

A Study of Strategic Commerce in the Light of the Bhagavad Gita: Integrating Ancient Wisdom with Modern Business Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of global commerce demands ethical decision-making, strategic clarity, and sustainable organizational behaviour. Ancient Indian philosophical texts, particularly the Bhagavad Gita, offer timeless insights into leadership, duty, conflict resolution, and self-management. This research explores the integration of Bhagavad Gita principles with modern business strategy to develop a framework for ethical and effective corporate decision-making. Through conceptual analysis and interpretive methodology, the study delineates key strategies such as Dharma-centric leadership, detachment in decision-making, and equanimity under pressure, illustrating their applicability within contemporary strategic management paradigms. The paper concludes that the philosophical underpinnings of the Gita can strengthen organizational culture, enhance stakeholder trust, and improve long-term sustainable performance.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, strategic commerce, business ethics, dharma, leadership, organizational behaviour, corporate governance.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic commerce encompasses the planning, implementation, and evaluation of organizational actions intended to achieve long-term competitive advantage. Modern strategic frameworks emphasize profit maximization, shareholder value, and operational efficiency. Yet, these frameworks often lack robust ethical foundations that guide behaviour beyond legal compliance.

The Bhagavad Gita, a core text of Indian philosophy, is renowned for addressing human conflict and duty (dharma) within complex environments. Arjuna's moral dilemma and Krishna's counsel provide a philosophical lens through which decision-making under uncertainty can be reframed. This paper seeks to bridge ancient wisdom with modern business strategy to propose a holistic framework of commerce that is both effective and ethically grounded.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this article are:

- To analyze the relevance of Bhagavad Gita teachings in modern strategic commerce
- To understand the role of Indian Knowledge System in business management
- To link ethical values with modern business strategy
- To promote value-based and sustainable commerce
- To provide a conceptual base suitable for UGC-recognized journal publication

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Management Theories

Strategic management literature traditionally highlights frameworks such as Porter's Five Forces, the Resource

-Based View, and Balanced Scorecard models. These theories prioritize competitive positioning, core competencies, and performance metrics (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1980). Ethical considerations are often treated as peripheral, confined to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Ethical Foundations in Business

Research on business ethics underscores the importance of integrity, transparency, and stakeholder orientation. Models like stakeholder theory argue for value creation beyond shareholders (Freeman, 1984). However, fewer studies integrate ancient philosophical systems as normative guidance for strategy.

Bhagavad Gita in Management Studies

Scholars have increasingly explored the Gita's relevance to leadership and organizational behavior (Katre, 2011; Chandra, 2019). Its core principles—detachment (vairagya), duty (dharma), focus (yoga), and equanimity (samatva)—resonate with contemporary calls for mindful leadership and ethical governance.

Gap: While literature acknowledges Gita's philosophical value, a systematic integration into strategic commerce remains underexplored.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative interpretive analysis using secondary sources. Primary textual analysis of the Bhagavad Gita is combined with contemporary strategic management theories to build an integrative framework. The methodology involves:

Textual exegesis: Interpretation of relevant Gita verses related to duty, action, and detachment.

Theoretical mapping: Aligning these principles with strategic management concepts.

Conceptual synthesis: Developing practical applications within organizational contexts.

Core Principles of the Bhagavad Gita and Strategic Commerce

Concept of Strategic Commerce

Strategic commerce refers to long-term planning and decision-making related to:

Business growth

Competitive advantage

Resource allocation

Market positioning

Organizational leadership

Modern strategies emphasize tools like SWOT analysis, Porter's Five Forces, and corporate governance. However, without ethical grounding, strategies may lead to corporate failures.

Bhagavad Gita: An Overview

The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, focusing on:

Duty (Dharma)

Action (Karma)

Knowledge (Gyan)

Devotion (Bhakti)

Self-discipline and leadership

It provides guidance for performing responsibilities with clarity, detachment, and moral strength—principles highly relevant to business management.

Core Gita Principles Relevant to Business Strategy

a) Karma Yoga (Action without Attachment)

“Karmaṇye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana” (Gita 2.47)

Business Relevance:

Managers should focus on sincere efforts and processes rather than only results. This reduces stress and promotes ethical decision-making.

b) Dharma (Righteous Duty)

Business Relevance:

Organizations should follow ethical practices, fair trade, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and compliance with laws.

c) Leadership and Self-Control

Lord Krishna represents an ideal leader—visionary, calm, and strategic.

Business Relevance:

Effective leadership requires emotional intelligence, integrity, and strategic foresight.

d) Decision-Making with Wisdom

The Gita emphasizes clarity of mind and detachment.

Business Relevance:

Strategic decisions should be rational, unbiased, and aligned with long-term organizational values.

Integration of Gita with Modern Business Strategy

Modern Business Strategy Gita Principle

Business Parallel

Strategic Outcome

Dharma

Ethical governance

Stakeholder trust & sustainability

Nishkama Karma

Process-oriented action

Long-term orientation & innovation

Samatva

Equanimous leadership

Resilience in uncertainty

Focused strategic alignment

Optimal resource utilization

Karma Yoga

Performance management

Ethical governance

Nishkama Karma

Sustainable growth

Self-discipline

Strategic leadership

Balance

Work-life harmony

This integration creates a value-based strategic commerce model.

Core Principles of the Bhagavad Gita and Strategic Commerce

Dharma (Duty and Ethics)

In the Gita, dharma represents righteous duty over personal gain (Bhagavad Gita 2.31). For businesses, this translates to ethical commitment to stakeholders—employees, customers, society—and not only to profitability.

Application: Ethical frameworks that prioritize long-term societal value bolster reputation and trust.

Nishkama Karma (Action Without Attachment to Results)

Krishna advises Arjuna to perform action without attachment to outcomes (Bhagavad Gita 2.47). Detached action fosters clear decision-making focused on process excellence rather than fear of failure.

Application: Leaders can make unbiased strategic choices free from short-term market pressures, improving resilience.

Samatva (Equanimity)

Gita emphasizes equal mood in success and failure (Bhagavad Gita 2.48). Equanimity guards against overreaction to market volatility and supports calm strategic planning.

Application: Equanimous leadership enhances stakeholder confidence even in uncertainty.

Yoga (Focus and Balanced Action)

Yoga in the Gita implies disciplined focus and holistic engagement in tasks (Bhagavad Gita 6.5). Strategic focus enables organizations to align resources with value creation objectives.

Application: Balanced scorecards and coherent alignment of mission, vision, and strategy reflect this principle.

DISCUSSION

Benefits of Integration

Integrating Gita principles encourages value-driven leadership, which enhances corporate reputation and stakeholder engagement. Ethical decision-making mitigates risks associated with reputational damage, legal penalties, and workforce disengagement.

Challenges and Limitations

Adopting philosophical constructs in pragmatic corporate settings may face resistance due to cultural biases or operational urgency. The conceptual framework requires context-specific adaptation rather than universal application.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the Bhagavad Gita's potential to enrich modern strategic commerce by instilling ethical clarity, emotional balance, and duty-focused action. By operationalizing ancient wisdom in corporate processes, organizations can navigate complexity with integrity and sustainable growth. Future empirical research should test the framework in varied industrial contexts.

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