



IDENTIFYING ELEMENTS OF THE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR TEACHERS IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA: A HERMENEUTIC STUDY

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Abstract:

The Bhagavad Gita is a holy scripture of the Hindu Religion and a section of the Mythological Epic Mahabharatha. This text ascribes to the philosophical discourse between Krishna and the Great Pandava warrior Arjuna which took place at the Kurukshetra battlefield. The role played by Krishna in the Mahabharata war is not just being Arjuna's charioteer, but also a guide who urges Arjuna for to maintain his righteous disposition and justful thoughts. In the present study, there has been an attempt made to trace out the educational implications from the perspective of Krishna as an ideal teacher and Arjuna as dutiful student through a hermeneutic approach. Sixty three verses of Bhagwad Gita have been drawn and implications have been drawn out that are relevant in the current teaching learning practices. The analysis reveals that the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita has great potential to address the some of the crucial aspects of Education.

Keywords: Code of Professional Ethics, Bhagavad Gita, hermeneutic

1. Introduction

The role of a teacher in the teaching-learning process is crucial and multifaceted. Without good teachers even the best system of education is bound to fail where an education system with good has the potential to overcome even the defects that exist in

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it. (Singh, 2007). As a transmitter of knowledge or as a facilitator, a teacher has to perform certain roles which are considered as his/her essential duties. A teacher has to perform the role of a parent at school, a guide, a counsellor, a knowledge provider depending on the situation(s). Above all, the teacher is regarded as a role model and the students imitate them and try to instill the qualities of a teacher in themselves.

In the present context, in order to improve the quality of the teaching learning process and ensure accountability, professional development of teachers is envisaged. In this regard, a code of professional ethics for school teachers was framed in 1997 and then reviewed and modified in 2011 which acts as a guiding light for the teachers and also helps in restoring dignity and integrity of teachers. But the need to highlight the duties of a teacher towards the students and the teaching learning process was felt much before which can be traced out in the great philosophical text, the Bhagavad Gita. When examined from an educational perspective, the verses of the Bhagavad Gita depicts the duties of an ideal teacher as performed by Krishna to guide his student Arjuna who seeks for his help and guidance in overcoming the deviation of mind and maintain focus toward the duties that are expected of him.

2. Code of Professional Ethics for teachers

The most recent work done in designing the code of professional ethics for teachers was done in 2010 and it took its final shape in 2011. The Code of Professional Ethics for school teachers is an attempt to provide direction and guidance to the teachers in enhancing the dignity of their professional work. A 23-point code is designed by the 4 member committee which depicts obligations of teachers towards: the Students (10 points), the parents, community, society (4 points) and profession and colleagues (9 points).

Both chronologically and in terms of the numbers, the code focused the most on the obligation of teachers towards the students. This part of the Code suggests that teachers have to impartial, treat all the students equally, refrain from corporal punishments, cater to their (students') individual needs thus being knowledgeable and use different approaches to enhance the teaching learning process. Teachers have to facilitate learning thus adopting a learner centric approach. Above all, teacher has to be a role model and is expected to transact her roles and responsibilities accordingly.

3. Duties of an Ideal teacher towards the students: In Bhagavad Gita

A teacher has to abide by the rules of the institution and most importantly perform his/her duties sincerely not only for an effective teaching-learning process to take place but also to infuse certain qualities like honesty, kindness, sincerity towards work, etc. in the students to prepare them for life. This is possible when teachers themselves portray such qualities. Such portrayal of one's character is one of the duties of an ideal teacher. These duties have been divided into 12 broad headings listed in Figure 1.

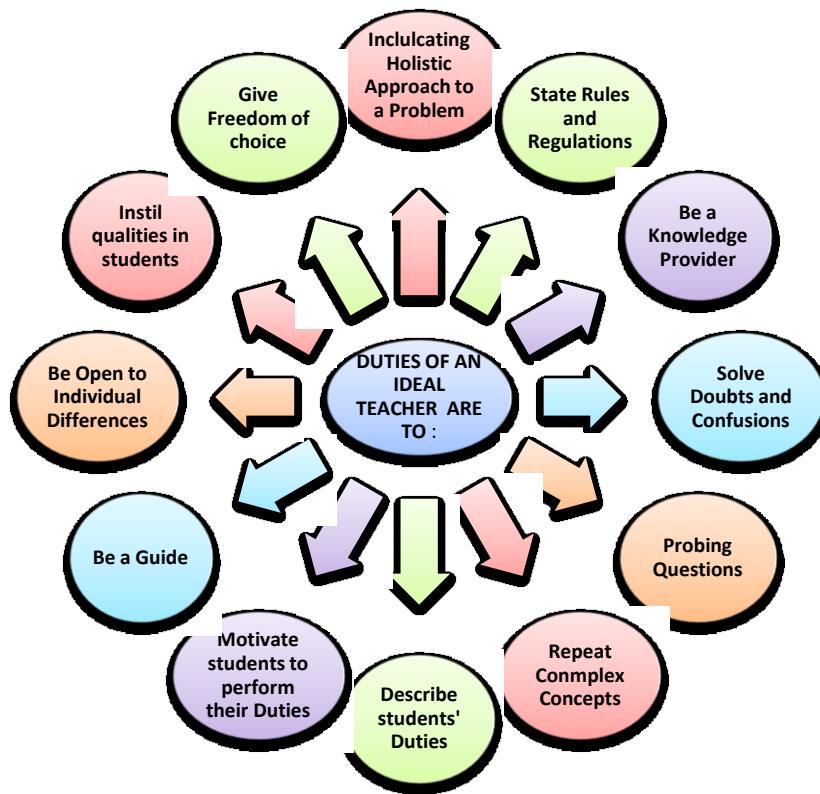


Figure 1: Duties of an ideal teacher

D 1: Inculcating Holistic Approach to a Problem

sañjaya uvācha |

evam ukto hr̥ṣhīkeśho guḍākeśhena bhārata |

senayor ubhayor madhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam || Bhagavad-Gita 1.24

In the verses of Ch-1(24) quoted above, Lord Krishna places the chariot between the two armies as asked by Arjuna. This is done to make Arjuna get a better picture of the challenges he would face during the war by having a closer look of the warriors of the other army. Arjuna was over-confident about winning the war against his kinsmen. Krishna performing his duty as a teacher, wants Arjuna to consider both the

possibilities of a war i.e. winning and losing. At the same time, Krishna wants Arjuna not to oversimplify his actions by getting influenced by his immediate instincts but to plan and act accordingly.

Implication: One of the major duties of an ideal teacher is to make his pupil realize that success is not certain does not depend solely on one's potential but is also impacted by external factors on which an individual has little or no control

D 2: State Rules and Regulations

An ideal teacher should always state rules and regulations before letting the student perform, be it a simple narration of a story, an activity or an exam. Stating rules and regulations beforehand solves the unintentional and unwanted mistakes to occur.

*nātyaśhnatastu yogo 'sti na chaikāntam anaśhnataḥ |
na chāti-svapna-śhīlasya jāgrato naiva chārjuna || Bhagavad-Gita 6.16
yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-cheṣṭāsya karmasu |
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā || Bhagavad-Gita 6.17*

In the verses of Ch-6(16, 17) above, Krishna lays down rules regarding the diet, fasting and recreation of one who follow and who wishes to practice Dhyanayoga.

Implication: It is very important to follow the schedule with respect to diet and recreation for balanced and harmonious development.

*idam te nātapaskyāya nābhaktāya kadāchana |
na chāśhuśhrūṣhave vāchyam na cha mām yo 'bhyasūtayi || Bhagavad-Gita 18.67*

In the above verse, Krishna points out the traits of those who are not qualified for the teachings of the Gita and prohibits Arjuna to impart the teaching to them. Here Krishna rules out the possibility of sharing the wisdom of Gita with certain set of people.

Implication: Stating rules and regulations enables student to get a better view of the action(s) he is planning to perform and helps him list out all the do's and don'ts to be followed while proceeding towards an endeavour. It helps the students to make worthwhile decisions for them. Therefore, the teachers should set and pre-define the rules and regulations to the students.

D 3: Be a Knowledge Provider

teṣhām evānukampārtham aham ajñāna-jam tamaḥ |
nāśhayāmyātma-bhāva-stho jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā || Bhagavad-Gita 10.11

In the verses of Ch-10(11) mentioned above, Krishna describes an important characteristic of an ideal teacher. The duty of an ideal teacher is to dispel darkness of ignorance by the light of knowledge.

sañjaya uvācha |
evam uktoḥ tato rājan mahā-yogeshvaro hariḥ |
darśhayām āsa pārthāya paramam rūpam aiśhwaram || Bhagavad-Gita 11.9

In the above verse, Krishna revealed to Arjuna his divine form. Arjuna wished to see Krishna's divine form and asked to bestow him with this knowledge. As a result, Krishna the true master provides his student, Arjuna with the desired knowledge.

Implication: One of the responsibilities expected of a teacher is to empower the student with the so that he can discriminate between fallacy and truth.

D 4: Solve Doubts and Confusions

The main motto behind delivering the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita is to clear away the clouds of darkness which gripped in Arjuna's mind in the form of doubts which led to uncertainty and loss of confidence towards his duties as a warrior. There are some verses which describes how Krishna as an ideal teacher provided solutions to the doubts that crept in Arjuna's mind Also solutions were to the possible sceptical aspects which might arise in the due course.

Ch-2(55, 56, 57, 59 and 61) is in response to Arjuna's doubts by his teacher Krishna.

śhrī bhagavān uvācha |
prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha mano-gatān |
ātmany-evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthita-prajñas tadochyate || Bhagavad-Gita 2.55
duḥkheṣu-anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata-sprihaḥ |
vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ sthita-dhīr munir uchyate || Bhagavad-Gita 2.56
yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehas tat tat prāpya śhubhāśhubham |
nābhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā || Bhagavad-Gita 2.57
viśhayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ |

rasa-varjam raso 'pyasya param drishṭvā nivartate || Bhagavad-Gita 2.59 The verses of

Ch-2(55, 56, 57 and 59) quoted above, the nature and characteristics of stable minded person are explained.

tāni sarvāni sanyamya yukta āsīta mat-parah |
vaśhe hi yasyendriyāni tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā || Bhagavad-Gita 2.61

In the verses of Ch-2(61) above, Krishna describes the attributes of a stable minded person.

Implication: Mental stability gives the power of concentration, attention and memory thereby enabling an individual to pursue his learning effectively.

śhrī bhagavān uvācha |
kāma eṣha krodha eṣha rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ |
mahāśhano mahā-pāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam || Bhagavad-Gita 3.37
dhūmenāvṛiyate vahnir yathādarśho malena cha |
yatholbenāvṛito garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛitam || Bhagavad-Gita 3.38
āvṛitam jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā |
kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya duṣhpūreṇānalena cha || Bhagavad-Gita 3.39
indriyāni mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam uchyate |
etair vimohayatyēsha jñānam āvṛitya dehinam || Bhagavad-Gita 3.40

The above quoted verses from Ch-3(37, 38, 39 and 40) are in Krishna's response to the doubt raised by Arjuna. Here, Krishna introduces the concept of 'Desire' to Arjuna which he calls the root cause of all evil actions. Through comparisons, Krishna clarifies the facets of Desire due to which man loses his power of rationalizing and falls prey to misdeeds driven by lust and greed.

Implication: A student must exercise self-control towards world pleasures to perform his duties satisfactorily. Self-control does not mean suppression of desires. It relates to the attribute of an individual towards manifesting himself to other embrace learning and not look at it as an imposition.

D 5: Probing Questions

*śhrī bhagavān uvācha |
kutastvā kaśhmalamidam viśhame samupasthitam |
anārya-juṣhṭamaswargyam akīrti-karam arjuna || Bhagavad-Gita 2.2*

In the verses of Ch-2(2) above, Krishna questions Arjuna and asks for reason(s) for showing such an unexpected change in behaviour and decision of not participating in the war.

*kachchid etach chhрутam pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa chetasā |
kachchid ajñāna-sammohaḥ pranaśhṭas te dhanañjaya || Bhagavad-Gita 18.72*

In the verses of Ch-18(72) above, Krishna inquires whether or not Arjuna has been vigilant in the whole process and is able to drive away the misconceptions. The Bhagavad Gita brings out two kinds of situations in which an ideal teacher should pose questions. The first one is where the student needs to be asked to justify his/her uncanny attitude. As a counsellor the teacher must give an opportunity to the student to keep his view point forward. The second one is where the students' understanding needs to be checked, for which asking questions related to the topic proves helpful.

Implications: Probing Questions can be of great advantage in between the teaching of a concept and also after the concept has been introduced for clarity and better understanding.

D 6: Repeat Complex Concepts

*śhrī bhagavān uvācha |
bhūya eva mahā-bāho śhrīṇu me paramam vachaḥ |
yatte 'ham prīyamānāya vakshyāmi hita-kāmyayā || Bhagavad-Gita 10.1
sañjaya uvācha |*

*ity arjunam vāsudevas tathoktvā
svakam rūpam darśhayām āsa bhūyaḥ |
āśhvāsayām āsa cha bhītam enam
bhūtvā punaḥ saumya-vapur mahatma || Bhagavad-Gita 11.50*

*śhrī-bhagavān uvācha |
param bhūyaḥ pravakshyāmi jñānānām jñānam uttamam |
yaj jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parām siddhim ito gatāḥ || Bhagavad-Gita 14.1*

sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śhrīṇu me paramaṁ vachaḥ |
iṣṭo 'si me dṛiḍham iti tato vakṣhyāmi te hitam || Bhagavad-Gita 18.64

In the verses of Ch-10(1) above, Krishna asks Arjuna to hear the concept once again for his betterment. Then In the verses of Ch-11(50) mentioned above Krishna revealed the swakamrupampunaha i.e. his four armed form again. In the verses of Ch-14(1) and Ch-18(64) above, Krishna says that he shall discuss once more his supreme wisdom with Arjuna.

Implication: Repetition of the complex concepts leads to better understanding and retention. Therefore, teachers must repeat the complex concepts.

D 7: Describe Duties of Students

yadṛichchayā chopapannaṁ swarga-dvāram apāvṛitam |
sukhinaḥ kṣhatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham iḍṛiṣham || Bhagavad-Gita 2.32
atha chet tvam imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṅgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi |
tataḥ sva-dharmaṁ kīrtim cha hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi || Bhagavad-Gita 2.33
akīrtim chāpi bhūtāni
kathayīshyanti te 'vyayām |
sambhāvitasya chākīrtir
maraṇād atirichyate || Bhagavad-Gita 2.34
bhayād raṇād uparataṁ mansyante tvām mahā-rathāḥ |
yeshām cha tvam bahu-mato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam || Bhagavad-Gita 2.35
avāchya-vādānś cha bahūn vadiṣhyanti tavāhitāḥ |
nindantastava sāmartyam tato duḥkhataram nu kim || Bhagavad-Gita 2.36
hato vā prāpsyasi swargaṁ jivā vā bhokṣhyase mahīm |
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛita-niśchayaḥ || Bhagavad-Gita 2.37
sukha-duḥkhe same kṛitvā lābhālābhau jayājayau |
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi || Bhagavad-Gita 2.38

In the verses of Ch-2(32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37and 38) mentioned above, Krishna describes Arjuna's Duties as a warrior. Arjuna is well aware of his duties as a Kshatriya which demands him to fight battles courageously but still it's the duty of an ideal teacher to remind his/her students their duties and responsibilities when they lose their track.

tapasvibhyo 'dhiko yogī
jñānibhyo 'pi mato 'dhikah |
karmibhyaśh chādhiko yogī
tasmād yogī bhavārjuna || Bhagavad-Gita 6.46

In the verses of Ch-6(46) above, Krishna establishes the superiority of a Yogi over others and encourages Arjuna to become a Yogi.

iti guhyatamaṁ śhāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha |
etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛita-kṛityaśh cha bhārata || Bhagavad-Gita 15.20

In the verses of Ch-15(20) above, Krishna describes the rewards of grasping the knowledge imparted to Arjuna. Therefore, Krishna points out at the advantage of being dutiful student. Here Krishna says, when a student grasps the wisdom provided, his mission in life is accomplished.

Implication: One of the most important duties of a student is to study and comprehend through self-reflection and practice.

D 8: Motivate Students to Perform Their Duties

śhri bhagavān uvācha |
loke 'smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha |
jñāna-yogena sānkhyanām karma-yogena yoginām || Bhagavad-Gita 3.3
na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣhkarmyam puruṣho 'śhnute |
na cha sannyasanād eva siddhim samadhigachchati || Bhagavad-Gita 3.4
karmaṇaiva hi sansiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ |
loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampāśhyan kartum arhasi || Bhagavad-Gita 3.20

In the verses of Ch-3(3) above, Krishna introduces the path of a Karmayogi i.e. one who walks along the path of action. In the verses of Ch-3(4), Krishna motivates Arjuna to perform his duties by performing action as he cannot achieve freedom from the action as well as perfection by ceasing to act. In the verses of Ch-3(20) above, Krishna advises Arjuna to understand his duties and act accordingly.

yadi hyaham na varteyam jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ |
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣhyāḥ pārtha sarvaśhaḥ || Bhagavad-Gita 3.23

To encourage his student, In the verses of Ch-3(23) mentioned above, Krishna cites himself as an example and clarifies that he as a charioteer should be at par with the rider with respect to skills, tactfulness and perform with utmost rigor.

Implications: The teacher should be role model to the student.

*śhrī-bhagavān uvācha |
mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṁ
rūpaṁ paraṁ darśhitam ātma-yogāt |
tejo-mayaṁ viśhvam anantam ādyaṁ
yan me tvad anyena na dṛiṣṭa-pūroam || Bhagavad-Gita 11.47*

In the verses of Ch-11(47) above, Krishna motivates Arjuna by appreciating him for his good conduct.

Implication: Good conduct should be positively reinforced through reward.

*śhreyān swa-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt |
swa-dharme nidhanaṁ śhreyah para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ || Bhagavad-Gita 3.35
hreyān swa-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt |
svabhāva-niyataṁ karma kuroan nāpnoti kilbiṣham || Bhagavad-Gita 18.47*

In the verses of Ch-3 (35) and Ch-18(47), Krishna talks about the importance of performing one's own duty in a time bound manner.

Implications: Lethargy has negative consequences on one's performance as wastage of time is wastage of a resource that is irreplaceable,

*yoga-sannyasta-karmāṇaṁ jñāna-sañchhinna-sanśhayam |
ātmavantam na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya || Bhagavad-Gita 4.41*

In the verses of Ch-4(41), Krishna describes the benefits one can achieve by following the path of a Karmayogi and encouraging Arjuna to practice the path of Karmayoga.

Implications: Every individual should fulfil his responsibility with dedication and commitment.

*śhrī bhagavān uvācha |
sannyāsaḥ karma-yogaś cha niḥśhreyasa-karāvubhau |
tayos tu karma-sannyāsāt karma-yogo viśhiṣhyate || Bhagavad-Gita 5.2*

In the verses of Ch-5(2) above, Krishna establishes the superiority of Yoga of Action over Yoga of knowledge.

Implication: Action is mightier than words as mere spoken words do not suffice by themselves and should follow by action to lead a person towards the accomplishment of goal.

saha-jam karma kaunteya sa-doṣham api na tyajet |
sarvārambhā hi doṣheṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛitāḥ || Bhagavad-Gita 18.48

In the verse above Krishna says that one should never abandon one's innate duty and should be duly performed without thinking of the consequences it could lead to.

Implication: A teacher should constantly motivate the students to perform their respective duties by following the path of Karma i.e. Action.

D 9: Be a Guide

antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śharīriṇaḥ |
anāśhino 'prameyasya tasmād yudhyasva bhārata || Bhagavad-Gita 2.18
mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātma-chetasā |
nirāśhīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigata-joaraḥ || Bhagavad-Gita 3.30
tasmād ajñāna-sambhūtaṁ hṛit-stham jñānāsīnātmanaḥ |
chhittvainaṁ sanśhayam yogam ātiṣṭhottīṣṭha bhārata || Bhagavad-Gita 4.42
dronam cha bhīṣhmanam cha jayadratham cha
karnam tathānyān api yodha-vīrān |
mayā hatāms tvam jahi mā vyathīṣṭhā
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān || Bhagavad-Gita 11.34

In the verses of Ch-2(18), Ch-3(30), Ch-4(42), and Ch-11(34) mentioned above, Krishna has guided Arjuna to the path he must choose and commands him to fight. By repeatedly asking him to fight, Krishna was guiding him to the path he was unsure of. Krishna was boosting confidence in Arjuna and assured him that he can perform his duties as a warrior.

Implication: The teacher should perform the role of friend, philosopher and guide.

eshā te 'bhīhitā sānkhye
buddhir yoge tvimām śhrīṇu |

buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha

karma-bandham prahāsyasi || Bhagavad-Gita 2.39

nehābhikrama-nāśho 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate |

svalpam apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt || Bhagavad-Gita 2.40

In the verses of Ch-2(39, 40) above, Krishna guides Arjuna to follow the path of Karmayoga and perform his duties as a warrior.

Implication: At times, the teacher has to be firm, assertive and strict to enable his student to achieve his goal.

D 10: Be Open to Individual Differences

yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śhraddhayārchitum ichchhati |

tasya tasyāchalām śhraddhām tām eva vidadhāmyaham || Bhagavad-Gita 7.21

In the verses of Ch-7(21), Krishna says depending on the path selected by the devotee he, the teacher establishes the devotion in that very way.

mām hi pārtha vyapāśhritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ |

striyo vaiśhyās tathā śhūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim || Bhagavad-Gita 9.32

According to Ch-9(32) mentioned above, Krishna makes no distinction between the followers of different castes, classes and sects. This shows that Krishna, the supreme master is open to individual differences and suggests that an ideal teacher should be accommodative to individual differences among students and should not discriminate one student from the other. Keeping the students on the same level and treating them equally is one of the main duties of a teacher.

Implication: The teacher should cater to the individual needs of the students and should be fair, impartial and objective in his disposition.

D 11: Instil Qualities in Students

sva-dharmam api chāvekṣhya na vikampitum arhasi |

dharmyāddhi yuddhāch chhreyo 'nyat kṣhatriyasya na vidyate || Bhagavad-Gita 2.31

In the verses of Ch-2(31) above, Krishna says that apart from your prescribed duties, you should not waver. Here Arjuna has been asked not to entertain any sort of hesitation and fear.

Implications: Teacher should boost the self-confidence of the student.

*atha chittam samādhātum na śhaknoṣhi mayi sthiram |
abhyāsa-yogena tato mām ichchhāptum dhananījaya || Bhagavad-Gita 12.9*

In the above verse, Krishna is asking Arjuna to stabilise his mind on anything he should perform the Yoga of repeated Practice. The above two verses bring forth four qualities i.e. 4 Fs (Figure 2) which Krishna intends to instil in Arjuna. Be fearless, be firm on the decisions taken, be focused and frequent drill and practice i.e. try and try until he succeeds and when one succeeds, practice more to gain perfection.

Implication: Fear inhibits creativity. A fearless mind succeeds.

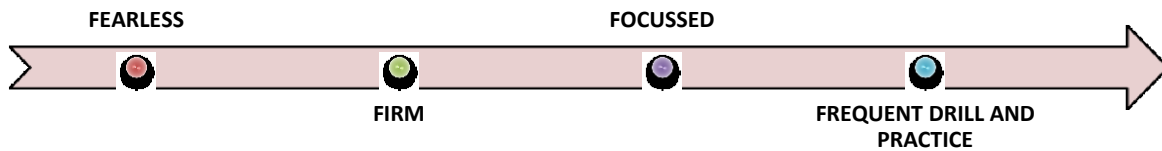


Figure 2: The four qualities

D 12: Give Freedom of Choice

*iti te jñānam ākhyātām guhyād guhyataram mayā |
vimriṣhyaitad aśheṣheṇa yathecchhasi tathā kuru || Bhagavad-Gita 18.63*

In the verses of Ch-18(63) mentioned above, Krishna says that now wisdom has been imparted by me to you Arjuna. Now it's the time for you to ponder over it and take the final decision accordingly. This is another duty of an ideal teacher where he/she imparts knowledge efficiently, puts forth the possibilities and gives the student enough time to contemplate and freedom to choose. This helps the student to take full charge of his decision and anticipating on all the possibilities helps him to look at the pros and cons of the path he wishes to choose. This also helps in boosting confidence in the student(s). Hence, it is very important to give the students freedom to choose.

Implication: Student's innate abilities have to be considered. The choice of subject should be interest based.

4. Conclusion

The study suggests that when viewed with an educational perspective, the Bhagavad Gita gives great insight for the growth and development of the two key players of education: Students and Teachers. The duties of an ideal teacher towards the students are vividly discussed in 63 verses of the Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavad Gita is greatly in consonance with the Code of Professional Ethics wherein the duties of teacher towards the students has been clearly outlined. However, the Bhagavad Gita goes a step beyond by providing methods and approaches through which teachers can perform these duties and enhance the teaching learning process. It won't be wrong to say that the Bhagavad Gita is way ahead of its time. Gita should be viewed as a great source of knowledge and its profound study could contribute to solve many issues faced by the stakeholders of education today.

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IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA: A HERMENEUTIC STUDY

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