

# Promoting 'Mean': A Desire Regulating Mechanism for Managers

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## Abstract

*The concept of 'mean' is quite popular in the area of statistics. It does not need any preliminary and comprehensive explanation for the people who work in the area of quantitative management. The importance and relevance of 'mean' in statistics is being studied, researched and emphasized. Yet, the application and implication of 'mean' in behavioral science remains as an unexplored area. Here the author projected the relevance of 'mean' not only as a decision making tool used by statisticians but most importantly as a tool in the behavioural science area to solve the behavior and attitude related problems faced by managers. The objective of this study is to investigate the dynamics of 'mean' that stimulates change within the organizational system. An analysis has been made between the Greek philosopher Aristotle's virtue ethics theory and Lord Krishna's verses in Bhagavad Gita concerning the existence of 'mean' and its application in the work life of managers.*

## Introduction

In statistics statisticians use 'mean' to project the measures of central tendency that establishes the middle point of a distribution. The resulted 'mean' helps the decision makers to take quality decision. Most of the time when we refer to the 'average of something', we discuss about its arithmetic mean (Levin and Rubin, 1998). Beri (2005) opined that the arithmetic mean is obtained by totaling all the observations and dividing the sum by the number of observations. The measure of central tendency has also been classified into: arithmetic mean, the geometric mean, weighted mean, the median, the mode, and the harmonic mean. But question arises; why one uses arithmetic mean or any other type of mean. The answer for the above constitutes of two main objectives of using 'mean'. Firstly, to get a single value that indicates the characteristics of the entire data. Secondly, to facilitate comparisons, measures of central tendency enable us to compare two or more distributions pertaining to the same time period, or within the same distribution over time.

The authors, in this paper explore a new and innovative idea i.e. besides using 'mean' in statistics for decision making purposes, managers can utilize the essence and value of 'mean' in the context of organizational behavior. 'Mean' plays a significant role in statistics as well as in organizational behavior. In statistics the objective behind developing a 'mean' is to determine the middle point of a distribution for effective decision making. Likewise, in behavioral science the 'mean' has played a pivotal role that facilitate a manager to regulate, and choose an ideal reasonable middle ground in the context of exercising his actions, emotions, and desires in the organizational arena. Of course differences exist regarding the role and nature of 'mean' in case of statistics and organizational behavior. In case of statistics the shape and size of 'mean' is more objective, where as in case of organizational behavior it is subjective. Here, our focus of discussion is limited concerning the role and importance of 'mean' in the organizational behavior perspective. In this connection the author cited the views of two eminent personalities: the famous Greek

philosopher Aristotle and the Indian spiritual icon Lord Krishna.

Velasquez (2002) interpreted in his book regarding the moral virtues developed by Aristotle and highlighted moral virtue as a 'mean' between two extreme vices, one of them is 'excess' and the other one is 'scarcity'. A.C.B.S Prabhupada's commentary on Lord Krishna's verses in *Bhagavad-Gita* where he emphasized upon developing an 'equally balanced, calm, and enlightened self' that act as a 'mean' between two extreme *dwandas* (dualities) of life and nature like: success and failure, winning and losing, light and darkness, hot and cold etc. (A.C.Bhaktivedanta, 1972).

On moral virtue, numerous views have been expressed by academics working in this field. Amongst all, the most noted and popular is the virtue ethics theory developed by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aristotle considered moral virtues as a habit that empowers a person to act with a definite purpose in life. Velasquez (2002) interpreted Aristotle's view that it is the faculty of 'reason' that discriminates human beings from other animals where the person accept a rational middle position between moving too far and not moving far enough in the context of exercising his feelings, emotions, actions and desires. Moral habits permit a person to live according to the 'reason'. The word 'reason' means a cause, explanation, or justification for human action. The action of a person to what extent is ethical or unethical can be judged by 'reason'.

### **Aristotle's notion of 'Mean'**

Aristotle argued that the moral virtues prompt people to follow 'reason' in dealing with their desires, emotions and actions. Velasquez (2002) posited Aristotle's few popular moral virtues like: courage, temperance, justice, and prudence below for reader's better understanding.

**Courage:** For instance, when a person responds to

the emotion of fear, courage stand as a virtue or a 'mean' between two unreasonable vices where he exercises reasonable amount of daring. These two unreasonable vices are 'cowardliness' and 'recklessness'. Cowardliness project an action where the person is not at all daring and 'recklessness' characterizes an action where the person becomes excessively daring against the emotion of fear. Both 'cowardliness' and 'recklessness' are considered as vices and unreasonable action by Aristotle.

**Temperance:** is a virtue where a person neither indulges too much or too little against the desire for consumption of food where he exercises his desire for food reasonably. Whereas the gluttonous action is a vice of gratifying the desire unreasonably and austerity is a vice where one indulges too little which is also unreasonable. The 'mean' temperance is a virtue that acts as a desire regulating mechanism i.e. healthy, productive and enduring.

**Justice:** is the virtue of giving people their due identically what they are worthy of getting. On the contrary injustice is a vice where giving people 'more' (one vice) or 'less' (another vice) than what they are worthy of getting.

**Prudence:** is a virtue that chooses a reasonable middle position and stay away from unreasonable extremes and vices that deals with either adopting excessive or deficient human actions that are irrational in nature. But question arises how one can determine what is reasonable or rational? So it is the virtue of prudence, Aristotle says, allow a person to know what is reasonable or rational in a particular condition.

Hooft (2005) interpreted Aristotle's 'mean' that human beings should be rational and reflective in their approach, should desire well and should not be excessive or deficient in their desires, live their lives well if their reasons control their inclinations. 'Mean' is not a straightforward average or the middle position, it is the appropriate amount or degree that not only stay away from deficiency or

excessiveness but can be judged in relation to the person acting and to the situation he is in.

Hooft's view mentioned above justified well through an example that an appropriate meal for a seasoned cine star or a model would certainly be different from an appropriate meal for a boxer or a weight lifter. Aristotle's 'mean' does not preach or applaud mediocrity in all situations, he talks about the habits and temperaments that we should have in normal and habitual situations. In unusual or extreme situations a person need to exercise judgment that involves intellectual virtue, but in case of virtues of character, one can only be talking about relatively routine situations in which we act in accordance with our habits and dispositions. Extreme situations need judgment and see what unusual and intense actions are required for us. Great danger and great challenges demand extreme actions like heroism in the field of sports, extraordinary military courage, loyalty under pressure and artistic achievement etc. (Hooft, 2005).

If you do not have the necessary intellectual skills or virtues to make the judgment as to what the appropriate action would be in a given situation, and if you do not have a habit to act in the appropriate way in such situations, then you better take the advice of a prudent person and act in the way that he or she would. Moral virtue as a 'mean' encompasses the sound, balanced character, motivation, and intention of a person are more important than the persons actual conduct and its after-effect (Pincoff, 1985; Slote, 1992).

Consistent development of sound character traits is the primary goal of life that contains motives, inclinations, and virtues that tempt a person or organization to act ethically (Petrick and Quinn, 1997). Virtues must emphasize upon being thoughtful about perspective and circumstances that uses wisdom consistently in determining the ends and means of attaining them (Russell, 2009). Aristotle refers to the importance of phronesis in his conceptualization of moral virtue as a 'mean'

between two extremes such that a person practices virtue by balancing multiple considerations that eschew either deficiency or excess of action in context (Aristotle, 1999; Moberg, 1999). In the article Aristotelian- ethics, Aristotle declared that every specific character excellence existing between the vices of an excess and a deficiency that abstains in some way from the state of virtuous character (Aristotle, 2014).

### Lord Krishna's notion of 'Mean'

Here the author's wants to draw the attention of readers towards two important verses of Lord Krishna described in *Bhagavad Gita*.

Analysis of the verse-48, Chapter- Two of *Bhagavad Gita*:

'Be steadfast in yoga, perform your duty and abandon all attachment to success and failure.

Such evenness of mind is called yoga'

(*Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 48*)

The above mentioned verse says: be firm or determined in yoga (supreme consciousness) and perform your duty without any attachment towards success and failure. In the corporate context managers need to develop 'calm and equally balanced mind' as a middle ground to manage both success and failure evenly. You have to perform your duty for the sake of duty only. To discharge the duties and responsibilities in a professional setup one should not be too much attached with either 'successes' or 'failure'. These two extremes of our professional life need to be strategically managed with an even, healthy, balancing, calm and pure mind. Chakraborty (1989) elucidated the characteristics of a pure mind. Absence of the following paves the ways towards growing a healthy and pure mind. Absence of jealousy, enviousness, arrogance,, ingratitude towards well wishers (benefactors) , greed and impatience to achieve more money, power and fame, non-fulfilment of promises made, blaming everyone and everything for one's own failure or lapses,

giving least importance to means/methods in achieving the end and many more.

So this balancing, pure and healthy mind acts as a 'mean' or a middle point between these dual extremes like 'success' and 'failure'. The very word 'mean' used by Aristotle has not been used literally by Lord Krishna but his verses clearly shows the existence of a mean or a middle position that has been identified and interpreted by the author as a broader, equally balanced, enlightened pure mind. In this context Vivekananda (1989) has rightly mentioned a stanza in his poem titled 'No One To Blame':

'Good, bad, love, hate, and pleasure, pain Forever linked go, I dream of pleasure without pain, It never, never came: No one but me to blame' (p.175).

Let us make a logical analysis on the subject of *dwandas* (dualities) of our empirical existence like: success and failure, pleasure and pain, light and darkness, good and bad, love and hate and soon so forth. Vivekananda's poem cited above is noteworthy and practical. Human being's empirical existence constitutes of these *dwandas* (dualities) because the characteristics of human 'nature' itself is *dwandwic* (dualistic). Nobody in this world can escape from the clutches of these dualities. Therefore longing to have only the success, light, good, and pleasure and rejecting their opposites like: failure, darkness, bad and pain is impracticable and unrealistic. Here, Chakraborty (1989) pointed out that always dreaming to acquire pleasure and denying pain is the most disturbing and painful saga of human life that is what Vivekananda has highlighted in his poem beforehand. In this materialistic world if one can't escape the force of these dualities, then how he will manage his life effectively. An explanation in this regard has been mentioned below.

If at all one achieves success, it is the nature of man's empirical self to develop vices like proudness, arrogance and in extreme cases egotism

etc. All these vices create a barricade between you and others in the organization. In the absence of your own knowledge numerous enemies will be created around you because you have not shared your success, achievement, glory with others. Yours arrogant, egoistic and narrow-minded self will provoke them to act negatively against you. In many organizations leg pulling, backbiting, stabbing from behind and unproductive gossip becomes the habit of people that projects an unhealthy work climate. Existence of unhealthy work climate is detrimental not only for you but also for others that altogether affect the grandeur of the organization for which it exists. Production, productivity and goodwill of the organization will be at stake that will defame the glory and status of the organization. Here it is worth quoting the great ancient political economist Kautilya's verse in his famous book *Arthashastra*:

'In the happiness of his subjects lies his (kings) happiness; in their welfare his welfare. He shall not consider as good only that which pleases him but treat as beneficial to him whatever pleases his subjects'

- (Rangarajan, 1992).

Secondly, the other extreme of man's empirical existence is 'failure'. When man becomes a failure, there is every possibility that he may be in the state of tension, depression, stress, and in extreme cases may lead to the level of burnout and suicidal tendencies.

The above discussion justifies that neither of the dualities whether 'success' or 'failure' is good for human beings. Man cannot escape from the bondage of these dualities because these dualities are the part and parcel of man's empirical existence or self. So, longing only towards success and rejecting its opposite i.e. failure is impracticable. Vivekananda's view mentioned beforehand is quite appropriate 'I dream of pleasure without pain, it never, never came: No one but me to blame'. Chakraborty (1989) opines that the major part of our stress arises due to lack of training to accept the

'failures' and the over enthusiasm to gaze for pleasure only. Habit of dreaming only pleasure and rejecting pain is highly vulnerable to stress. Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Verse 50) says that 'Pure intelligence is the key to the proper and skillful discharge of duties. This will free you of both good and evil doings. Therefore, try to be in Yoga. Yoga is skill in work'.

In this regard Lord Krishna delivers an innovative solution. He argues that, there is no harm in experiencing these dualities in life but don't develop severe attachment to these dualities. His deep rooted prophetic vision says that to manage these dualities of life or nature one must develop a 'mean' in-between these dualities. Question arises what is that 'mean'. Krishna defines this 'mean' as the evenness of mind and such evenness of mind has been projected as yoga. 'Evenness of mind' has been named differently like: yoga, healthy mind, uncontaminated pure mind and trans-empirical self, supreme-consciousness etc. As man's outward empirical self is overshadowed with these *dwandas* (dualities), Krishna suggested, one has to develop equality of mind or evenness of mind (*samatvam yoga uchyate* we call this evenness of mind as yoga) towards these dualities. Our trans-empirical self is itself deprived of these dualities that can cleanly manage the duality of success and failure efficiently and productively. (Maharaj, n.d.) has adequately interpreted Lord Krishna's verse in his discourse that 'A lotus leaf lives in water, drinks water, but is never touched by water. If you pour water on it, the water rolls off the leaf'.

Chakraborty (1989) has rightly pointed out that this trans-empirical self by definition is stress free because the duality character of empirical self has left it unharmed. This trans-empirical self by nature remain calm and stable and unaffected by the external clamors of the phenomenal world. So such a dynamic self can really create a win and win situation in business irrespective of all odds. This balancing, broader and enlightened trans-empirical self act as a 'mean' or a middle ground that help managers to manage these existential

*dwandas* (dualities) effectively in the corporate arena. Neither he is too much overwhelmed with joy and excitement whenever he achieves success nor he is too much depressed, demotivated and discouraged whenever he confront failure in discharging his duties and responsibilities. In this perspective Subramaniam (2002) have nicely explained the traits of the distinguished space scientist Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in his article 'Kalam as a Colleague' in the following manner: 'other traits of his that have struck his colleagues are that he is a great motivator of men and is a team builder. "He inspires by example. He treats success and failure with equal poise" said Narayan Moorthi'. In this milieu Bhagavad Gita (A.C.Bhaktivedanta, 1972) says that 'he who is without attachment, who does not rejoice when he obtains good, nor lament when he obtains evil, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge' (p.143).

In the corporate context whenever a manager achieves success his trans-empirical self prompts him to share his success, glory and achievement with others in the organization. My achievement and glory are the achievement and glory of all starting from pillar to post in this organization. Without their cooperation, support and encouragement it would not have been possible for me to achieve whatever I achieved. The attitude portrayed above will create a win and win situation where everybody will be the gainer. A positive and healthy atmosphere will prevail in the entire organization. In business we often talk about creating a win and win situation. A healthy executive mind can manage the interest of different stakeholders who have contributed their share for the ultimate success of business. Srinivasu (2012) has beautifully described in *Subhasitani* (wise sayings) that considerations like 'he is mine or he is another's occur only to the narrow minded persons. To the broad-minded persons, the whole world is like a family' (p.2).

So, managers enlightened balanced mind act as a 'mean' or a middle ground between positive and negative forces of the organization. Such a manager

can really establish co-operation and harmony among people that promote better team work with least conflict. Lord Krishna never criticized that two extremes of life like success and failure are bad. But what he wants that, one should not be too much delighted and overjoyed with success which is detrimental to him. He must bring holistic transformation in his attitude. He should consider himself as a mere tool or an instrument in the hand of the divine. Bhagavad Gita (A.C.Bhaktivedanta, 1972) suggests: 'therefore get up and prepare to fight. After conquering your enemies you will enjoy a flourishing kingdom. They are already put to death by my arrangement, and you, O Sabyasacin, can be but an instrument in the fight' (p.564). Krishna was of opinion that in this phenomenal world whenever man attain success his 'active ego' made him feel proud and he himself alone take all credit for the result of his achievement. In extreme cases the above feeling maybe transformed into vices like: egotism, arrogance and selfishness inside. He considers himself as the smartest, most talented and a capable fellow than others within his immediate surroundings. His active ego doesn't allow him to share his success with others that isolates him from others. He can't draw the cooperation, help and support from others in the long run which create a hindrance in the path of establishing a win and win situation. Lord Krishna says a human beings 'active ego' needs to be transformed into a 'passive one'. For exercising 'passive ego' he has to act as an instrument or a tool in the hand of the supreme. An attitude transformation from 'active ego' states to 'passive ego' state will make him more acceptable, and adoptable before others in the organization. Passive ego state will prompt him to reflect that whatever success I achieved is due to the unending blessing of the divine or the supreme. I become successful due to the constant cooperation, support and encouragement of my boss, colleagues, subordinates and other well wishers of the organization. Without their support and cooperation I would not have been successful. Such an attitude will certainly promote a positive, healthy and a win and win work atmosphere in the work setup. In this context DMRC Chief E.

Shreedharan's role is noteworthy. Goyal (2011) posited that:

“The man himself is unruffled. Sreedharan has full faith in his team to carry forward Delhi Metro's sterling tradition. After all, the credit for the project's success must go to the 7000 (seven thousand) employees who work hard every day, he says. This is Sreedharan the leader, who has evolved a system that he believes, can do without him. This is Sreedharan the man, who is self-effacing in his humility and can't be bothered with glory.”

In this context The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (1994) mentioned about a memorable event where a conversation occurred between Great Indian saint Swami Vivekananda and American multimillionaire Mr. Rockefeller.

“Swami Vivekananda told Rockefeller much about his past that was not known to anyone but himself, and made him understand that the money he had already accumulated was not his, that he was only a channel (emphasis added) and that his duty was to do good to the world that God has given him his wealth in order that he might have an opportunity to help people” (p.28).

Analysis of the verse-38, Chapter-two of Bhagavad Gita:

'Being equipoise in happiness and unhappiness, profit and loss, victory and defeat; therefore prepare for battle and in this way you will not incur sinful reaction'

- (*Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 38*)

The verse portrayed above elucidates that one has to project the attribute of equanimity towards the dualities of life like winning and losing, profit and loss, happiness and unhappiness. This equanimity is nothing but calm and even tempered healthy mind that is not vulnerable to elation and dejection. A manager possessed with a healthy and calm mind never perplexed and bothered about the dualities of corporate performance like profit and loss, winning and losing etc. A manager of composed psyche

thinks deeply about the root cause of these corporate dualities. He should make an SWOT analysis. He should pinpoint the major factors responsible for making profit through an effective MIS of the organization. Organizations need to dispense importance to these factors for further enhancement of profit, productivity etc in future. If at all loss made, the company's weakness and grey areas need to be identified by the managers so that preventive measures can be taken. Managers should bestow more importance on preventive strategy than curing strategy. That is why flood prevention strategy is more healthy and productive than administering flood relief, a curing one. According to Director General of Income Tax-Vigilance (2010), preventive vigilance plays a vital role in intensifying the vigilance setup of an organization, as the role of punitive vigilance alone cannot create an infrastructure for efficient functioning of vigilance machinery. There is an urgent need to establish preventive vigilance that is more healthy and productive for the organization. It establishes procedures and systems before hand to restrict the actions of wrong doers and misconduct in different areas of the organization. Comparatively it is more effective than punitive vigilance. Bhagavad Gita (A.C.Bhaktivedanta, 1972) enumerates that 'One is equipped with equanimity in this life discards both merit and sin. Therefore remain established in yoga; yoga results in perfect action'.

Yoga projects the equanimity of mind during the performance of an action. Krishna nicely narrated about another benefit of yoga. If one cultivates equanimity of mind gradually one's action become perfect as the work will be performed with total attention and proficiency, without any abstractions. So the manager need not have to be apprehensive about whether an action will beget merit or sin and profit or loss. The result will, undoubtedly beneficial because of the scientific-philosophy of 'Doctrine of *Karma*'. If an individual started detaching himself from the results or fruits of actions; he will not get attached to both merit and sin also. Both merit and sin, like fruits of an action,

are future centric assumptions, and therefore are not part of *Karma Yoga*. *Karma Yoga* believes in performing the action and not on the results of that action, which is futuristic. In the corporate context managers possessed with yoga or pure intelligence will help them to discharge their duties and responsibilities skillfully. This pure intelligence or the yoga stands as a 'mean' or as a middle point between the duality of merit and sin (good and bad actions). A manager need to remain unaffected from the duality of gaining 'merit or sin'.

### Conclusion

In this article an attempt has been made by the authors to study the application of 'mean' in business organization that is unique and innovative in nature. A study has been made between the virtue ethics theory of the illustrious Greek philosopher Aristotle and the enlightened verses of Indian spiritual godhead Lord Krishna of India. In the world of business, managers shoulder the burden of managing different critical resources for the achievement of organization goal. Among all the critical resources the most critical is the human resource. Why most critical? It is because of the unique nature of this human entity. Rests of the resources are non-human entities like; land, capital, infrastructure and technology etc who do not have life, rationality and complexes. It is a tough task for managers to manage human resources. Managers possessed with a healthy mind and character can manage human resources efficiently and effectively. A healthy mind procreates good character and good character promotes moral virtues. The entire article centered on the development of a healthy and pure mind, good character and noble virtues which are essential ingredients of a good manager. The article focused upon developing 'mean' as an ideal situation that manages the extremes of managerial emotions, actions and desires. Aristotle's virtue ethics theory taught managers how to develop moral virtues as a 'mean' that create a rational and reasonable middle position between two unreasonable vices. The virtue ethics theory of

Aristotle will undoubtedly provide valuable guidelines for future managers how to exercise morality at the work place. Likewise the enlightened verses of Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad Gita* shall indoctrinate the present day managers how to develop an equally balanced healthy mind as a 'mean' to manage existential *dwandas* (dualities) of life like winning and losing, profit and loss, happiness and unhappiness, love and hatred etc in the corporate arena. Whether it is Aristotle's 'mean' as moral virtues or Lord Krishna's 'healthy enlightened mind' will undoubtedly work as a torch bearer before today's corporate executives. The notion of 'mean' will facilitate managers to regulate their actions, emotions and desires reasonably for the promotion of a healthy and productive work climate in an organization. The study has its own limitations because the role of 'mean' in statistics is quite objective whereas in OB it is more subjective. The subject being new the scope for availing the literature has been constricted. Irrespective of the limitations, the study provides ample opportunities for researchers to investigate empirically the relevance of 'mean' and its function in different organizational settings.

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