

## Enriching Management Studies through Indian Wisdom

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**Abstract:** India has been a land of immense cultural virtuosity which gets reflected in its normal and day-to-day management practices. This paper explores the role of the Indian epistemology as exemplified in its creative writings and other cultural forms of expression in the study of Management sciences. It is our hypothesis that the study of Management, especially in the Indian context, can be further enriched by exposing it to ethical and cultural practices in the curriculum. With the help of literary works and also through an analysis of the traditional and classical wisdom available in the form of epithets and aphorisms, we have concluded that a new theory based on Indian philosophical wisdom can be supplemented to the existing scholarship on the Management Studies which, with its humanitarian approach, will broaden the scope and aim of this area of study.

**Keywords:** Wisdom, Vedas, Culture, Management.

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### I. Indian wisdom

Even a cursory glance at the cultural and epistemological traditions in India indicates the general proclivity of Indians observing austerity and economic prudence in day-to-day affairs of life. Both classical and folk traditions of wisdom support the idea that the natural resources should not be wasted in simply gratifying our luxurious desires of life. Most of the religious traditions including Buddhism and Jainism have negated the extravagances of life as a sin. According to the Buddha, “Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth, so virtue appears from food deeds, and wisdom appears from a pure and peaceful mind. To walk safely through the maze of human life, one needs the light of wisdom and the guidance of virtue” (Buddha, 2016). As such, the humans should not harbour any illusion regarding their ultimate possessiveness over the resources of the Mother Earth which is to be treated with utmost reverence. The Nature and its irrevocable and precious resources have to be protected for the future generations as an invaluable gift from the ancestors. The physical resources should be utilized in a controlled way so that everybody’s desires could be fulfilled. One can also recall Mahatma Gandhi’s famous words, “Nature can fulfil all your needs but one of your greed”. The scriptures like the Bhagwad Gita have also called for a management of these resources in order to ensure their equitable distribution. All these facts indicate that the seeds of management have been lying dormant in their various cultural practices. With the natural resources depleting very fast, it is high time we revived those cultural practices which have long given succour and sustenance to the economy of the ancient Indians. The lessons learnt from them can be aptly utilised to enrich the modern Management Studies the world over.

The ancient Indian civilization is oldest among the world’s other civilizations and distinguished by its profound thought and wisdom. It is identified with various names including the Vedic civilization, Sindhu-Saraswati civilization and even the Aryan civilization (AncientIndianwisdom, 2016). The paper will focus on the possibilities of benefits that can be drawn from the cultural practices and traditional wisdom coming down through ages in the form of different scriptures as well as the popular folk lore of the country.

### Management in Ancient India

Management, particularly in the Indian perspective, can be defined as an act through which we draw maximum benefits out of minimal resources. Ever since the beginning of civilization, the ancient Indians had already equipped themselves with a well defined system of Management as reflected in their warfare, education, bureaucracy and the finances. The administration of those universities can be cited as an instance of a very complex management system that the Indians can still boast of. The great war of Mahabharata is a unique example of a very advanced system of war management. There are indications that these organizations used to be run by virtue of some of the excellent principles related to Management, mostly contained in the ShrimadBhagwad Gita, Manusmriti, various Jatakas and Buddhist texts, the treatise written by Chanakya-Chanakya Niti. These texts have significantly influenced the modern Management practices in India.

### **Duties described by the Vedas for Management of Work-life culture**

Man has to be guided by the directives of the Vedas. Of the three Vedas Rig, Yajur and Sama the Rig Veda contains the essence of all the three. Its principal teaching is Vinaya and Vidheyata (humility and duty). The Yajur Veda enjoins the quality of Dharana (steadfastness). This means that whatever difficulties you may encounter, whatever hardship you experience, you should fulfill your duty with fortitude and forbearance. Through both these means you can develop your human qualities to the highest extent. The essential teaching of the Sama Veda is Vignatha (Propriety). This tells you how to conduct yourself with any person, how to behave towards elders and superiors, how to treat guests, how to approach God and what is the right behaviour in any situation. These three Vedas (Trayee) provide the basic rules for right living: Vidheyata (Devotion to duty); dharana (steadfastness) and Vignata (Propriety) (Sssbpt, 2016).

### **The laws of Manu or Manavdharma**

Manusmriti proposes numerous laws to minutely govern human life and conduct as applicable to each individual according to her or his social class, duties and responsibilities. Their purpose is to inculcate discipline, provide a basis for the rulers to enforce lawful conduct, and ensure the orderly progression of the world through righteous conduct and observation of obligatory duties by individuals who have chosen for themselves the life of a householder, or that of a renunciant. The power to enforce the laws is carefully distributed among the rulers and the guardians of society who assist him in decision making. It recognizes the corrupting and deluding influence of power over the mind and cautions the kings to exercise their judgment with great care to avoid sinful karma and harmful consequences for themselves and for the world. The laws that were proposed by Manu to govern human conduct and society reflect the conditions, needs and values of the times in which they were formulated. Most of them do not fit into the present day value system. They acknowledge prevailing social and gender inequalities as natural conditions of human existence, and propose laws to govern the behaviour of individuals without providing scope for any changes that time may bring in the conditions of society or the lives of people (Hinduwebsite, 2016).

The law of cause and effect forms an integral part of Hindu philosophy. This law is termed as 'karma', which means to 'act'. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines it as the "sum of person's actions in one of his successive states of existence, viewed as deciding his fate for the next". In Sanskrit karma means "volitional action that is undertaken deliberately or knowingly". This also dovetails self-determination and a strong will power to abstain from inactivity. Karma is the differential that characterizes human beings and distinguishes him from other creatures of the world.

### **The Natural Law**

The theory of karma harps on the Newtonian principle that every action produces an equal and opposite reaction. Every time we think or do something, we create a cause, which in time will bear its corresponding effects. This cyclical cause and effect generates the concepts of sansara (or the world) and birth and reincarnation. It is the personality of a human being or the jivatman- with its positive and negative actions - that causes karma. Karma could be both the activities of the body or the mind, irrespective of the consideration whether the performance brings fruition immediately or at a later stage. However, the involuntary or the reflex actions of the body cannot be called karma.

### **Your Karma Is Your Own Doing**

Every person is responsible for his or her acts and thoughts, so each person's karma is entirely his or her own. Occidentals see the operation of karma as fatalistic. But that is far from true since it is in the hands of an individual to shape his own future by schooling his present. Hindu philosophy, which believes in life after death, holds the doctrine that if the karma of an individual is good enough, the next birth will be rewarding, and if not, the person may actually devolve and degenerate into a lower life form. In order to achieve good karma it is important to live life according to dharma or what is right.

### **Three Kinds of Karma**

According to the ways of life chosen by a person, his karma can be classified into three kinds. "The satvik karma, which is without attachment, selfless and for the benefit of others; the rajasik karma, which is selfish where the focus is on gains for oneself; and the tamasik karma, which is undertaken without heed to consequences, and is supremely selfish and savage."

According to Swami Sivananda, of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh classifies karma into three kinds on the basis of action and reaction: "Prarabdha (so much of past actions as has given rise to the present birth), Sanchita (the balance of past actions that will give rise to future births - the storehouse of accumulated actions), Agami or Kriyamana (acts being done in the present life)."

According to the Scriptures: “The discipline of unattached action (Nishkâma Karma) can lead to salvation of the soul. So they recommend that one should remain detached while carrying out his duties in life.” (Hinduism, 2016).

### **Suitability of Sayings/Doha's (lyrical verse-format) of Saint Kabir in Management of Life and Work.**

Kabir was 15<sup>th</sup>-century Indian mystic poet and saint whose writings influenced Hinduism's Bhakti movement. His early life was in a Muslim family, but he was strongly influenced by his teacher, the Hindu bhakti leader Ramananda in Varanasi, known for devotional Vaisnavism (Wikipedia, Kabir, 2016). He was born in India in 1398 AD. Kabir contributed to the Bhakti Movement and is considered a pioneer of Bhakti along with Ravidas, Farid, and Namdev. Some relevant Dohas are as follows:

1. Kabira Garva Naa Kijiye Kabahu Naa Hasiye

Koye Aja Ye Naav Samudra Me Naa Jane Kya Hoye

“Do not feel proud. Do not mock at anybody. Your life is like a boat in the sea. Who, can say what may happen at any time.”

Lesson 1: One should treat all his co-workers and other persons in life equally rather than to dominate them by showing the extra power and knowledge.

2. Kabira Teri Jhopadi Gal Katiyan Ke Paas Jaisi Karani Vaisi Bharani Tu Kyu Hua Udaas

“One reaps what one sows”

Lesson 2: Always do work ethically and with full hardship and honesty because in organization and in personal life the positive results can be only gained by following the right path.

3. Kaal Kare So Aaj Kar, Aaj Kare So Ub Pal Mein Pralaya Hoyegi, Bahuri Karoge Kub

“Tomorrow's works do today, today's work now if the moment is lost, the work is done how.”

Lesson 3: One should complete his work on time and be Punctual because time is unpredictable.

4. Aisee Vani Boliye, MunKa Aapa Khoye Apna Tan Sheetal Kare, Auran Ko Sukh Hoye

“Speak such words, sans ego's ploy Body remains composed, giving the listener joy.”

Lesson 4: One should always speak soft words and do not create a conflicting situation. The speech should be always motivated with full honesty and enthusiasm

5. Chaah miti, chinta miti, manwa beparwaah Jisko kuch nahi chahiye, woh Shahen ke shah.

“If your wishes end, then your anxiety and trouble will also end, and your mind will be fearless. One who doesn't need anything, he is a real king.”

Lesson 5:- One should not be attached to the materialistic and perform his /her duties to satisfy social and personal requirements rather than to be mad about fulfilling the wishes.

6. Bada hua toh kya hua jaise ped khajur, Panthi ko chaya nahi, phal lage ati door.

“What happened if you achieve heights, but you don't have sweetness and love like Khajur tree (date), which do not yield any value either by giving shelter from sun rays and also its fruits are also far away,”

Lesson 6: One should be down to earth and well behaved whether he has achieved high goals in life because the support of family members and friends is must for existence.

7. Guru govind dono khade, kaake lagu paaye Balihari guru aapno, govind diyo bataye.

“Teacher and Lord are both there, whom to be adore. But teacher you are great, who told us that god is greater.”

Lesson 7: One should respect his team leader or Boss in the organization because a leader is person who helps his team members to achieve the target given to them which ultimately boost their career.

8. Sabase Laghuta Hi Bhali Laghuta Se Sab Hoye Jasa Dwitiya Ka Chandrama Shashi Lahai Sab Koye.

“It's always better to be humble. Humbleness is an effective way of getting results. The second day of the moon (after the no moon day) is loved by all.”

Lesson 8: One should be polite and modest while behaving with others because this is the only ways he /she can gain respect, love and affection and also one of requirement of being emotionally fit and give mental strength.

9. Jaisa Bhojan Kijiye Vaisa Hi Mana Hoye, Jaisa Paani Pijiye Taisi Vani Hoye.

“Your consumed food affects your mind. Your voice is the reflection of the drinks you have.”

Lesson 9: One should eat healthy and nutritious food in life because food is the only source of energy and it has direct impact on our body, mind and nature. We are become what we eat.

10. Chandan Jaisa Sadhu Hai Sarp Hi Sab Sansar Taake Ang Lapta Rahe Mana Me Nahi Vikar.

“A good person is like a sandal tree and the world is like a snake. The snake resides on the sandal tree but the sandal tree does not become poisonous to any extent.”

Lesson 10: One should always make good friends and be in the company of good people. Because to achieve goals in life, good company is must which always guide and shows a right path in case of any difficulty.

11. Kabira Dheeraj Ke Dhare Haathi Man Bhar Khaaye Tuk Tuk Bekar Me Svan Ghare Ghar Jaaye

“As the elephant has patience it eats till its mind is satisfied. But the impatient dog runs here and there in the hope of food.”

Lesson 11: One should have tolerance in life and act patiently in work as well as in personal life because it is really helpful in big problematic conditions (Vidyalaya, 2016).

### Implication of Bharithari's in Niti-sataka(Moral conduct) in Modern Management:

Bharithari was a Sanskrit author (5<sup>th</sup> Century CE) who had written the Satakatraya, a work of Sanskrit poetry, comprising three collections of about 100 stanzas each. Bhartrihari's poetry is an aphoristic poetry and has bliss of literature. It has comments on the social mores of the time. The collected work is known as Śatakatraya "the three śatakas or 'hundreds' ('centuries') (Wikipedia, Bhartrhari 2016). Among these three Satakas, some Shalokas from the Niti-sataka(Moral conduct) has been described here and their significance in Modern Management.

#### 1. Importance of knowledge

हर्तुर्याति न गोचरं किमपि शं पुष्पाति यत्सर्वदा ह्यर्थिभ्यः प्रतिपाद्यमानमनिशं प्राप्नोति वृद्धिं पराम् ।  
कल्पान्तेष्वपि न प्रयाति निधनं विद्याख्यमन्तर्धनं येषां तान्प्रति मानमुज्झत नृपाः कस्तैः सह स्पर्धते ॥

Oh Kings! Castoff your pride before those who possess the secret treasure of wisdom. A treasure which remains invisible to a thief and which always augments some unique indescribable happiness, which largely increases even though constantly given to those who desire it and which is not destroyed even at the time of universal of destruction. Who can ever compete with such persons?

#### 2. Importance of good communication skills

केयूरा न विभूषयन्ति पुरुषं हारा न चन्द्रोज्ज्वला न स्नानं न विलेपनं न कुसुमं नालङ्कृता मूर्धजाः। वाण्येका समलंकरोति पुरुषं  
या संस्कृता धार्यते क्षीयते खलु भूषणानि सततं वाग्भूषणं भूषणम् ॥

Bracelets do not adorn a man; neither do the necklaces shining bright like the moon nor bathing in scented waters; not anointment with fragrant pastes; not the flowers; nor decorated hair; but it is refined and polished speech alone which adorns him. All other ornaments are destructible and will diminish with time but ornament of refined and polished speech remains forever.

#### 3. For Inner Strength, will power and motivation

अम्भोजिनिवनवासविलासमेव, हंसस्य हन्ति नितरां कुपितो विधाता ।  
न त्वस्य दुग्धजलभेदविधौ प्रसिद्धां, वैदग्ध्यकीर्तिमपहर्तुमसौ समर्थः ॥

Highly irritated Brahma can destroy for the swan the enjoyment of residing in beds of lotuses, but he cannot deprive him of his fame about the natural skill of separating milk from water.

#### 4. To get Name and fame and Social recognition

दाक्षिण्यं स्वजने, दया परजने, शाट्यं सदा दुर्जने प्रीतिः साधुजने, नयो नृपजने, विद्वज्जनेऽप्यार्जवम् ।  
शौर्यं शत्रुजने, क्षमा गुरुजने, नारीजने धूर्तता ये चैवं पुरुषाः कलासु कुशलास्तेष्वेव लोकस्थितिः ॥

Indulgence towards one's own people, kindness to strangers, caution with respect to the wicked, love for the good people, politic behaviour with kings, straightforwardness in dealings with the learned, bravery with enemies, forbearance towards elders, shrewdness with regard to the fair sex; those who are versed in these and the like arts are the persons on whom rests the preservation of social order.

#### 5. To perform or accomplishment of a Task/Job role

प्रारभ्यते न खलु विघ्नभयेन नीचैः प्रारभ्य विघ्नविहता विरमन्ति मध्याः ।  
विघ्नैः पुनः पुनरपि प्रतिहन्यमानाः प्रारब्धमुत्तमजना न परित्यजन्ति ॥

Weak minded people do not begin anything at all through fear of difficulties, mediocre begin a work but abandon it no sooner obstacle come in their way, but strong minded person though repeatedly hindered by difficulties do not give up what they have once begun.

#### 7. Never compromises in difficult and odd situation

क्षुत्क्षामोऽपि जराकुशोऽपि शिथिलप्राणोऽपि कष्टं दशाम् आपन्नोऽपि विपन्नदीधितिरिति प्राणेषु नश्यत्स्वपि । मत्तेभे  
न्द्रविभिन्नकुम्भपिशितग्रासैकबद्धस्पृहः किं जीर्णं तृणमन्ति मानमहतामग्रेसरः केसरी ॥

The lion, the foremost among the proud, has unparalleled eagerness for swallowing a mouthful out of the temples broken for himself of a great intoxicated elephant; does he although emaciated by hunger, weakened by old age, almost exhausted and come to a miserable plight, with all his vigor gone, and even on the verge of death ever feed upon withered grass? This is the very nature of the people who are strong. Age is not a deterring factor for the valorous men.

### **8. Importance of attributes to a person**

क्षान्तिश्चेत्कवचेन किं, किमिरिभिः क्रोधोऽस्ति चेद्देहिनां ज्ञातिश्चेदनलेन किं यदि सुहृद्व्यौषधिः किं फलम् । किं सर्पैर्यदि दुर्जनः, किमु धनैर्वृद्धानवद्या यदि व्रीडा चेत्किमु भूषणैः सुकविता यद्यस्ति राज्येन किम् ॥

If man has patience what need has he of Armour, if he has anger what other enemy need he fears. If he has relatives what need of any fire, if he has a true friend what use has he of medicines of potent virtue; if there be bad people around him why should he fear serpents; if he has flawless learning what worth are riches to him, if he has sense of shame what other ornament does he require; if he has good poems what pleasure can he have from a kingdom (Hindisahitya, 2016).

## **II. Conclusion**

A scholarly study of the scriptures and other creative writings of India can be significantly helpful in understanding the modern management practices as also in enriching the Management Studies in modern times. This knowledge available in those ancient writings and cultural practices can be further utilised towards developing new paradigms of Management in modern times. The texts and folk wisdom quoted above will certainly broaden the scope and reach of Management as a branch of study.

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