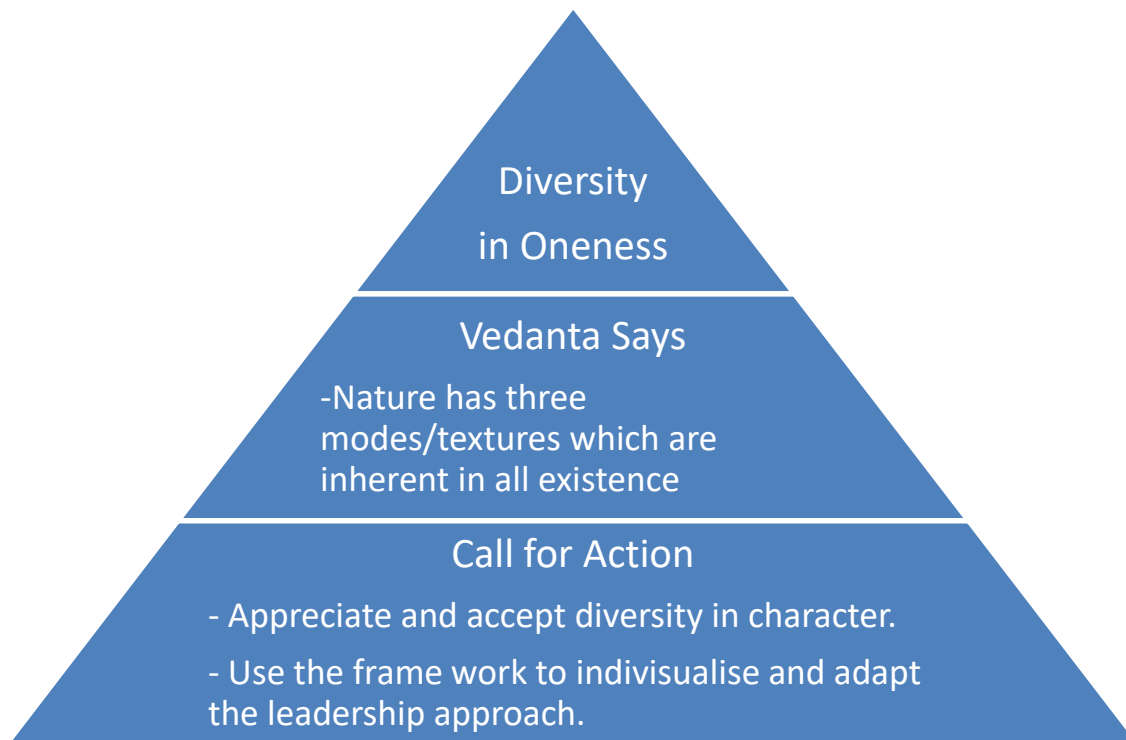
**Rajasika Personality**-Driven by desire for fruits of action. Perceives and insists on differences and diversity as real. Vague and confused analysis and understanding (ayathavat janati). Erratic in fortitude and scrupulousness.

**Tamasika Personality**: Indolent and inactive. Mistaking part for the whole and being fanatic about it. Understanding a situation to be opposite of what it actually is (viparitam janati). Stubborn insistence on erroneous notions. (Tejomayananda, Vision of Management In Gita, 2018)

**It must be understood that everyone possesses all three qualities, and the difference only comes in dominance of one over the other two (Mulla & Krishnan, 2019). Also, such preponderance of each guna can change on different times. Thus no one can be taken as absolutely of one type at all times.**

As managers and leaders, it is useful that-

- We understand the broad texture of each one that we are dealing with and match their abilities with suitable assignments.
- Be aware of predominance of gunas in us at different times and act accordingly.



**Figure 9: Relating with Others: Diversity**

### **6.7. Giving back to the society**

This is a dominant undercurrent of Karmayoga and comes across as two themes i.e. action taken in yajna spirit, service to fellow beings and gratitude and indebtedness towards phenomenal forces of nature.

Swami Chinmayanada has the following to say on **Yajna Spirit**.

*The productive potential (Deva), when cherished through 'self-dedicated work performed in a spirit of sacrifice' (Yajna), will provide the worker with the desired objects. This is the law of life. And when we thus earn a profit due to our sacrifices, we have every right to enjoy that profit SHARING AMONG OURSELVES.*

He says that even in business organisation, as long as we can invoke and work in this spirit of co-operation, sacrifice and service, collective success and prosperity is assured.

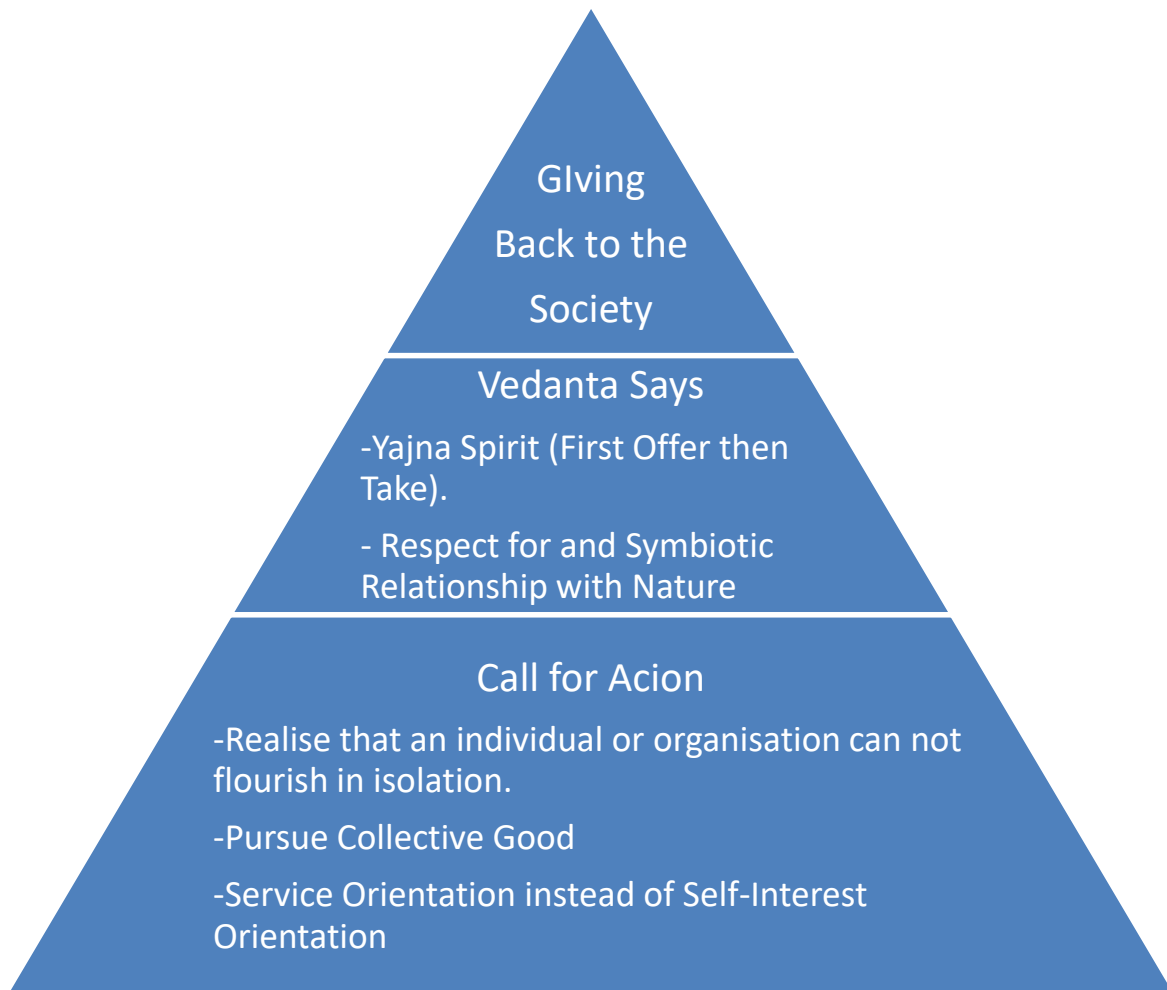
Also

*HE WHO ENJOYS OBJECTS, GIVEN BY THE DEVAS, the productive potential tapped, without offering his own Yajna-efforts into it, is termed here by Krishna as a 'social thief'. (Chinmayananda, The Holy Geeta, 2008, pp. 208-209)*

**On service**, it would be opportune to quote Parthasarathy

*The moment you are born the good world provides you with everything you need. Oxygen to breathe, mother's milk, the right temperature within and without, pressure inside and outside and countless other things. You become totally indebted to the world. You must therefore maintain a sense of gratitude through your life. And serve the world, serve the society, serve one and all. This is the first of the elements of right living. The attitude of service maintains your spiritual wellbeing. The Bhagavad Gita says it is criminal to consume the resources of the world without contributing to it: He who eats without producing is verily a thief. (Parthasarathy, 2015, p. 73)*

Again, when the underlying oneness of all being is realised, the realised one cannot but treat all beings in the same way as he or she would treat oneself or would like to be treated. This is the ultimate barometer for judging the impact of an action.



**Figure 10: Giving back to the Society.**

## 7. CONCLUSION

This paper doesn't purport to be an exhaustive commentary on the scriptures or the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Rather, the intention is to show briefly, that there exists a code of living in our philosophy, which can afford us a framework, to model our thinking and life on, in our quest to have a fulfilling life and leave the world a better place. The researchers hope that through brief examination of some of the concepts, the reader would be encouraged to explore this stream of knowledge more and more and put to use, what appeals to them.

Furthermore, the researchers wishes to stress that management education based solely on western concepts of modern management can and should be supplemented with Eastern Philosophies of Self-Management as all management starts from there i.e. the self, to achieve fulfilment.

IN CONCLUSION KRISHNA ADDS:

iti te jñānamākhyātām guhyādguhyataram mayā I

vimṛśyaitadaśeṣeṇa yathechchhasi tathā kuru II (Bh.Geeta 18.63)

*Thus, the 'Wisdom' which is a greater secret than all secrets, has been declared to you by Me; having reflected upon it fully, you now act as you choose. (Chinmayananda, The Holy Geeta, 2008, p. 1236)*

## 8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH:

There are quite a study establishing the benefits of Workplace Spirituality on employee as well as organizational outcomes. However, these researchers felt that more needed to be done in approaching this issue from the individual side. Afterall, the individual is the operational unit where all the difference has to be made, without which, no number of organizational interventions can hope to succeed. To this extent, the need to outline the operational framework with a logical, cognitive basis and what it means in terms of attitude and action for a management practitioner, was felt. While we hope that work would be useful for management practitioners, we do realise that Empirical Substantiation is inherent part of research and need to be taken up as further work in this direction. Also, while these researchers have focussed on Advaita Vedanta, the overall domain of workplace spirituality can probably benefit from inputs from other Indian Schools of Philosophy as well. We hope that this work would encourage future researchers to look in these directions as well.

### Notes

- 1) One of the researchers (PC) had a close personal experience about this. When his father retired from the fairly respected position of a District Judge after 31 years with the state judiciary, he reluctantly agreed to become the Director of Clinical Education at one of the National Law University. After 6 years of having spent time with bright young law students, he was asked by the researcher as to which of the two careers were more gratifying for him. Despite all the glories and social repute that came with being a judge, he did not have the slightest hesitation in picking up teaching as having been more

gratifying. He went on to inspire the researcher to pursue academics despite being in a private sector career. This goes to show that even when one is considered successful and accomplished by societal standard, one needs to ask oneself if the chosen career is leading to fulfilment. If not, once probably isn't following Swadharma.

- 2) The prisoner's dilemma is a Game Theory thought experiment that describes a situation where two people have competing incentives. The dilemma is that each person can either cooperate for mutual benefit or betray their partner for individual reward. The highest reward for each party occurs when both parties choose to cooperate. For more information <https://www.britannica.com/science/game-theory/The-prisoners-dilemma> or other internet resources could be explored.
- 3) The parable of the second arrow is a well-known Buddhist story about dealing with suffering more skilfully. It is said the Buddha once asked a student, 'If a person is struck by an arrow, is it painful? If the person is struck by a second arrow, is it even more painful?' He then went on to explain, 'In life, we can't always control the first arrow. However, the second arrow is our reaction to the first. This second arrow is optional.' (<https://mindfulnessmeditation.net.au/arrow/>)

## References

- 1) Adidevananda, S. (n.d.). Srimad Bhagvadgita 18.47. Retrieved from Gita Supersite (IITK): [https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/srimad?language=dv&field\\_chapter\\_value=3&field\\_nsutra\\_value=35&ecsiva=1&etsiva=1&etpurohit=1&etgb=1&setgb=1&etssa=1&etassa=1&etradi=1&etadi=1](https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/srimad?language=dv&field_chapter_value=3&field_nsutra_value=35&ecsiva=1&etsiva=1&etpurohit=1&etgb=1&setgb=1&etssa=1&etassa=1&etradi=1&etadi=1)
- 2) Adidevananda, S. (n.d.). Srimad Bhagvadgita 3.21. Retrieved from Gita Supersite: [https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/srimad?language=dv&field\\_chapter\\_value=3&field\\_nsutra\\_value=21&httn=1&ecsiva=1&etsiva=1&etpurohit=1&etgb=1&setgb=1&etssa=1&etassa=1&etradi=1&etadi=1&choose=1](https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/srimad?language=dv&field_chapter_value=3&field_nsutra_value=21&httn=1&ecsiva=1&etsiva=1&etpurohit=1&etgb=1&setgb=1&etssa=1&etassa=1&etradi=1&etadi=1&choose=1)
- 3) Advayananda, S. (2019, Jan 17). Master Gita Master Life Programme. Retrieved Jan 17, 2019, from <https://youtu.be/HuyojsEEtNM?si=Mz44vHhT6O8iVFuv>
- 4) Ahuvia, A. (2012, 6). Wealth, consumption and happiness. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234777751\\_Wealth\\_Consumption\\_and\\_Happiness](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234777751_Wealth_Consumption_and_Happiness)
- 5) Anderson, J. (2012, 8). An investigation of moksha in the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara and Gaudapada. *Asian Philosophy*, 22(3), 275-287.
- 6) Carvalho, F. K., & Mulla, Z. R. (2020). Power of Love (AGAPE) in Leadership: A Theoretical Model and Research Agenda. *South Asian Journal of Management*, 27(4), 96-120.
- 7) Chandra, R. (2022). Spirituality in Work Place. *The International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, b767-771.
- 8) Chinmayananda, S. (2008). *The Holy Geeta*. Mumbai: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.
- 9) Chinmayananda, S. (2014). *Aatmbodha (Hindi)*. Mumbai: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.
- 10) Chinmayananda, S. (2018). Right Attitude for Success. In *Indian Insights into Management* (pp. 82-91). Mumbai: Chinmaya Prakashan.
- 11) Chinmayananda, S. (2018). *The Inspired Leadership*. In *Indian Insights into management* (p. 78). Mumbai: Chinmaya Prakashan.
- 12) contributors, W. ((2023, August 11). Anubandha chatushtaya. Retrieved 11 12, 2023, from Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anubandha\\_chatushtaya&oldid=1169789776](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anubandha_chatushtaya&oldid=1169789776)

- 13) Dalal, N. (2021). Sankara. In E. N. (Ed), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 21 Edition). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/shankara/>
- 14) Gautamananda, S. (2012, December 2012). Swami Vivekananda-the True Ambassador of Indian Culture. The Vedanta Kesari, pp. 467-474.
- 15) Harshananda, S. (2009). The six Systems of Hindu Philosophy: A Primer. Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- 16) Jan, M., Soomro, S., & Ahmad, N. (2017, 11). Impact of Social Media on Self-Esteem. European Scientific Journal, 13, 329-341.
- 17) Jiang, S., & Ngien, A. (2020, 4). The Effects of Instagram Use, Social Comparison, and Self-Esteem on Social Anxiety: A Survey Study in Singapore. Social Media and Society, 6(2). Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305120912488>
- 18) Katsenelson, V. (2022). Soul in the Game: The Art of a Meaningful Life. Harriman House.
- 19) Kejriwal, A., & Krishann, V. (2004). Impact of Vedic Worldview and Gunas on Transformational Leadership. Vikalpa, 29(1), 29–40. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090920040103>
- 20) Komninos, A. (2020). Self-Actualization: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by Andreas Komninos. Retrieved from [www.interaction-design.org](http://www.interaction-design.org): <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/self-actualization-maslow-s-hierarchy-of-needs>.
- 21) Livingston, J. S. (1971, January). The myth of the well-educated manager. Harvard Business Review, 49(1), 79-89. Retrieved October 15, 2023, from Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/1971/01/myth-of-the-well-educated-manager>
- 22) Mulla, Z. R., & Krishnan, V. R. (2019). Impact of Personality (Gunas) and Belief System on Helping. South Asian Journal of Management, 26(4), 95-108.
- 23) Muniapan, D. B. (2021). Philosophy and Management: The Relevance of Vedanta in Management. In P. O. Pablos, Managerial Strategies and Solutions for Business Success in Asia (pp. 125-140). IGI Global.
- 24) Parthasarathy, A. (2015). Vedanta Treatise The Eternities. Mumbai: A Parthasarathy.
- 25) Ranganathan, R. (2015, Oct-Dec). Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is my Family): What Happens to My Self-concept When I Take Others' Perspectives. South Asian Journal of Management, 22(4), 118-135.
- 26) Selvam, R. (2023). Advaita Vedanta and Jungian Psychology: Explorations towards Further Reconciliation in East-West Dialogues on the Psyche. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Publishing. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372217290>
- 27) Shivananda, S. (n.d.). Srimad Bhagavadgita 3.35. Retrieved from Gita Supersite (IITK): [https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/srimad?language=dv&field\\_chapter\\_value=3&field\\_nsutra\\_value=35&httyn=1&ecsiva=1&etsiva=1&etpurohit=1&etgb=1&setgb=1&etssa=1&etassa=1&etradi=1&etadi=1&choose=1](https://www.gitasupersite.iitk.ac.in/srimad?language=dv&field_chapter_value=3&field_nsutra_value=35&httyn=1&ecsiva=1&etsiva=1&etpurohit=1&etgb=1&setgb=1&etssa=1&etassa=1&etradi=1&etadi=1&choose=1)
- 28) Stapleton, P., Luiz, G., & Chatwin, H. (2017, 3). Generation Validation: The Role of Social Comparison in Use of Instagram Among Emerging Adults. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 20, 142-149.
- 29) Tejomayananda, S. (2018). Vision of Management in Gita. In Indian Insights into Management (pp. 26-31). Mumbai: Chinmaya Prakashan.
- 30) Tejomayananda, S. (2022). Tips for Sadhana. Mumbai: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.



- 31) Retrieved from <https://www.vedantahub.org/>
- 32) Veeraiah, C. (2015). The pursuit of happiness: An Advaita Vedanta perspective. Happiness and Hope1. Lisbon.
- 33) Vivekananda, S. (1893). Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda-the paper on Hinduism Read at Parliament of the Religions, Sept 20,1893. Kindle Edition.
- 34) Vivekananda, S. (1989). Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.