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## UNDERSTANDING MASLOW'S MOTIVATIONAL CONCEPT FROM INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

During this pandemic, entire world is talking about terms like motivation in every walk of life. Motivation is crucial for patients and their family members, for health care workers, for public administration personnel and political leaders. It is also important during self-isolation and along-with this Motivation term is highly required by employees who have shifted from office culture to work-from-home culture. Due to covid-19 many industries and organizations are facing tough times and some are propelling. This is the testing time for the leaders of the organization. They have to firstly keep themselves motivated and then they have to understand how to keep their employees motivated and engaged when their work-environment has changed and when the salary of the employees has also been trimmed.

Lot of research has been done earlier and even in 21<sup>st</sup> century about significance of motivation in organizations. Looking into the contribution of motivation to different spheres of personal as well as organizational life it is an aberration that the concept has drawn attention from various perspectives and philosophies. Extending the same, the present study is attempts to visit from the perspective of ancient Indian wisdom. The study primarily compares and contrasts the teachings of SrimadBhagvad Gita, a sacred scripture of Hindus, with the prevailing concept of motivation. In this study by delving deep into the Need Hierarchy Theory of Maslow and Bhagvad Gita, it has been found that by enhancing Sattva Guna and practicing detachment in any work one can attain Supreme Bliss and when one attains this state of mind individual is emotionally and psychologically balanced. Any task performed with this state of mind is the best which on one hand will be fruitful for the success of organization and on the other hand give internal satisfaction to the employees.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Bhagvad Gita, Abraham Maslow, Detachment, Triguna, Indian Philosophy, Karmayoga, Jnana Yoga.

### Introduction

During this pandemic, entire world is talking about terms like motivation in every walk of life. Motivation is crucial for patients and their family members, for health care workers, for public administration personnel and political leaders. It is also important during self-isolation and along-with this Motivation term is highly required by employees who have shifted from office culture to work-from-home culture. Due to covid-19 many industries and organizations are facing tough times and some are propelling. This is the testing time for the leaders of the organization. They have to firstly keep themselves motivated and then they have to understand how to keep their employees motivated and engaged when their work-environment has changed and when the salary of the employees has also been trimmed.

Lot of research has been done earlier and even in 21<sup>st</sup> century about significance of motivation in organizations. This paper emphasizes on Maslow's Need hierarchy theory and how insights from Bhagvad Gita can help business leaders in overcoming the challenge of motivating themselves and their employees.

### Motivation

There is an old idiom- 'you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink', same is the case with human beings too. People do things what they desire to do or are encouraged to do. In society we find two types of people –one who have internal drive to pursue a given task with full dedication and devotion, and second type are those who need to be pushed by some external force to complete a task. If people are not self-driven, then they can be motivated.

Motivation is essential in every sphere of life and also for business organizations as one of the pillars of organization is an employee (human resource). Work motivation is one of the crucial factors in success of the organization as it affects employee's style of work and behavior. Research suggests that work motivation is a factor that positively affects employee performance (Octaviannand et al., 2017), (Febrianti et al., 2020) employee engagement (Singh, 2016), employee's productivity (Bawa, 2019), employee's job satisfaction (Febrianti et al., 2020), organizational commitment (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018).

Motivation is the psychological process that cause the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions, that are goal oriented. ((Mitchell, 1982), (Mládková et al., 2015) It is the driving force which causes one to act. Each employee or individual has different behavior and behavior is motivated by want, need. This 'need', 'want' is the driving force, which helps an individual achieve one's target. These Needs/ desires/ wants have been classified differently. viz.-**Maslow** suggested that human needs are multiple, complex and inter-related. These needs motivate them to strive for fulfillment. The behavior of an individual at a particular point of



time is determined by their strongest need. These needs have been classified by Maslow as –Physiological Needs, Safety or Security Needs, Social Needs, Esteem needs and Self-actualization needs. He has also suggested a systematic and sequential process of need-development and need fulfillment among individuals. **Herzberg** identified two types of needs independent of each other affecting the behavior of an individual differently. The two categories were- Hygiene Factors- which were had inverse relation with satisfaction of the individuals, and Motivational Factors – which had positive affect on satisfaction of the individuals. **McClelland** has identified three types of needs- Need for -(i) power, (ii) affiliation and (iii) achievement. He suggested that individuals with high power need have great concern for exercising influence and control, and affiliation needs are related to social needs, such individuals draw satisfaction from being loved. The need for achievement can be defined as a desire to succeed in challenging and competitive environment. **Alderfer** has categorized needs as –(i) Existence needs, (ii) Relatedness needs, and (iii) Growth needs. Existence needs include physiological and safety needs of an individual. Relatedness needs are satisfied by personal relationships and social interaction with others. Growth needs include individual making creative efforts to achieve full potential that an individual is capable of achieving. According to **Vroom**, an individual's motivation to do things is dependent on three factors- (i) Expectancy- the chances of having desired outcome on doing any task. (ii) Instrumentality-performance of a job will be reward-giving. (iii) Valence- Value assigned to desired rewards. Vroom suggested that motivation is determined by the nature of reward people expect to get as a result of their job performance. **Adam** suggested that an individual is motivated to maintain fair relationship between their performance and reward in comparison to others. It is based on the assumption that individuals compare the rewards that they receive for their contribution with the rewards received by the others. If any inequality is found they are motivated to overcome that inequality. **Locke** suggested that the type and the challenge of the goal induces motivation in the individual to achieve such goal. These needs can be broadly classified as –financial/extrinsic/basic needs/material needs and non-financial/ intrinsic/ self-actualization/self-enlightenment needs. As there are different needs so there are different ways of achieving them.

#### Maslow's Motivation Theory and its Application

The concept of motivation has been discussed by various thinkers and it has also been studied that work motivation is important for the smooth functioning of any organization. Research have shown that Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory is quite effective in keeping the employees motivated.(Badubi, 2017) in their research study have analyzed different theories of motivation including Maslow's need hierarchy theory. They have concluded that lack of motivation among employees leads to different types of risks- viz- operational risk (like- absenteeism, poor quality of work). Due to lack of motivation organizations face High staff turnover which costs the organizations and unhappy employees transfer their dissatisfaction in customer services which will affect the market of the organization.(Nwagwu & Africa, 2012) have studied the relationship between Maslow's motivation factors and job satisfaction. The study found that Needs identified by Maslow describe the Job-satisfaction.(Lester, 2017) Lester, et al have measured the degree of satisfaction of needs described by Maslow and its effect on psychological health of individuals. The study found that the level of satisfaction of needs and psychological health are positively related to each other. Higher the level of satisfaction more psychologically healthy is the individual. (Louise, 2003) in their research has also found that needs described by Maslow effect satisfaction among ancillary staff positively. (Kaur, 2013) has discussed Maslow's Need hierarchy theory and suggested that this theory has managerial implications. This study has found that Maslow's theory can be utilized by managers in keeping employees motivated. Recognizing employee's accomplishments to make employees satisfy their esteem needs, providing financial security to fulfill their safety needs and providing opportunities to socialize to make employees feel loved are certain ways suggested to keep employees satisfied and dedicated towards organization and achieving organization's goal. (Nguyen, 2017) has identified the most motivating factors which are covered by Maslow's Needs. It was suggested that employee motivation is affected by 2 factors- extrinsic- salary or financial benefits and intrinsic factors- needs, desires, goals. It was found that employee motivation and organizational productivity are related to each other.(Taormina, 2019) have applied multiple regression and found that the satisfaction of the lower-level needs statistically predict the satisfaction of the higher-level needs.

The most effective motivational theory as per research studies is Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory. It was developed by A.H. Maslow. Maslow has given a framework that helps to explain the strength of certain needs. According to him there seems to be a hierarchy into which human needs are arranged. In this hierarchy at one end are lower order needs and at the other end higher order needs and in between there are middle order needs. These needs arise in a step-by step process, each lower order need once satisfied, giving way for an unfulfilled higher order need.(Maslow & Green, n.d.)

The term 'self-actualization' was first time used by Kurt Goldstein in 1943. According to him, "the tendency toward self-actualization is the only drive by which the life of an organism is determined." In Maslow's opinion, Self-actualization is an Intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately of what is the organism itself. According to him, it is the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.

In philosophical literature, four goals of life have been stated. And individuals are expected to pursue these goals if they wish to lead a good and happy life. These goals are- Artha, Kama, Dharma and Moksha. Moksha is considered to be the highest goal and



the superior goal of life. According to Transcendental Consciousness, it is the fourth state of consciousness after waking, dreaming and sleeping states. According to this concept, Moskha is an unused Human Potential of creativity, compassion and understanding which had been blocked and shut out (Deutsch).

Maslow's theory is based on prepotency of needs. This theory is based on the assumption that Human Being is an organism which drives into action to fulfill its needs. Several drives or needs play a central role in motivating a human being. A sound theory of motivation depends on the ultimate goals of human beings. Such goals can be better foundation of motivation theory, if they are unconscious goals of human beings.

Bhagvad Gita has discussed the secret of origin of human beings. On understanding the origin as discussed in Bhagvad Gita it will become easier for human beings to connect to the ultimate goal of life and also to move on to the journey towards achievement of that goal.

This study we will be talking about self-actualization needs and how to achieve those with insights from Bhagvad Gita.

### Insights from Bhagvad Gita

In general, individuals vary both in their capacity to do a certain job and in their desire to do that job. Regardless of their less abilities, those with a lot of zeal perform better, while those who are profoundly gifted and have the ideal capacity do not perform well if they are not willing to do it. To achieve success this motivation is essential. The potential force that sets an individual into action is Motivation.

#### a. Trinity of Action

According to Dubin, "Motivation is the complex force starting and keeping a person at work in an organization." This concept of motivation can be traced back to nearly \_\_centuries ago in Indian writings. In the battlefield when Arjuna shared his decision of not fighting the war with Shri Krishna, then in the Kurukshetra also termed as Dharamakshetra, SHri Krishna revealed the concept of work motivation //B.G. 18.18//, Shri Krishna says that there are three factors that propel actions-

- Knowledge-provides understanding to knower
- The object of knowledge
- The knower

According to him, knowledge about the object (the task to be done) and the quality of work are related to each other. Deeper and clearer the knowledge about the object better will be the quality of work.

Bhagvad Gita has also analyzed the constituents of action-

- Doer
- The instrument of action
- The act itself

These three constituents of Action are related to three types of material nature, because of which people differ in their motives and actions.

#### b. Secret of Life

Before discussing the types of material nature and its effects on motives and actions of individuals, it is important to understand how modes of nature are connected with an Individual.

Shri Krishna in //B.G. 14.3-14.4// has revealed the secret of origin of life. He claims that he places souls in Mother Nature's womb and that the body, mind and soul are nourished by material energy.

This material energy comprises of 3 Gunas-

- Sattva- Goodness
- Rajas- Passion
- Tamas- Ignorance

As a part of one's character, Sattva Guna induces excellence and lights up the mind with wisdom. It makes a person calm, fulfilled, generous, caring, merciful, supportive, peaceful and serene. good health and freedom from disease are additionally sustained. Although the mode of goodness generates an impact of peacefulness and bliss, the soul is bound to material nature through



connection to them. //B.G. 14.6//. In Sattva Guna, the agonies of material life are minimized and common cravings are suppressed. Those influenced by 'sattva' are equipped with a measure of innocence, integrity, temperance, benevolence, wisdom and selflessness. //B.G. 14.16//.

RajoGuna arouses want for mental and physical desires/needs. It also elevates attachment to worldly desires. Individuals influenced by RajoGuna, get engaged in worldly quest for status, fame, reputation, work, family and home. They consider them as sources of enjoyment and are inspired to take exceptional and powerful steps to accomplish them. //B.G. 14.7//In RajoGuna, souls are guided to intense action. Their relationship with the world and desire for fun, fame, reputation, wealth and physical comfort encourages them to work hard in the world to fulfill those ambitions that they consider to be the most significant for life. //B.G. 14.9//.

Individuals influenced by RajoGuna remain disturbed by the desires of their senses and mind. The prime motive behind their work is arrogance and sense satisfaction of themselves and their dependents. They are self-centric. //B.G.14.16//.

Individuals influenced by TamoGuna receive satisfaction from laziness, violence, intoxication and gambling. Such individuals find it difficult to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, and they do not hesitate to resort to unethical actions in order to satisfy themselves. //B.G. 14.8//.The intelligence of individual is covered by mode of ignorance. The desire for happiness now arises in distorted forms. The influence of TamoGuna, embraces the mind with clouds of ignorance. //B.G. 14.9//. Those who are influenced by TamoGuna do not respect rules and regulations laid down in scriptures.

Shri. Krishna further adds that due to these modes of material nature all human beings are forced to perform work in this material world. //B.G. 3.5//. Even the essential bodily activities like eating, bathing, maintaining proper health require physical activities/work to be done. These essential and fundamental day-to-day activities are called as NITYA KAMA. To ignore and avoid these basic activities is not considered as progressive. To be progressive, one should undertake such activities which help to develop, enhance and nourish one's mind and intellect. //B.G. 3.8//. Again in //B.G. 18.59 & 18.60// Shri. Krishna emphasizes on importance of performing obligatory actions. He believes that all knowledgeable and wise individuals act according to their nature as all living beings are put to some action due to their inbuilt habit and tendencies. He considers action is superior to inaction. // B.G. 3.33//.

Shri. Krishna also delivers words of caution. He elaborates and says that above shlokas should not be interpreted as if all individuals have complete freedom to do what they desire. One should acknowledge the truth that the soul is dependent on Almighty God in several ways. In this materialistic world, the soul is under the influence of three Gunas-Sattva, Rajo and TamoGuna- already discussed. The nature of an individual is based on the amalgamation of these three gunas and accordingly an individual is forced to act. On the basis of these three types of Gunas there are three types of knowledge, action, doer, intellect and determination and satisfaction (happiness), which form the basis of motivation for action. (Fig.-1)

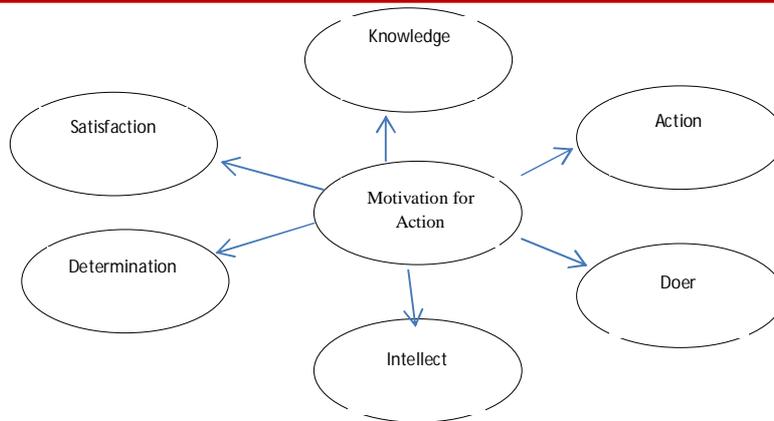


Fig.-1: Basis for Motivation for Action as in Bhagvad Gita

Sattvik Jnana (knowledge of Goodness)-The knowledge of goodness is the awareness by which a person has the insight to see and recognize the wholeness of life with everything, the presence of the same soul in oneself and others. //B.G. 18.20//. It is known as Sattvic knowledge when one recognizes the whole universe in its union with God.

Sattvik Karma (action of goodness)-The activity in the mode of goodness is one that is done as recommended in philosophical texts and one that is conducted without attachment with desired results.//B.G. 18.23//

Sattvik Karta (Doer)-The sattvic doers are the persons who perform determined acts with total commitment, loyalty, determination and passion and without attachment. Such individuals maintain complete balance of mind throughout the task. //B.G. 18.26//

Sattvikmind (intellect) – Sattvik intellect helps one to discriminate and decide which acts are to be undertaken and which are to be withdrawn, what one should be afraid of and what one should overlook.//B.G. 18.30//

Sattvic determination (Determination in the mode of Goodness)-It is the strong will-power that evolves when one learns to suppress the senses, leads a disciplined life and exercises control over mind.//B.G. 18.33//

Sattvic Sukha (Happiness in the mode of goodness)-That which at first appears as unpleasant as poison and eventually tastes like honey, that happiness is called Sattvic. Such happiness is generated when awakens to self-realization.//B.G. 18.37//

Rajas (knowledge of Passion) is said to be the one in which an individual fails to feel the of everything and instead discriminates each life with one another. Rajas Karma (action in the mode of passion) is one in which the act is done with huge effort and intention to gain predetermined fruits of results in the form of name, fame and wealth and is done with the feeling of pride and for prestige.

Rajas Karta (Rajas Doers) are deeply ambitious for materialistic enhancement. To fulfill their ends, they sometimes sacrifice morality. When their desires are fulfilled, they become elated and when they are daunted, they get detected. Their life, thus, becomes a mixture of delights and sorrow.

Rajas Buddhi (intellect in the mode of passion). The rajasic intellect, colored by attachments and aversions, likes and dislikes is unable to discern the proper course of action. It becomes confused between the important and the trivial, the permanent and the transient, the valuable and the insignificant.

Rajas Determination- the steadfast will by which one holds to duty, pleasures and wealth out of attachment and desire for rewards, is determination in the mode of passion. //B.G. 18.34// Rajasic happiness is experienced as a thrill that arises from the contact between the senses and their objects, but the joy is as short-lived as the contact itself, and leaves in its wake greed, anxiety, guilt and a thickening of material illusion.//B.G. 18.38//

Tamasic knowledge (knowledge of ignorance)when the intellect is dulled under the effect of TamoGuna, it clings into fragmental concept as if it were the complete truth. People with such views often become fanatic about what they perceive to be the



absolute truth. Their understanding is usually not even rational, nor grounded in the scriptures or in reality and yet they zealously desire to impose their beliefs on others. //B.G.18.22//

Tamasic Karma (Action in the mode of ignorance). The intellects of those in TamoGuna are covered by the fog of ignorance. Such people are only interested in themselves and their self-interest. They pay no heed to money or resources at hand. Such work brings harm to them and to others. Such actions cause decay of one's health and vitality. //B.G. 18.25//

Tamasic doer (doer in the mode of ignorance are the ones who are undisciplined, illiterate, proudy, stubborn, lazy and procrastinator.//B.G. 18.28//. The workers in the mode of ignorance are cunning and dishonest in their ways because they have closed their ears and mind to reason.

Tamasic Mind (intellect) the tamasic intellect is without the illumination of the sublime knowledge. in the tamasic intellect, the ability of being logical and rational is lost.

An individual with tamasic intellect is determined to giving up dreaming (sleep), fear, despair and conceit. Determination based upon such stubborn clinging to unproductive thoughts is in the mode of ignorance.//B.G. 18.35//

Tamasic happiness is of the lowest kind. It throws the soul in the darkness of ignorance. And yet, since there is a tiny experience of pleasure in it, people get addicted to it.//B.G. 18.39//. Such pleasures derived from sleep, laziness and negligence –are in the mode of ignorance.

### c. Science of Action and Motivation as in Bhagvad Gita

The Gita believes that all actions are incited by sattva, rajo and tamogunas. The outcome of amalgamation of these gunas is Egoism. When the embodied soul rises above these gunas which created its body, the soul becomes liberated from all sufferings caused by birth, age and death. The connection of the self with the mind-body complex is the reason for the epitomized life and re-birth. It gets completely liberated only when it is totally detached from these gunas and their modifications. The most essential requirement for the realization of the transcendental liberation is complete detachment from these three gunas.

The Gita emphasizes repeatedly that liberation is the supreme and highest bliss. It is attained when one experiences one's union with god. In Bhagvad Gita, Moksha is equated with self-delight, self-contentment, self-realization and self-fulfillment. It is free from moral obligations. It is said in Bhagvad Gita that Liberated individuals perform all actions as sacrifice to God and are free from all Karmic actions. They neither do any act nor do they cause others to act. The Individuals are released from the bondage of materialistic attachments may work for the welfare of the society without ethical commitment.

Bhagvad Gita believes that the individuals who have attained liberation remain unaffected by good or bad deeds or thoughts. Such individuals have transcended to the world which is ahead of moral and ethical rules. He has entered a world which is free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. He is not held responsible for any unpleasant act done by him, he is far ahead of such rules and regulations of material life.

Bhagvad Gita has discussed three different paths following which one can attain Moksha or Liberation. These are the paths of – Karma yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. The first path is Path of Action. It is the practice of selfless performance of duties. It is attained when one performs all designated tasks with full devotion and dedication but without any expectation of rewards, instead he dedicates all fruits of action to the God. It is also known as NishkamaKarmayoga. Second is path of devotion. In this Bhagvad Gita expects individuals to surrender to Almighty God and have complete devotion in Him. In this state individual feels gratitude towards God and accepts pleasant and unpleasant events as gift or Love of God and performs all actions out of love for God. It is also known as Nishkama Bhakti Yoga. When one experiences and realizes the truth of all happenings and practices complete control on all his senses and maintains balance of mind in favourable and unfavourable situations, one is following the Path of Knowledge. This path is also known as Nishkama Jnana Yoga.

### Conclusion

According to Bhagvad Gita Moksha or Liberation can be defined as freedom from materialistic pleasures. It teaches to renounce the feelings of attachment, entanglement, jealousy, anger, arrogance and proud. In this fast-growing world people often feel frustrated, stressed, demotivated, puzzled and restless. All are overloaded with work and strict deadlines. Everyone is rushing to secure their future without focusing on their present. All individuals are investing their time in worrying about uncertain future and its complexities. Bhagvad Gita on the contrary inspires one to put in all efforts to the underlying task without worrying about the results. One is advised to act spontaneously and do the needful without attachment with the results and dedicate the fruits of action to God and



practice balance of mind as the only Reality is that One is only a puppet of Almighty God. On practicing Bhagvad Gita's concept of Moksha one can lead and live a life fully, ethically and morally.

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