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## **The Indian Philosophy of Karmayoga and Mission Karmayogi: Ethical Foundations of Good Governance Reforms**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The philosophy of Karmayoga, which espouses the ideal of 'doing selfless services and deeds without personal attachment', has always been a part of Indian philosophical and ethical traditions since time immemorial. The present study shall first attempt to explore the philosophical foundation of Karmayoga as mentioned in the 'Bhagavad Gita' and the 'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda', and then, using it as a theoretical framework, examine the evolution of Mission Karmayogi-Governance Reforms, which was launched by the Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020. Furthermore, it undertakes an explanatory approach to explain the Ideal Vision of Indian civil servants, the six pillars, salient features, institutional structure, implementation frameworks, monitoring and evaluation structures and funding mechanisms of Mission Karmayogi. The final sections of the article outline the expected implications of the programme and assess the Mission's positive outcomes. The main objective of this article is to study the role of the Mission in building public-spirited, emphatic and competent Indian civil servants and government employees whose public service delivery is expected to imbibe the philosophy of Karmayoga to bring welfare to all the Indian citizens.

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## Introduction

Mission Karmayogi, which is also known as the “National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)”, is the biggest bureaucratic reform initiative launched by the DoP&T under the Government of India on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 (Baba, 2020) . The programme aims to bring a paradigm shift in capacity building of civil servants by enhancing their functional, behavioural, and domain competencies, thereby catalysing the transition from a ‘rules-based’ system to the ‘roles-based’ system, and also aims to create a framework of shared resources (Railways, 2021).It focuses on the upgradation of the post-recruitment training mechanism of all the officers and employees at all strata of the Government (Baba, 2020).Another goal of this mission is to foster the quality of citizen-government interface and achieve greater citizens’ satisfaction in all the domains of public services (Railways, 2021). It is also considered a mission to ensure that the Indian civil servants are grounded in “Indian Culture and sensibilities and remain connected, with their roots, while they learn from the best institutions and practices across the world” to cultivate a culture of good governance (Ashok, 2021) .

## Philosophical Foundations of Karma Yoga

In the Bhagavad Gita, it is observed that Lord Shri Krishna explains the concept of ‘Karmayoga’ when he says “, Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Krsna and at the same time continue your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt” (Prabhupada, 2013). Swami Prabhupada explains these words of Sri Krsna when he says, “Sri Krsna does not advise Arjuna simply to remember Him and give up his occupation. No, the Lord never suggests anything impractical. In this material world, in order to maintain the body one has to work.” (Prabhupada, 2013). According to Swami Vivekananda, the word “Karma” is derived from the Sanskrit word “Kri”, which means “to do”, i.e. “all action” is Karma. At the same time, it means “the effects of actions” (Vivekananda, 2016). And according to Vee Jay Attri, “Karma is action, but karma is also the consequence of action”. He also says, “It is the force of nature that balances a cause with a corresponding effect” (Attri, 2013).

After understanding what Karma is, the present study shall attempt to understand the concept of “Karma Yoga”. According to Swami Vivekananda, “Karma Yoga” is the spiritual path to attain the Divine Supreme Soul through one’s work, i.e. karma. He teaches that a Karma Yogi cannot focus on the realm of thoughts only, but shall focus more on the visible and tangible works, and therefore preaches his philosophy of Karma yoga that men should do good works without attachment to the rewards of their good karmas because all miseries and pains in life come from materialistic attachment and expectation of



rewards. And the fear of miseries and pains, in turn, deters men from doing good Karma. A Karma Yogi should work because it is in his nature that he feels right and good to work for the good of others, and he has no hope of reward beyond this. He is a giver to humanity and never cares to receive any reward for the good karma he gives. In this way, he is free from the bondage of miseries and pains caused by attachment (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda , 2016).

In the context of Mission Karmayogi, which was initiated by the Government of India in 2020, it aims to develop civil servants and government employees who serve society and humanity as a whole by implementing the principles of inclusive and public-centric good governance (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).

### **Mission Karmayogi: Emergence and Development**

The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, in its official booklet, mentions that the Mission Karmayogi evolved through the following continuum of stages (Ministry of Personnel, 2020):

- In 2014, the Government of India launched the DoPT Competency Framework.
- In 2017, the COMMIT (Comprehensive Online Modified Modules on Induction Training for Sub-district level frontline functionaries) was initiated.
- In 2018, the iGOT Learning Platform was put into operation.
- In 2019, the first version of Aarambh was unveiled.
- Finally, in the year 2020, Mission Karmayogi was commenced by the Department of Personnel and Training.

### **Rationale and Structural Pressures for Mission Karmayogi and Governance Reforms**

In this section, the present study shall analyse the rationale and multitude of structural challenges and bottlenecks in bureaucracy, which necessitated the government of India to operationalise the programme of Mission Karma Yogi.

The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions identifies the diverse and fragmented training landscape, and also mentions that the current training programmes are sporadic and mainly concentrate on individual and intermittent innovations (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). Secondly, there is the development of stereotyped working in silos or compartments at the departmental level, which prevents the evolution of India's unified national development aspirations and priorities (Baba, 2020). This results in the duplication of efforts and redundancy, and also creates barriers to the exchange of



knowledge and collaboration (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). Third, there is also a lack of a lifelong and continuous training and learning environment for the government employees (Baba, 2020). Lastly, there exist inconsistencies and incoherence in training priorities, competency and pedagogy, which result in challenges in finding government employees with the right competencies and roles for the appropriate tasks (Baba, 2020). This challenge, therefore, highlights the need to move from the ‘rules-based’ human resource management system to the ‘roles-based’ human resource management system and the allocation of the right officials with the right competencies for the right roles.

In a study conducted by Gurram Ashok, he mentions that Paul H. Appleby identified “the rigidity, lack of administrative action, and human relations orientation” in the cadres of public administration (Ashok, 2021). It is also observed that institutions, legal provisions and official behaviours still reflect the legacy of colonial bureaucracy even in post-independent India. This is rightly mentioned by Upadhyay when he said, “Sadly, in India, in the recent past the folklore of collector despotism that reminisce the local episodes of brutish and boorish treatment of natives by Gora Sahibs fed the oppressive instincts and shaped the career choices of perpetually powerless middle and lower classes” (Ashok, 2021). The main challenge of the Indian bureaucratic institutions just after independence was to adapt them to the system of Parliamentary form of government and federal Constitution, and also to make the bureaucrats promote electoral democracy and economic development founded on the principles of liberty, equity, justice and fraternity. The Administrative Reform Commissions were set up to undertake reforms in the Indian bureaucracy, but they have not yet reached the desired results. Furthermore, the rapid changes in India’s demography and the favourable demographic dividend demand a new approach to public administration. The civil servants need to be equipped with new skill sets conducive to modern roles and information communication technology, and these modern scientific technology skills will help in bringing social-economic and political transformations in the lives of the poor, worse-off and marginalised sections, as evident in the new governmental schemes like the Direct to Beneficiary Technology, Jan Dhan, etc. The honourable PM Narendra Modi envisions the Indian bureaucrats to have personal qualities of “Transparent and Tech-enabled, Creative and Constructive, Imaginative and Innovative, Proactive and Polite, Professional and Progressive, and Energetic and Enabling” in carrying out their public services” (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). It is in this regard that Gurram Ashok, in his article on Mission Karmayogi, emphasises that the Mission Karmayogi will help in the inner engineering as well as in building a positive outlook of the bureaucrats, which will definitely produce “right actions for the right purpose”. This initiative of the Government of India will help in bridging the gap between policy formulation and its execution, which will foster the achievement of Niti



Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of "ease of living" and "ease of doing business". In a developing country like India, the governance of welfare services for the citizens is critical in bringing social-economic and political developments, and it is in these roles that the civil servants have much to give. He also cited that F.Afridi emphasises that the quality of public service delivery will have its influence on economic growth, as human capital formation and poverty alleviation to a large extent are contributed by the good governance of the State (Ashok, 2021). Therefore, it can be inferred that Mission Karmayogi aims at developing civil servants who are "by the people, of the people, for the people" in spirit for the realisation of the New India.

### **PM Narendra Modi's Reformist Vision for India's Civil Services**

Honourable PM Narendra Modi envisions the following elements as integral qualities of Indian Civil Servants-Imaginative and Innovative, Proactive and Polite, Professional and Progressive, Energetic and Enabling, Creative and Constructive, Transparent and Tech-enabled (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). The vision set by the Prime Minister emphasises that "all departments must attempt to leverage the upcoming 75 years of independence, which can foster and inspire citizens to make a contribution for the betterment of the nation" (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). Mission Karmayogi is envisioned as one of the largest capacity-building programmes for government officials in the world. First, it will cover approximately 46 lakh government officials at the Central level and then cover 1.5 crore government officials, approximately, at the Central and State Levels and the local bodies (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).

### **Salient Features of Mission Karmayogi**

The salient features of Mission Karmayogi, as delineated by governmental sources and academic works, are as follows:

- 1) 'Rule-based' to 'Role-based' Human Resource Management: it means "alignment of civil servants' work allocation by matching their competencies as per the transition from 'Rule-based' to 'Role-based' Human Resource Management" (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). This will enable a smooth transition from 'Rule-based' to 'Role-based' Human Resource Management.
- 2) Framework of Roles, Activities and Competencies (FRAC) approach: it will enable "Civil service positions to a Framework of Roles, Activities and Competencies (FRAC) approach and to develop and provide learning content relevant to the identified FRAC in every Government entity" (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).



- 3) Behavioural, Functional and Domain Competencies: this will facilitate “all civil servants to continuously build and strengthen their behavioural, functional and domain competencies in their self-driven and mandated learning paths” (Ashok, 2021).
- 4) On-Site Learning to complement Off-Site Learning: this ensures “training civil servants on-site so that they have hands-on experience” (Ashok, 2021).
- 5) Resource investment towards co-creation and sharing of a common ecosystem of learning: it will help “all the Central ministries and departments and their organisations to invest their resources towards co-creation and sharing the collaborative and common ecosystem of learning through an annual subscription for every employee” (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).
- 6) Ecosystem of shared training infrastructure: it will help “civil servants to adapt to an ecosystem of shared learning materials, institutions and personnel” (Ashok, 2021).
- 7) Partnership with learning content creators: it will foster “partnership with the best-in-class learning content creators, including training institutions, universities, start-ups and individual experts” (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).
- 8) iGOT Karmayogi data analytics: This data analytics, based on feedback, will help to “identify reforms in the areas of administration and policy implementation and mapping competencies” (Ashok, 2021).

Based on the above findings, it can be inferred that the Mission Karmayogi will help in the improvement of Human Resource Management, which in turn, will enhance the governance for the citizens’ welfare and reach the goals envisioned by India’s founding fathers.

### **Six Pillars of Mission Karmayogi**

The National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (Mission Karma Yogi) is grounded on six pillars, which are as follows (Railways, 2021):

- 1) Policy Framework: It deals with new training policies that focus on continuous learning and enhancing competencies.
- 2) Competency Framework: It deals with the transition from ‘Rule to Role’ with the indigenous competency framework.
- 3) Institutional Framework: There is overall supervision by the PMHR Council.
- 4) Digital Learning Framework: There is iGOT Karmayogi, which is a comprehensive online learning platform.
- 5) eHRMS: It deals with a strategic human resource management system.



- 6) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: It deals with continuous, data-driven and real-time monitoring of performance.

### **Institutional Structure for Mission Karmayogi**

As per the article of IAS Baba and the notification order of the Ministry of Railways, the Mission Karmayogi has the following four Institutional Structures:

- 1) PM-led Human Resource Council: This Council will include the Chief Ministers of the states, the Union Cabinet Ministers, Think-tanks, Industry and Business Leaders, eminent national and global Intellectuals and Academicians. This Council will provide the approval and also review the capacity building programmes of the civil servants.

The mandatory tasks of the Council are as follows:

- It is an apex body that provides the strategic direction and drives the programme.
  - It will provide the approval and the monitoring of the capacity-building programmes of the Civil Servants.
  - It will review “the reports submitted by the Capacity Building Commission” (Baba, 2020).
- 2) Cabinet Secretary Coordination Unit: This unit is constituted of the select secretaries and the cadre controlling authorities, and the unit is headed by the Cabinet Secretary. The mandatory task of the Unit is to monitor the progress and the implementation of the plans.
  - 3) Capacity Building Commission: This Commission will include specialised domain experts and global professionals.

The mandatory tasks of the Commission include the following:

- It will “prepare annual Capacity Building Plans and also seek approval from the PM HR Council” (Baba, 2020).
- It will audit the available human resources of the government.
- It will harmonise the training standards with the capacity-building programmes.
- It will “create shared faculty and resources” (Baba, 2020).
- It will play an overall supervisory role over the Central training institutions.
- It will “established norms for the common mid-career training programmes” (Baba, 2020)
- It will perform an analysis of data from the iGOT-Karmayogi platform.



- It will draw the annual Human Resource Report on the progress status of civil servants and target achievements (Railways, 2021).
- 4) Karmayogi Bharat Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV): It is in the form of a not-for-profit company, which is a 100% government-owned entity for the execution of the Mission. “A mandatory subscription-based Revenue Model which enables the participation of all the ministries, departments, entities of the Central government and willing State governments has been designed to partly fund the Mission” (Railways, 2021). “The Department of Personnel and Training have fixed a sum of Rs431 per employee of the concerned Ministry or Department or Organisation or Agency of the Central Government as enrolment fee for the first year of subscription” (Baba, 2020).

The main functions of the Karmayogi Bharat SPV are as follows-

- It will own and operate the iGOT Karmayogi online platform on behalf of the Indian government.
- It will also operate the content ecosystem of the iGOT platform.
- It will administer “the assessment and certification ecosystem” (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).
- It will perform “telemetry data based scoring” for monitoring and evaluating the progress of civil servants (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building(NPCSCB)- "Mission Karmayogi").
- It will also assess feedback driven by Artificial Intelligence and a measurable platform.
- It will deliver Capacity Building Programmes of Civil Servants in other countries as well (Baba, 2020).
- It is the “ownership of all the intellectual property rights on behalf of the Government of India” (Baba, 2020).

For the successful implementation of Mission Karmayogi, the Department of Personnel and Training launched the iGOT Karmayogi Digital Platform in 2020 (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).

### **iGOT Karmayogi Digital Platform**

According to the booklet released by the Department of Personnel and Training in 2020, the programmes of Mission Karmayogi will be provided by setting up an integrated online training platform called the iGOT digital platform. It is a “continuous online training platform” which will provide continuous training to all government servants from the post of assistant secretary to secretary, as per their domain areas. It will also make available training courses from international universities to learn at



any point in time. The iGOT platform is also aimed to “evolve into a vibrant and world-class marketplace” for learning content, where meticulously designed and developed e-learning materials will be made available (Baba, 2020).

### **Operationalisation of Mission Karmayogi Within Three Frameworks**

As mentioned in the notification order of the Railway Ministry dated 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Mission Karmayogi will be implemented in the following three frameworks:

- 1) “Content/Course creation and publishing on iGOT digital platform”: This content component of the iGOT digital platform will play a vital role in the feasibility of the Mission. The content to be onboarded will have to be engaging as well as of high quality in order to have a substantial impact on the enhancement of the capacity building and competency of the learners. Therefore, “learner-centred, action-oriented and transformative content” has to be uploaded on this iGOT digital platform (Railways, 2021).

The two broad dimensions will guide the kinds of content that will be onboarded on this platform-

- “Learning Urgency”: it will have the following elements, such as mandatory learnings aimed to meet the competency and capacity building requirements of a role, recommended learnings to enable the individual officials and government employees to progress in their career and enhance expertise, and open courses to help learners increase their knowledge and skills (Railways, 2021).
- “Learning Model”: contents will be developed in the form of “face to face classroom based learning, flipped learning, online courses, online remote classrooms and blended courses” (Railways, 2021).

The contents can be in the form of any one or the combination of lecturers, videos, webinars, interactive, presentations, assessments, case studies, quizzes, simulations, rules, acts, research papers, journals, etc. in PPTs and PDFs formats, online links and websites (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building(NPCSCB)- "Mission Karmayogi"). The structure of the “contents will be Resource>Module>Course>Programs, in which the smallest learning entity will be ‘resource’ which will be consumed by a learner” (Railways, 2021).

Four-level key players in each Ministry or Department, such as Administrator, Content Creator, Content Reviewer and Content Publisher, will undertake the process “from authorisation of course creation to its publication” on the iGOT Karmayogi digital platform (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). The task of the ‘content creator’ is to develop adaptable content on the iGOT digital platform, which will be



reviewed and verified by the ‘content reviewer’ and then published on the iGOT by the ‘content publisher’ (Railways, 2021).

- 2) “Onboarding of Ministries/ Departments/ Government entities on iGOT platform”: It refers to “the process of enlisting users or learners on the iGOT digital platform” (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). Each department must complete the prerequisites, such as enlisting users/ learners with their relevant data and roles of those who will be onboarded on the platform (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building(NPCSCB)- "Mission Karmayogi").
- 3) “Rollout of Framework of Role Activities and Competencies (FRAC)”: It is the “exercise for defining the FRACs, including the skills”, which will be done and integrated with the iGOT digital platform (Railways, 2021). This exercise also includes defining the contents of various government officials' and employees' roles and activities in their official positions (Ministry of Personnel, 2020). The “behavioural, functional and domain” skills, capabilities, knowledge and attitudes to be learned and developed by the officials will be uploaded on this iGOT digital platform and will enable them to carry out their responsibilities (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building(NPCSCB)- "Mission Karmayogi").

### **Monitoring and Evaluation Architecture of Mission Karmayogi**

As per the booklet released by the Ministry of Personnel and Training on Mission Karmayogi and the article published by IASbaba, the monitoring and evaluation of all the users, i.e. the targeted learners, will be done on the basis of key performance indicators.

- “Prime Ministers’ Dashboard”: it will show annual score cards and departments’ rankings as well as “real-time reporting of capacity building key performance indicators” (Baba, 2020).
- “Capacity Building Plans”: each department will submit annual plans drawn based on national goals (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).
- “Annual state of Civil Services Report”: it is a consolidated performance report for a year of the whole civil services with major emphasis on their contributions to and achievements of national goals and progress (Baba, 2020).
- “Independent Audits”: third-party auditing of the Mission programmes and their achievements of progress will be conducted, supplementing the “regular audit and quality assurance” which will be conducted by the Capacity Building Commission (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building(NPCSCB)- "Mission Karmayogi").



## **Fiscal Allocation and Resource Mobilisation for Mission Karmayogi**

It is observed in the article of IASbaba that a sum of Rs510.86 crore will be allocated over a period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25 to cover approximately 46 lakh central employees. The allocation expenditure will also be partly financed by multilateral assistance amounting to \$50 million (Baba, 2020).

### **Expected Policy and Administrative Impacts**

According to the Ministry of Personnel and Training, the government of India expects the following outcomes of Mission Karmayogi:

- “Capacity Building Landscape”: The Mission will help in the 1) integration of all the government capacity building landscapes, 2) establishment of common and shared resource architectures across all the government institutions at the national, state and local levels, 3) re-vitalization of civil service and government employees’ training institutions (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).
- “Civil Service”: It will enable 1) in enhancing the competency and capacity of the civil servants for their roles, 2) in developing a lifelong and continuous learning-training ecosystem for the civil servants, and 3) in establishing directed and guided learning paths for the civil servants (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building(NPCSCB)- "Mission Karmayogi").
- “Citizens”: The Mission will help in 1) standardising the public service delivery of the Government, 2) making the government responsive and citizen-centric (Baba, 2020).
- “Government”: Mission Karmayogi will help in bringing 1) transparency and accountability of the government, 2) standardisation and harmonisation of the government officials’ capacity, competency and also in their public service delivery (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).

### **Strengths of Mission Karmayogi**

Based on the study of the above findings drawn from governmental and academic sources, it is observed that the provisions and salient features of Mission Karmayogi have the following merits:

- 1) It will help in the democratisation of civil service as it is a “silo-less” capacity building programme.
- 2) “Right person with right competencies at the right position” is ensured with its competency-oriented human resource management policy (Baba, 2020) .



- 3) The initiative is designed as a holistic capacity-building programme at the individual, procedural and institutional levels for high-quality public service delivery.
- 4) It will enhance the expertise, skills, and knowledge of the civil servants, transforming them into true people's leaders and specialised experts.
- 5) The iGOT platform allows civil servants to learn from the best international institutions and practices (Ministry of Personnel, 2020).
- 6) The Mission will help in bringing better governance as it will produce civil servants who are more productive, efficient, accountable and responsive to the welfare of the citizens (Ashok, 2021).
- 7) The work culture of government ministries and departments will be improved as the Mission lays special emphasis on improving the personality aspect of civil servants.
- 8) It is a platform to undertake a uniform approach in administering and building capacity-building programmes for the civil servants (Baba, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Based on the above study, it can be inferred that Mission Karmayogi is a capacity-building programme for the Indian Civil Servants and government employees, which lays special emphasis on their capacity-building as well as inner-engineering of personality to make them public-spirited and highly competent for their roles. This will ensure emulating high-standard Indian values and a citizen-centric outlook in delivering public service. The existing gulf between government servants and citizens will be eliminated, thereby improving public satisfaction and bringing a pleasant and hassle-free experience to the citizens. It will foster an era of a new India where corruption and inequalities cease to exist and “sarvodaya” of all is guaranteed.

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