

## Enunciation of Management Theories in Ancient India

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**ABSTRACT:** The Indian Sanskrit writings is rich by various subjects. They range from literature, Chemistry, Law, Astrology, Space Science, Medicine, Surgery, Engineering, Mathematics. The western Management concepts have arisen after Industrial Revolution, i.e. after 18<sup>th</sup> century; whereas many management concepts are traced back to Bhagwat Geet, which is about 5000 years back. Even some concepts are found in Chandogya Upanishad and Tatory Upanishad, of which the period goes still back. The Tirukkural written by Tiruvalluvar also deals with many management theories and systems. Acharya Chanakya (Vishnugupta or also Kautilya) has written an epitome called as "The Arthashastra", which as per the title, does not deal with only Economics, but Finance, Political Science, Law, Administration and Management. It is a landmark work translated in many languages of the world; and what he has stipulated is much before all the Economists like Marshall, Pigu, Ricardo and so on. Even his concepts as well as the theories propagated by Tiruvalluvar about the management are outstanding and original, which later many Western Management Thinkers like Mayo, Peter Drucker etc. have written. Ancient Indian Sanskrit literature (Writings) have touched almost all aspects of Management and Administration.

**KEY WORD:** Leadership, Managers, Recruitment, Competency, Skill, Emotional Intelligence,

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### I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

**1.1** Indian history, especially Ancient Indian History (Pre-Vedic Period to the Year 1200) is rich in heritage. The Vedas came into existence at least 500 years ago. However, the latest Carbon Dating of the remains of the Dwarika city near Sourashtra, Gujrath, is said to date back to 32,000 years. This news, if believed and considered to be true and authentic, the Mahabharat period will go back further; and Ramayana goes still beyond that. Naturally, The Vedas may date back to 50,000 years or so. If we look at the then prevailing map of India, it can be said that proper administration and sound management principles were in existence in India.

The Bhagwat Gita by AC Prabhupad Bhakti Vedant, Patanjali Yogsutre, Dhammpad, Upanishad, Shatak Tryee, Tirukkural, Legal History of India, Taittiriya Upnashad, Brihadaranya Upanishad were studied. Some references in google search were also referred.

#### 1.2 Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to explore to what extent Management Principles and Theories were in existence in Ancient India, especially Before Christ and whether they were exported to western world and influenced Western Management Thinkers and also their criticality and strengths.

#### 1.3 Research Methodology and Data Analysis

In order to explore the availability, strengths and importance and also depth of literature of Ancient India, many references had been gone through. The concepts mentioned there, directly or indirectly, were compared with the modern western management; and similarities and dissimilarities were observed. Other than management books, old scriptures in English, Samskrit and other languages with their translation in English were referred. Those are listed below.

- (१) नारदभक्ति स्तोत्र: [कालातीत] – Naradbhaktistotr – Time Immemorial
- (२) भगवदगीता: [इसवी सन पूर्व ५१५१] – Bhagwat Gita [BC 5151]
- (३) छानदोग्य उपनिषद: [इसवी सन पूर्व १५०० ते ८००] – Chandogya Upanishad [BC 1500-800]
- (४) बृहदारण्य उपनिषद: [इसवी सन पूर्व १५०० ते ८००] – Bruhdarnya Upanishad [BC 1500 – 800]
- (५) भगवान महावीर: [इसवी सन पूर्व ५९९ ते ५२७] – Bhagwan Mahavir [BC 599 – 527]

- (६) भगवान गौतम बुद्ध: [इसवी सन पूर्व ४८३ ते ४००] – Bhagwan Gautam Buddha [BC483 – 400]  
(७) आचार्य चाणक्य – अर्थशास्त्र: [इसवी सन पूर्व ३५० ते २७५] – Acharya Chanakya [BC 350 -275]  
(८) थिरुवल्लुवर – थिरुक्कुल: [इसवी सन १ ते ६] – Thiruvalluvar [CE 100 - 600]  
(९) राजा भरत्रुहारी – शतकत्रयी: [इसवी सन ४५० ते ५१०] – Raja Bhartruhari [CE 450 – 510]

Since it is conceptual work, data (numbers, except period) analysis is not relevant.

#### **1.4 Findings and Interpretation**

The paper has identified that in Ancient India, most of the literature on Management and Administration is found in Sanskrit language. Some literature is also in Pali etc. The in-depth exploration of the same has revealed that BC 5000 years to Second Century, many Great Management thinkers have contributed to the development of the Management Science in India; though those writing were mentioning about the “Good Governance” of a State or Kingdom. It can be easily interpreted and deduced from it that the underlying principles for the good governance of the State or Kingdom without any variation can be straightway applied to modern corporate houses, organizations, universities and other organisations too. It is to be remembered that the words used in ancient literature are synonymous and not same; though some are similar. However, the real meaning or the tinge of the word is interpreted and applied without any error or confusion.

**1.4.1 Principles of Recruitment:** In olden days, recruitment was being done. It is not the modern-day system after industrial revolution only. However, the biggest employer in those days, was of course, the King and kingdom. King used to recruit people for various functions of the State (Government). Structural has laid down many guidelines for the recruitment of employees. In his well-known treatise on politics and governance entitled ‘The Prince’, Machiavelli has pertinently stated that the ability and prowess of a prince may be legitimately judged by the quality and loyalty of the men immediately surrounding him. (Page- 546)<sup>1</sup> That precisely is the reason why Thiruvalluvar has categorically stated that, before entrusting a man with a position of responsibility, he should be put through a set of four trials relating to Dharma, Wealth, Love and Life. Only those who succeed in these tests may be considered to be of proven faithfulness to the King and the State, and entrusted with position and authority. (Page-546)<sup>2</sup>

There is a practical suggestion made by the poet as a guideline for selection to the many positions that have to be filled in the king’s service. As perfect men are not available, the choice should be of at least those persons, in whom the good predominates. In public service, and for that matter in private service too, assessment of the performance after functionaries are selected and they take their position is also very important aspect. In such a context also Vallur’s guidelines in this Kural will be of immense help to administrators (Page-549)<sup>3</sup>. The Vallur system of listing out the good and bad points and deciding on the characteristics that overwhelmingly prevail, will provide an objective method of assessment (Page-549)<sup>4</sup>.

For a highly skilled job. It is very often necessary to enlist the expert advice and guidance of a man, who knows the A to Z of that job. But what is interesting to my mind is Vallur’s direction to enter the mind of the expert and to absorb and internalise the expertise as soon as possible, and not perpetually depend on him, as we seem to do most often in India (Page-701)<sup>5</sup>.

**1.4.2 Behavioural Anchored Interviews:** The acquisition of human assets starts with recruitment and selection of potential employees. The simple resume, few documents and a typical “Question-Answers” format of interview is more valid. It is out of date and hardly help to find out the capabilities of prospective candidate in dealing unusual, abnormal and non-routine problems and situations. This fact has necessitated the introduction of some different technique and system to go deeper and explore (Page-546)<sup>6</sup>.

**1.4.3 Grades (Categories) of Employees:** Employees are normally classified into three grades namely, (1) Mando (Unintelligent), (2) Madhya (The Middle) and (3) Shrestha (The Best). Their wages should be determined in the order of merit. The classification of workers made in this rule correspondence to the modern classification or workers into Unskilled, Semi-skilled and Skilled, respectively, as mentioned in The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 (Page-189)<sup>7</sup>.

**1.4.4 Principles of Wages:** Those days as people used to be got recruited by State, naturally wages and salaries were required to be paid. The principles laid down regarding the wages were very detailed, just and fair. Minimum Wages should be paid. Wages to be graded. The wages to be paid according to qualification and should be fair. Wherever rates of wages are not fixed, legal rates are to be determined and should be regularly paid (Pages-190-191)<sup>8</sup>.

**1.4.5 Skill Identification & Competency Building:** In today’s world, especially after 90s these two terminologies have come to forefront in industries. It does not mean that these concepts were not known earlier. Even during Vedas, the skill and competencies were talked about very clearly. Brihadaranya Upanishad,

Thirukkul and Niti Shatak also discussed these pivotal things and had laid down certain principles. Lord Shrikrishna in Chapter-2, Shlok-50 tells Arjun to involve himself completely with full devotion, so that he can achieve the expertise in his work (Page-101)<sup>9</sup>. A person who works with a focussed mind and attitude achieves the skill, competency and success in his work (Page-585)<sup>10</sup>. Thiruvalluvar says that for a highly skilled job, it is very often necessary to enlist the expert advice and guidance of a man, who knows A to Z of that job (Page-701)<sup>11</sup>. Raja Bhartruhari in his Nitishatak says that great people (Manager) never let alone a person whom they have accepted as companion and maintain the affinity (Page-49)<sup>12</sup>.

**1.4.6 Interpersonal Relationship:** The working together by human is inevitable in any type of work. If we look at Ramayan and Mahabharata, we can find enormous examples. Narad Bhakti Sutra talk of Interpersonal relationship, so also in Arthshastra by Acharya Chanakya. Making friendship with many and to have a large number of true friends is a strength by itself. It is, therefore, worth striving for making a good group of friends, who will stand with you even in times of trouble, difficulties or danger. This kind of strength is vital for taking further steps towards building of an enterprise (Page-72)<sup>13</sup>. And to maintain such relationships, the manager must overcome his anger, whether expressed or not. It is natural instinctive emotion of all human beings, which arises whenever others behave in a way which hurts self-interest or the work at hand. Managers are known to be more prone to anger, because they always have something to get done from others and because disturbances in progress of work are quite common. Getting angry on employees may appear 'to work' and bring the desired results; but experienced managers know that those who always get angry are neither obeyed truly nor are respected. (Page-193)<sup>14</sup>

**1.4.7 Work Planning:** The term work is as old as human being. With the progress from stone age to current century, the nature of work might have undergone change drastically. A person engaged in work, must first understand what is important and essential and to get aligned with the organisation is prerequisite of understanding the work, job or assignment; and if required he must exploratory questions (Page-458 & 459)<sup>15</sup>. The statement about using the right means is in non-negative form: using the right means or method a work does not become difficult to accomplish. It is not said that work accomplishment becomes easier with the use of right means. Knowing the complexities of real life that result in unexpected disturbances in any work planned by the manager, this statement says that without right means, difficulties will arise in implementation in desired manner, i.e. with less efforts, time and cost etc. (Page-131)<sup>16</sup>. The basic objective of management being wealth generation, preservation and growth, priority should also be always given to work items which give more advantages. Any action or type of work which gives a high gain with relatively low input costs or time or efforts etc. should naturally be given priority (Page-167 & 168)<sup>16</sup>.

Saint Thiruvalluvar in his epic Tirukkul is Chapter-68 says that the jobs which can wait should be deferred and those cannot wait should be done immediately without wasting any time. Even Peter Drucker also endorses this (Page-696)<sup>17</sup>. He also says that before starting any work, it is necessary to decide about resources, work planning, schedule of work and place of work and Manager should plan for the availability of the same (Page-698-699)<sup>18</sup>.

It is very important to be clear about the objectives before starting the work. And simultaneously, it has to be also thought of about the difficulties, possible obstacles, probable benefits and reaction of people after the work is completed, so also alternate plans (Page-699-700)<sup>19</sup>.

**1.4.8 Allegiance to Organization:** In all periods and settings, irrespective of the nature of ownership, the allegiance to organization has remained always an important aspect of employment. In fact, the progress and success are dependent upon the alignment of employees with the organization and the alignment is possible only if employees are well aware of the aim and objectives of the organization.

Those who are proud of their wealth or position or learning or birth, spiritual discipline cannot come and they cannot realise God. Devotion is supreme. Ego is detestable. Good will and love are important. And if a person gets rid of such restrictive barriers, he can certainly enjoy the bliss of work. They are myopic or short-sighted (Page-69 to 71)<sup>20</sup>.

**1.4.9 Work Commitment:** It can come only when employer includes all employees in the process of important decision making.

In any work, unless you determine to accomplish that task, you can never achieve that result. If you become successful, you will get inspired and will be able to go ahead; but in case, you becomes unsuccessful, still it is an opportunity you got to learn; which means, in reality you are not a loser at all (Page-99-100)<sup>21</sup>.

An employee is himself responsible all aspects of the job from his manager and seniors. It is not the responsibility of a Manager or senior. An employee is expected to approach the right person as a mentor to help him grow professionally, is important to understand and remember all the time (Page-29 & 30)<sup>22</sup>.

**1.4.10 Ethical Management:** Organization can become good organization but to make it a “Great” organization, what is most important is that the organization is managed by ethical principles. Ethical management means not passing arbitrary judgements, but by investigating both right and wrong and not judging others arbitrarily. It means passing judgement impartially according to truth, a sagacious guardian of the law (Page-109)<sup>23</sup>.

**1.4.11 Personality of Manager:** The organisation is “Non-Living” entity and is represented by living individuals. The success of organization is dependent on the fact to what extent its key personnel like managers are possessing the ability to influence. And therefore, employers are required to first prepare the Job Profiles to determine what type of manager should be inducted in the organisation, who can influence others to take them along and achieve organisation’s objectives.

The word ‘dharma’ is used here not in the sense of religion, but in the sense of prescribed duty, or code of conduct. The meaning of the word dharma has been elaborated by Kautilya in Arthshastra: it consists of three aspects of behaviour of all human beings. The first refers to the duties to be performed by persons belonging to different varnas, namely, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Learning, teaching, priesthood etc. for Brahmins; learning, protecting etc. for Kshatriya; commerce, agriculture, animal rearing etc. for Vaisyas; and all services, artisanship and entertainment etc. for the Sutras (Pages-13 to 16)<sup>24</sup>.

A Good Manager must have the attitude of gratitude for all, kind with all the employees, diplomatic with obdurate, love for kind hearted people, just with management, honest with learned people, courageous with competitors, lenient with seniors, respectful with female employees and appropriate and right behaviour with all the employees always (Page-50 & 51)<sup>25</sup>.

A manager’s personality will become impressive if he gets rid of anger, arrogance and meanness and will bring him dignity in greatness. (Page-479)<sup>26</sup>.

**1.4.12 Leadership Qualities:** It is said that a nation can win a war only if its army is guided by an efficient leader. In the same way, an organization can run smoothly if its leaders are competent, humane and empathising with their team members. In respect of any project, the first thing to be considered is some depth so as to be clear about it, is the objective. Once that is settled, it is good also to examine the various possible obstacles that may arise in the course of the execution. It will be wise to provide for contingency plans to overcome these obstacles. Modern management envisages this (Page-700)<sup>27</sup>. And a good leader precisely does this.

A manager must control his mind completely. He should focus on his objectives and his mind should remain unwavering, so that he achieves for what he is aiming for (Page-238)<sup>28</sup>.

One who has acquired knowledge becomes one who has conquered himself. Only those who have equipped themselves well with the knowledge of the world will be in full control of their own self. Only such persons will be able to conquer the ‘six senses’, which distort the intellect and reason when not well controlled. Chanakya does not feel the need to enjoin the student, to urge the student who has acquired the right type of worldly knowledge through humbly serving the teacher, to control himself totally. He knew that the *guru-sisya* (teacher-student) learning process is such that a manager who, becomes knowledgeable in this manner automatically conquers his own self. This requirement is applicable even more to the CEO positions, because a Chief Executive Officer is in such a leadership position that he can either make or mar the enterprise. This ‘total control of oneself’ is necessary in a professional manager for various reasons. Firstly, he has to act invariably in the long-term interest of the organisation he serves. The temptations to take a short-term view of what is good for the organisation are many and strong. Such actions that are in the long-term interest are generally not perceived to be so by many stakeholders. Convincing them within reasonable limits of transparency and democracy is a task that strains all aspects of self-control by the CEO (Page-31)<sup>29</sup>.

Secondly, he has to strongly resist the temptations to act in that kind of self-interest, which is not necessarily in the best interest of the organisation. Even within the framework of ethically sound management, the CEO can indulge in the acts of omissions and commissions. These promote his self-interest at the expense of the enterprise. These actions may be in terms of earning money or privileges, or in terms of retaining or acquiring power, prestige etc. (Page-31 & 32)<sup>30</sup>.

Thirdly, the CEO has to ensure that he does not succumb to undue pressure from peers, juniors (employee unions), and seniors (board members, political heavy weights) towards taking decisions detrimental to the long-term interests of the organisation (Page-32)<sup>31</sup>.

Fourthly, the temptation to do good for the organization at the cost of the society or the nation in general, and to the detriment of the vulnerable stakeholders in particular, is one of the most difficult to avoid. Such measures, especially those that are at the cost of the society, often get approved by those concerned with such decisions in an enterprise, especially if these are not patently illegal (Page-32)<sup>32</sup>.

Lastly, in the tug of war between forces for and against the interest of the organisation, situations can arise where the CEO cannot accept a decision forced upon him against his firm conviction. The only professional alternative is to quit. One must be prepared to face the consequences. Such preparedness comes only through total self-control (Page-32)<sup>33</sup>.

One in whom there is truthfulness and virtue, inoffensiveness, restraint, and self-mastery, who is free from defilements and wise, he is truly called an elder (Manager) (Page-111)<sup>34</sup>.

He who utters gentle, instructive, and truthful words, who imprecates none, him do I call a holy-man (Page-173)<sup>35</sup>.

**1.4.13 Work Culture:** It is the responsibility of the top management and board of directors to inculcate the appropriate culture in the work environment, so as to ensure that everybody working there feels absolutely comfortable. The appropriate work culture presupposes fairness, equality and just treatment to all, irrespective of anything. A manager, who thinks about the luxuries, comforts and privileges always, gets attached to such temptations naturally. Such attachment breeds desire, and desire leads to frustration, which in turn leads to delusion. When one gets deluded, he loses his memory, which further deteriorates the ability of discriminating between right & wrong, good & bad, moral & immoral and so on. Once this ability is impaired, the 'Real One' is lost. Such Manager is unable to take any rightful decision and instead of creating and sustaining the good work culture, destroys the well-knit fabric of harmonious work culture of the organization (Page-111)<sup>36</sup>.

**1.4.14 Principles of Influencing:** Undoubtedly, every manager and leader has to be able to influence his team members, because unless he is in a position to impress team members, the execution of the decision will not take place.

The Monk (Manager), who has control over his tongue, is moderate in speech, unassuming and who explains the teaching in both letter and spirit, whatever he says is pleasing (Page-154)<sup>37</sup>. It means a manager who uses the palatable language in his communication, does not treat others as meagre and always act as a Mentor to his juniors and fellow members, develops the ability to influence.

**1.4.15 Emotional Management:** In olden days, the whole emphasis was on Intelligence Quotient. However, over the period of time, it was observed that having IQ only cannot make anyone successful and acceptable. The more important, rather essential to best utilise the IQ, is EQ. Emotional Quotient is far more important than IQ. And therefore, to manage own's emotions *quid pro quo* for maintaining good interpersonal relations; because without it, the achievement of result shall remain a dream only.

Indian philosophy as well as EI calls attention to the power of emotions, they both differ in certain basic aspects. The EI focuses on a man's success from the materialistic point of view – an emotionally intelligent person becomes a successful manager, becomes adept in handling relationships etc. – whereas, the Indian texts have a more holistic approach. They see the mind as an instrument which has the potential to lead a man to eternal happiness or to perpetual suffering. It isn't something that begins and ends with this life on earth, but that which paves way for many more such births and thus, if a man does not control his senses, he falls into the abyss of birth and rebirth, trapped in this mortal world for an eternity. The Indian philosophy thus takes both life and death into thought. For the Indian philosophers, life and death complement each other and the one loses its meaning without the other. For them life on this earth is a preparation for the life after death. They believe in the theory of 'Karma' – every thought and action of a person has its repercussions. A man's 'Karma' binds him to this world of suffering and an enlightened man strives to escape this web of 'Karma' by controlling his thoughts and actions and focusing them on the Supreme Being. This approach gives a different dimension to the understanding of the importance and control of mind for the Indian philosophers and thus distinguishes them from the advocates of the theory of emotional intelligence. An analysis and comparison of the Indian philosophical approach to that of EI is sure to pave way for a better understanding on the power of emotions and the way to control them.<sup>38</sup>

**2.0.0 Recommendations:** Looking at the vast treasure of knowledge hidden in hundreds of thousand of pages' manuscript and engraved stones. Many of them are in Sanskrit, Pali, Brahmi and other languages of olden times, which required to be decoded. A focused research on unearthing and revealing the lost or unknown

historical facts shall definitely throw lights on many startling facts. It will also help to understand to what extent and at what time, Hinduism and Buddhism expanded beyond the geographical boundaries of India; even though, as on date, some researches have already found out that Hinduism and Buddhism have gone up to Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines, but continuous connectivity is not established yet.

**2.1.0** Not only expansion of religion is relevant but as we know ancient literature revealed to some extent that the ample work is done in the area of Mathematics, Music, Chemistry, Engineering etc. Therefore, if extensive research is done specifically oriented towards finding, we may find much richer heritage.

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