



Contemporary Relevance of Ancient Indian scriptures pertaining to Management Concepts

Ramanathan Srinivasan

Former Dean, CARE Group of
Institutions, Trichy, Tamilnadu

drsramnath2k21@outlook.com

Abstract

Modern management follow a common trend to refer ancient Indian literary works in order to discover solutions to contemporary issues which are pertaining to health, happiness, wellbeing, behavior, business management, moral related issues, fighting corruption, space missions, waging or winning a war and so on. Many are trying to find remedies and consolation in our ancient literature, religious books, sermons of saints, philosophers, and writers for our problems/issues. Every day people witness new serials on TV, new books and articles on our Epics, religious works, religious heroes, Vaastu Sastra, Astrology, Tarot Cards, Numerology, Yoga and so on. In fact, the ancient classical literature is now being considered as a treasure house of information on various aspects of life. That is the reason why Indians are returning to their roots and studying and trying to follow the traditional knowledge in their modern lives. This paradigm shift has led to the studies of the Smritis, the Vedas, the Upanishads, Puranas, the Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, and Bhagavata Gita. The Bhagavad Gita provides the path of Leadership that acts as a bridge between the old Vedic order and the modern culture application.

But a paradox still prevails that some claim to imbibe the principles of management today from western sources. Most of modern management for doing business and managing people, politics, economics, and international relations which were performed very well by ancient Indians in their practices under the nomenclature of 'Management'. Hence the aim for this paper to shed light on the relevance of ancient time management practices, concepts which still plays crucial role in the modern day to day life

Key words- ancient treatises, management concepts, modern management, leadership, contemporary issues

INTRODUCTION

The western management ideas and philosophies have ruled the globe more than two centuries. Due to colonialism and the extensive usage of English in many nations, the English language has risen to the top, as most of the management literature written in it. However, a comprehensive investigation indicates that many of the lately popularised western management ideas and principles have been used in Asian nations for millennia, particularly in India and China. They applied to both commercial organisation and governmental or political control, although not exclusively. Many governments and groups throughout the globe are attempting to figure out their unique management structure. In the last two decades, various

research works and publications have been published to examine an ancient treatise relevant to management idea to investigate Asian philosophies in management¹

In management, the method is to establish and maintain a work environment where people, working in teams, may accomplish certain objectives efficiently and successfully. People in management positions plan, organise, staff, lead, and govern their organisations. Managers are tasked with taking steps that allow employees to make their greatest contributions to the group's goals. Managers are responsible for small and big businesses alike must practice management². Profit and non-profit companies, as well as sectors such as manufacturing and service, are all included. "As a result, the word "management" may be used to a wide range of institutions, including "businesses, government agencies, hospitals, universities, churches, and temples". The CEO, hospital admin, governmental first-line official, and the leaders of all organizations and businesses are concerned with effective management, which includes planning, organising, staffing, directing, and regulating human activities³. It's a method of making decisions and exercising influence over the behaviour of others in order to achieve a certain objective. To manage something is like master the practice of acquiring tasks accomplished by having the correct personnel in place to lead and guide them as they carry out their responsibilities⁴. Team, organisation, industry, economy, nation, environment, and planet futures are all shaped by leadership. The quality of life we lead is influenced by leadership. This is the choices and practices of good or terrible leadership that have an influence on people's lives⁵.

India is seen as a civilisation with a long history of good leadership that has had a significant impact on the globe. No exaggeration is needed when stating that our digital age has its roots in Indian inventions - even if that invention is as little as the number zero. In addition to opening the gates, Indian leaders have widened people's moral imagination⁶. There are religious books that continue to teach the faithful as how to live dignified and disciplined lives, poets who could envision a future, and a great soul like Mahatma whose teaching of Ahimsa, non-violence, liberty and equality that survives well even today. Yet Indian management is a complex and in-depth concept⁷

Indian management theories are coloured and inspired with the spirit of our culture. The Western nations had never missed an opportunity to learn from the great thinkers who came before it. It took the Western world more than 5000 years to understand principles that have been revealed to us in our ancient writings. The Iron Pillar in Delhi, India, has long shown that our technology is superior to that of any of our international peers⁸. One thousand years ago, we were the first to do precise procedures. Because of colonial control, Indians gradually began to adopt Western management principles. We embraced concepts such as Taylor's management science, management by objectives, division of labour, centralization of authority, bureaucracy, and mass production, among others. Various ideas and techniques are protected under Taylor's Management science. It was held that increasing productivity was in both management's and labor's best interests⁹. This concept recommended remuneration for performance, the introduction of production lines, and other changes.

¹ Bhattathiri, M.P. (2005). World Management Lessons from India. *The Internet Journal of Alternative Medicine*. 2(2). Retrieved April 14 2011 from <http://www.ispub.com/>.

² TarannumAhmad, Transactional Analysis And Managerial Leadership Styles: An Empirical Study (2010), A Research thesis By-, Deptt of Economics, Delhi University

³ Blake, R. R. & McCause, A. A. (1991). *Leadership dilemmas-Grid solutions*. Houston, Tx: Gulf.

⁴ Bigelow, J. D. (1991). *Managerial skills: Explorations in practical knowledge*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

⁵ Bognar, J. Tales from Twelve O'Clock High: Leadership Lessons for the 21st Century. Retrieved February 9, 2008, from http://www.strategosinc.com/twelve_oclock_high.htm.

⁶ Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, A. and Dennison, P. (June 2003). *A Review of Leadership Theory And Competency Frameworks* Edited Version of a Report for Chase Consulting and the Management Standards Centre for Leadership Studies University of Exeter.

⁷ Cohen, C. (1998). Using Narrative Fiction within Management Education. *Management Learning*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 165-181.

⁸ Budhwar, P.S. & Bhatnagar, J. (2008). *The changing face of people management in India*. New York: Routledge.

⁹ Subhash Sharma, Indian Ethos, Indian Culture, and Indian Management: Towards New Frontiers in Management Thinking, Proceedings of Conference on 'Indian Culture and Management' of the ICSSR and COSMODE workshop held at Hyderabad, April, 2005

Incredible modern-day scientific and technological advances now heavily influence and decisively define people's way of life, quality of living, and economics all over the globe. It's no secret that governments throughout the globe have started to put the interests of global capital ahead of "social and economic justice" for the world's most disadvantaged citizens. It is the mechanical vision of life that underlies giant corporations like Multinational Corporations and drives fierce rivalry with the insanity of "survival of the fittest.". For these people, greed and power are the driving forces behind their actions, even if it means horrendous exploitation of people and natural resources¹⁰. Corporate power distorts information acquired by the public via the media and affects how our educational system works as well as the direction of academic research¹¹. Board of trustee members at academic institutions, as well as foundation boards, are familiar with corporate and commercial executives, who utilise their positions to promote a value system aligned with corporate objectives¹².

With the advent of globalisation, liberalisation, and privatisation, the globe has really transformed into a Monstrous Supermarket¹³. It's the mechanical perspective of life that's driving business management, which promotes severe rivalry and the "survival of the fittest"¹⁴. For the owners at the very top of management, "surplus" and "maximum profit" are typically the focus of managerial performance¹⁵. However, there is growing concern about the downsides of the Modern Art and Science of Management all over the globe. A new paradigm change, based on a Holistic Approach to Management, is on the horizon.

ANCIENT MANAGEMENT

we have seen that 'management' needs to be nurtured in the soils of the countries with their own culture to make it more effective and successful. This provides us an opportunity to study and discover the kinds of managements we have and also the strategies they have been applying in their business ventures and try to identify with the ancient strategies as found in the Epics of Ramayana, Mahabharata and also other great works like Arthashastra, Thirukkural etc., and these come under 'Management'¹⁶.

Ancient Managements have their origins in different sources. Especially the word "DHARMA" is used as a key word in the management. The term management had been known as "Administration" "since most of the times it had been monarchy that prevailed and also the "Parampara" form of successions was in vogue. People considered the king as God and he had all the powers to rule and administer. The king had the chief minister and the council of ministers in place to take care of the different needs of governance. The references are from various works like Kautilya's "arthashastra" in Sanskrit and Thiruvalluvar 'sThirukkural in Tamil

¹⁰ Collier, K., & Williams, M. (2004). *Biblical Leadership : Becoming a Different Kind of a Leader*. North Ireland: Ambassador Publications.

¹¹ Dehler, G. E. (1996). Management Education as Intentional Learning: A Knowledge-Transforming Approach to Written Composition. *Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 221-235.

¹² Giacalone, R. A., Jurkiewicz, C. L., & Knouse, S. B. (2003). A Capstone Project in Business Ethics: Building an Ethics Training Program. *Journal of Management Education*, 27, 590-607.

¹³ Giri, A. K. (1997). Management Education and the Teaching of Ethics: Pedagogy, Practice and the Challenge of a New Initiative. *Journal of Human Values*, 3, 3.

¹⁴ Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K. (1972). *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.

¹⁵ Y. Williams, "An Analysis of Organizational Behavior Diversity Management and Positive Psychology," *Advances in Human Resources Management and Organizational Development*, pp. 21–33, 2020.

¹⁶ Sharma, J. K. (2017). Relevance of ancient Indian scriptures - business wisdom drawn from Ramayana, Gita and Thirukkural. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 15(3), 278.
doi:10.1504/ijicbm.2017.10007909

- This quality and talent help a leader play a critical role in the management operations of a company to attain its objectives. A company's success relies heavily on its managers. Managers that are effective know how to plan, organise, lead, and control in order to accomplish the success of the company. Managers must be able to motivate and solve problems as well as communicate effectively and innovate¹⁷.

Only in the twentieth century has the world realised the significance of management ideas and principles. Numerous books on management concepts/principles are now on the market and every company or organisation regularly provides management training to its employees in order to make them successful managers by adhering to business ethics¹⁸.

Between 317 to 293 B.C., Acharya Chanakya (also known as Kautilya) served as Chandragupta Maurya's minister. According to legend, he was a highly wise minister who produced the book *Arthashastra* in the 4th century before Christ, explaining his ideas on statecraft, war, social hierarchies, politics, and ethics in great detail. With "15 chapters, 380 Shlokas, and 4968 Sutras", it's a massive collection. This is most likely the first book ever published on the ethics of statecraft. According to reliable sources. It's mostly about good administration, and it has a didactic feel to it.¹⁹ The Mauryan Empire spanned the Indian Ocean all the way up to the Himalayas, and reached as far west as Iran. As soon as Alexander departed India, this was the most dominant state in the country. The minister who counselled the King was Acharya Chanakya or Kautilya (hence Kautilya). His Swamy (king) Chandragupta Maurya requested this book, which he addressed to "those who rule" in the prologue²⁰. For Kautilya, the creation and operation of the machinery that the monarch uses to protect the unity and integrity of the State was of utmost importance.

While Kautilya's work is largely a book of political realism, it does include some philosophical considerations as well. A King must use violent and terrible measures to stay in power, and that's exactly what Kautilya describes in his writings. As a result, Ashoka, Chandragupta's grandson, heeded Kautilya's advice and chose the road of morality by renouncing violence and war.

ANCIENT TREATISES BEARING IN THE MODERN MANAGEMENT TEACHINGS

It has been extensively believed that management principles and concepts have been initiated in the west and progressed toward the east. It is very well-rehearsed that no country or community has risen to glory or power devoid of acknowledged its culture and heritage. Management theories from the west have broadened their presence due to broad availability and advocating of management literature all over the world.

The management concept influenced from western power is mainly people oriented and making them committed for a common purpose to maximize social benefit - in search of excellence²¹. Whatever matters most to all managers is how to be efficient in their work.

Ancient treatises like "Vaastu Shastra (architecture), *Arthashastra* (political science), *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Kama Sutra*" are the invaluable treasures radiating harmony, workplace ethics, leadership skills, and many more

¹⁷ Avolio Bruce J (2007), Promoting more integrative strategies for leadership - Theory -Building, American Psychological Association, Volume 62, No 1, pp 25–33

¹⁸ Holme, C. (2008) 'Business ethics – part one: does it matter?', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 40, No. 5, pp.248–252.

¹⁹ L. Kaipa, P. (2014). Making wise decisions: leadership lessons from Mahabharata. *Journal of Management Development*, 33(8/9), 835–846. doi:10.1108/jmd-06-2014-0061

²⁰ Manikutty, S. (2012). Why Should I Be Ethical? Some Answers from Mahabharata. *Journal of Human Values*, 18(1), 19-32

²¹ H. Lorenz, "Virtue and Goals of Actions in Aristotle's Ethical Treatises," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume 57, pp. 191–218, Jan. 2020.

workplace problems in a very simple and detailed manner. The works of Indian literature that we have contributed are the real treasures that adorn the whole world with its knowledge, wisdom and sound practices. There lies a chance to explore those practices and put them into action for decision making and business problems²².

Manusmṛiti is regarded as the earliest text of the *Dharmasastra* category. History of origin of *smritis* attributes it to Brahma who communicated to his son *Manu*. M N Dutt in the introduction of his Book *Sixteen Minor Smṛiti* has said that “of all *smṛitis* *manusmṛiti* is regarded by Hindus as next in sanctity to *Vedas*. It is the oldest of all the laws and authorship is attributed to *Manu* himself, son of Brahma. He was the most ancient and the greatest of all the law givers”. He also advocated a balance between human beings and the nature and therefore care of the nature, trees, plants and oblation to the Sun. He clearly stated that plants experience pleasure and pain though they cannot express as human being can. The same theory has been proved experimentally after thousands of years by the famous scientist J C Bose. He emphasized upon a harmonious co-relation among all items of the creation.

Nearly 2,500 years ago, **Arthashastra** was written by a minister in the Chandragupta dynasty known as Chanakya (“also known as Kautilya and Vishnu Gupta”). He was the epitome of a leadership expert. In his book "Arthashastra," he outlines his theories on how to find and train future leaders. 6000 sutras are included in this book, which has 150 chapters and is used by the monarch to administer the state. They may be applied to business organisation management because, like kingdoms, they have vast financial, technical, and human resources at their disposal, and they have a tremendous effect on society²³.

The "Arthashastra" of Kautilya is a comprehensive book on statecraft that explains the structure, dynamics of groups, organisations, and standards. Numerous literatures on politics and diplomacy by several masters and many dharma shastras were studied to improve the performance or efficacy of the state and to examine the rules and tactics for governing the state, which led to composition of the Arthashastra. Arthashastra performs a good job of explaining systems, roles, and responsibilities, as well as leadership ideals expected of those in positions of power. As the name implies, the subject matter of Arthashastra is the science of extending one's empire or territory. It is also the study of material gains, although this does not correlate to economics, as has been discovered recently. Arthashastra relied on variables such as time and place. Arthashastra favoured a ruler who dispensed justice and equity in equal measure²⁴. It elevated education and accentuated many of a leader's best traits. When it comes to maintaining society, Kautilya in Arthashastra encourages every major virtue, despite its relentless pursuit of kingdom development and prosperity as well as allegiance to its monarch.

CURRENT SCENARIO OF MODERN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

India is a pluralistic society. Often, social and political identities are derived from religious, regional, sectarian, castes and linguistic identities. In turn, these diverse identities, generally, get intervened with socio-political and economic identities²⁵.

Persist in your belief that management is a methodical manner of carrying out tasks in order to achieve your goals says Peter F. Ducker, a management guru, also elucidating that “its mission is to make individuals capable of joint performance, to make their deficiencies unimportant”. An overview of managerial functions is appended in this document²⁶.

²² P. R. Panchamukhi, “Ancient Indian Economic Thought: Relevance for Today,” *The Indian Economic Journal*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 178–180, Jul. 2010.

²³ L N Rangarajan, *Kautilya-The Arthashastra*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 1992, edition, pages 21-22

²⁴ Aradhana Parmar, Atma Ram & Sons *Techniques of Statecraft-A Study of KautilyaArthashastra*. 1987 edition, , Delhi.

²⁵ Laleman, F., V. Pereira & A. Malik (2015). ‘Understanding cultural singularities of ‘Indianness’ in an intercultural business setting’, *Culture and Organization*, Vol. 21, Issue 5, pp. 427-447.

²⁶ Maria Brouwer, “Peter Drucker and the rise of management theory,” *Organizations, Individualism and Economic Theory*, pp. 100–138, Aug. 2012.

- Setting mission and vision
- Planning
- Developing leadership
- Creating and mapping excellence
- Innovating structures
- Developing human resources
- Building teams and teamwork
- Delegating Powers to subordinates
- Motivating people,
- Communicating
- Auditing performance

Again, it is astounding to learn that our great saint and erudite scholar Thiruvalluvar, has explained the Management Principles/concepts in his holy couplets (Kural), “Thirukkural” 2000 years ago. The kurals are spread over 133 chapters of 10 couplets each. Each Kural is rhythmically crafted with just seven apt words. While the rhythm and beauty are entralling, the content and messages are thought provoking.” According to Indian reasoning, leaders should adopt a comprehensive approach. What do you want to achieve at the end of this? What do you want to accomplish at the end of the project? Knowing that there are several approaches to reach a goal ensures that leaders push their followers to attempt something new/untried/unconventional.

Thiruvalluvar advises that even if one encounters challenges and difficulties in his progressive path towards a given goal, he needs to carry on doing whatever he does with courage. If one persists, with courage the end result will certainly be rewarding.

Thunbamvarinumseigathunivaatri
InbampayakkumvinaiKural- 669

Leaders need to have courage of conviction. In its absence, his leadership will always be looked at with suspicion.

When a person is not deterred by the roadblocks in the path of progress and considers them as a routine course of life and enjoys the challenges with the same state of mind as he would deal with happiness, even his opponents love him for his commitment, courage and conviction. Thiruvalluvar calls such people ‘exemplary’ and says ‘they are commended even by their rivals.’”

innamaiinbamyenakkolinaagunthan
OnnarvizhayunjchirappuKural- 630

He further adds:

Idumbaikkuidumbaipadupparidumbaikku
IdumbaipadaathavarKural- 623

Meaning: “People who are not afraid of facing roadblocks, create roadblocks to challenges and thus win over”

Thus, one finds lot of messages from Kural in which Thiruvalluvar makes crystal clear with regard to leadership and management concepts and these verses were authored several centuries before. No wonder, the book is considered as one of eternal value.

CONCLUSION

Best possible correlation of ancient management lessons like leadership, team building, work ethics, decision-making, motivation, Communication and human relations in business and other management functions, challenges like social,

economic, technological and ecological aspects, one can find in today's world. The contributions of ancient Indians are being now acknowledged in the modern context and Bharath can feel proud to have several significant treatises like Arthashastra, many references in puranic and Vedic literature like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad-Gita and Thirukkural which are still significant in today's world.

REFERENCES

- [1] Edusai: Principles Of Leadership And Management From 'Thirukkural' Edusai_ Principles Of Leadership And Management From 'Thirukkural', N.D.
- [2] Frederick W Taylor, New York, in his book "The Principles of Scientific Management By Harper & Row Publishers, 1911 Edition from the Bhagavad Gita. Singapore Management Review, 29(1), 73.
- [3] Ka Naa Subramanyam, ,, Thiruvalluvar and His Thirukkural" Bhartiya Jnanpeeth, New Delhi, 1987.
- [4] R K Mishra, Public Enterprise in Kautilya's Arthashastra: some insights (2003), Paper by publication Bhartiya Pragna, www.hvk.org/articles/0203/223.html
- [5] R P Kangle, The Kautilya Arthashastra, Page 20-22, Volume III, first edition, reprint in 2000 by Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi
- [6] R. P. Kangle, Motilal English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes ethical evaluation of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana (No. 13). Oriental Publishers & Distributors
- [7] Radhakrishnan, Pillai. The Principles of Management, An Article in Mumbai Mirror (Weekly Column), 2007
- [8] Shamasastri, R. (1961) Translator. 'Kautilya's Arthashastra' Mysore Printing and Publishing House, Mysore- chapter XI Recovery of Debt – page no. 250
- [9] Shamasastri, R. 1915 (1967). Kautilya's Arthashastra, 8th Edition, trans. Mahamahopadhyay, Arthasadravisharda, Vidyalankar, Panditaraja, with an introductory note by J. F. Fleet, Mysore: Mysore Printing and Publishing House; 1st edition 1915, 3rd edition 1929.
- [10] Sharma S. (2005). Indian Ethos, Indian culture Indian management: towards new frontiers in management thinking. Conference proceedings of ICSSR and COSMODE workshop held at Hyderabad
- [11] Sharma, J. K. (2017). Relevance of ancient Indian scriptures - business wisdom drawn from Ramayana, Gita and Thirukkural. International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management, 15(3), 278. doi:10.1504/ijicbm.2017.10007909