Indian Ethos for Management: an Analytical study

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Indian ethos for management means the applications of principles of management as revealed in our ancient wisdom brought forth in our sacred books like 'Gita', 'Upanishads', 'Bible' and 'Quran'. Formally, the body of knowledge which derives its solutions from the rich and huge Indian system of ethics is known as Indian Ethos for Management. Management is behavioral science and it has to be culture specific. Indian Ethos for Management has as its basis, the cultural base of India and as a country whose culture has its roots in religion - it does draw its lessons from the religions of the land - be it Hinduism, Buddhism, or any other.

Introduction

The history of India has been a saga of the periodic confluence of differing cultures leading to a constant adaptation, synthesis, eventual regeneration and retention of what is and has been uniquely "Indian". While successful countries have developed management styles in consonance with their own cultural ethos, we in India have started waking up to this reality belatedly. Right from the post-independence phase of development, no adequate and serious grass root efforts were ever made to evolve management processes that could be in tune with the Indian Ethos. "Know thyself" is not only an Upanishad exhortation, but it also makes sense from a psycho-social perspective. An understanding of our cultural milieu, norms, values, and beliefs should help us to evolve styles and management systems suited to our requirements. Further, as people cannot be divorced from the environment, the organisational context needs to be related to situations and more of Indian socio-cultural life. What we require, therefore, is a serious attempt at development, standardisation, and institutionalisation of management policies, processes and practices which in turn are based on an understanding of our present-day socio-cultural milieu as well as an appreciation of our cultural ethos which provide a basic frame of reference (through predisposition to hold certain values) for subsequent interactions with society and the environment. In other words, a social system being a living and organic system, simply rejects

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that which is too discordant and incongruent with its ethos and thus a need for management policies and practices compatible with the cultural values and work level expectation.

It is a commonly agreed view that the success of Japan in managing the economy and enterprise lies in "Japanising" the management processes within the framework of Japanese ethos. In fact, there are many cultural values, shared by both Japan and India. But whereas in India, no serious attempt was undertaken to build institutional structures and management concepts rooted in our cultural ethos; Japan, on the contrary, has emerged business leader because it has been able to bridge a nexus between the cultural values and the needs of the people vis-à-vis the organizational response to these demands. In 1980's we have come across enough literature telling us how Japanese evolved and institutionalized their management practices based on Japanese cultural ethos. Of further importance is the fact that the search for blending and a synthesis of Eastern and Western perspectives is taking a new momentum in Japan. The philosophy, cultural values, and traditions of Japan are again playing a key role in their drive to pursue new frontiers of research and creativity. For example, the Mukta Institute or "JizaiKenkyujo" is an alternative-style think tank that merges scientific rationality with the Buddhist philosophy to arrive at creative new solutions. Founded in 1970 by Masahiro-Mori, the founder of Robotics Society of Japan, Mukta institute has some of the leading industrialists of Japan as its members. It is supposed to be an answer to Japan's historical search for a satisfying union of Western science and eastern philosophy. It is also of interest to note that an increasing number of Japanese are joining Buddhist Study Groups which have been multiplying at the rate of one every week in Japan. Further, as an alternative to time and space to pursue leisure activities in Japan as well as to overcome frustration and stress from long commuting and working hours; many companies in Japan are offering stress-reducing 'meditation rooms;' and sponsor back to nature retreats as a respite from the daily grind. The concept of miniaturization which is Japan's best-known form of aesthetic creativity and permeated Japanese culture throughout history has led to Japan's knack for creative miniaturization in the electronics world.

Similarly, the Japanese art of paper folding and folding fans have instilled the notion of collapsible space which resulted in designing products like laptop computers, modular furniture etc. Even the complex characters of Japanese language has forced computer makers to develop complex word processing software, facsimile machines, optical scanning devices, computer translation system and other advanced data processing technologies. These skills and technologies are now being used for artificial intelligence adopt computing systems.

Ethics and Indian Ethos

The word "ethics" has its origin in the Greek word "ethics" meaning character, norms, ideas or morals prevailing in a group or society. Ethics is concerned with what is right and what is wrong in human behaviour judged on the basis of a standard form conduct/ behaviour of individuals, as approved by society in a particular field of activity.

Ethics may be viewed as the entire body of moral values that society attaches to the actions of human beings. Ethics can also refer to codes or another system for controlling means so that they serve human ends. Ethical standards are often enacted into laws. But ethical behaviour is just and fair conduct which goes beyond observing laws and government regulations. It means adhering to moral principles, being guided by particular values, and behaving in a way people ought to act. The set of principles called ethics may be written or unwritten codes or principles governing a professional or human activity.

Therefore, "ethics" is a set of standards, or a code or value system, worked out from human reason and experience, by which free human actions are determined as ultimately right or wrong, good or evil. If an action agrees with these standards it is ethical; if not it is unethical. Ethics are derived from Ethos. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines ethos as "the set of beliefs, ideas, etc. about social behaviour and relationship of a person or group" while Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines it as "the moral ideas and attitudes that belong to a particular group or society". Indian Ethos is all about what can be termed as "national ethos". Indian Ethos is the set of values and ethics derived from the Indian Cultures as is depicted in the epics like Ramayana & Mahabharata and Holy Books like Bhagavad Gita & Vedas. It may be difficult to internalize the approach of Indian Ethos with the amaterialistic bent of mind, where the end result is the only concern, to be achieved by hook or crook rather than the processes and paths chosen to arrive at that result. Indian Ethos gives impetus to the means adopted to achieve a goal, rather than the goal itself. If the processes and means are defined and refined, excellence will automatically be manifested even in the end result.

"Ethos" is derived from "shastra" culture. It determines the culture of "Paap-Punya","Swarg-narak", conduct or cultured behavior like truth, non-violence, devotion, welcome, pranam, kindness, respect for elders, love to youngsters etc. "Ethos" is a discipline that examines one's morality or the moral standard of the society whereas "ethics" means expected standards in terms of your personal and social welfare. It includes honesty, morality; responsibility, etc. "Indian ethos" demands a subjective management system which leads to an understanding of the following:

(a) Management Attitude – Top management having firm belief in value-oriented holistic management. Profit is earned through service and satisfaction of all stakeholders –employees, customers, shareholders, and citizens. Fulfillment of social responsibility must be ensured.

(b) Humanising the Organisation – Looking at the three aspects of humane organisations, i.e., interpersonal relations, man-machine equation where the man is the prime concern and inner management through the mental and spiritual growth of individuals.

(c) Interiorising Management – Self management or management of consciousness. When the soul manages the other four members of the human being, namely, the body, mind, intellect and the heart, the conflict these four have amongst them can be resolved.This is management of consciousness. The objective of self-management is to first know and manage oneself and then manage others.

(d) Self-introspection – Embark upon self-study, self-analysis, and self-criticism to locate areas of friction and disharmony, a self-examination of one's own thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations and passions and a desire to reduce and subdue the ego.

(e) Brain-stilling – For rational and enduring decisions, a silent mind is a necessity. A perfect Mounum (calm mind enjoying tranquility) is necessary. Brain-stilling or meditative silence is the most reliable method to discover solutions to problems and difficulties which seem to be difficult to be tackled by reason and intellect because through this one can come into contact with the inner mind or higher consciousness called "Chetana".

(f) Stepping Back (for a while) – Never decide anything, never speak a word, never throw yourself into the action without stepping back. The stepping back from a situation for a while enables one to control and master a situation.

(g) Self-dynamising Meditation – A dynamic meditation is a meditation of transformation of lower consciousness into higher consciousness and hence is called transforming meditation.

Through meditation, in a silent and calm mind, one reaches the highest level of consciousness which offers guidance in the form of intuitions to tackle a multitude of problems. This is called consciousness approach to management.

(h) Role of Intuition – Intuition is the act of coming to direct knowledge or certainty without reasoning or inferring. It is immediate cognition of the inner mind and when fully developed, is efficient and effective for taking prompt and sound decisions. Intuition skills enable one to cope with confidence the fluctuating environment and rapid changes. Faith is a prerequisite to develop and realize the power of intuition.

Indian Management

The socio-cultural interpretations of managerial phenomenon represent a fairly recent conceptual advance. The dominant tradition in theorising about managerial processes has emphasised the universality of managerial principles and methods. It has been suggested that cultural variables and sociological elements have a negligible role in the analysis and explanation of managerial behaviour. It is assumed that transferring management concepts and methods from one socio-cultural environment to another is relatively easy and non-problematic. Furthermore, such a process of borrowing does not in any significant manner diminish the relevance and effectiveness of such concepts and techniques in terms of their practical application in the new situation.

In contrast to the school of thought who views the managerial process as being independent of sociological and cultural influence, the Indian management argues that managerial styles and processes are deeply influenced by socio-cultural factors. In other words, it is proposed that the socio-cultural environment plays a very important and significant role in the evolution and development of management ideas and styles. It is this basic proposition that is being put forward in this paper. In doing so, the particular case of Indian Management will be discussed. It will be argued that management in India-quite contrary to the popular impression is very much a product of our history, social structure, cultural characteristic and other significant macro-environment elements. A more critical and deep understanding of the nature and scope of the relationship between culture and management will facilitate the design of management systems appropriate to and congruent with the Indian conditions. Thus, the utilisation of a socio-cultural perspective for the analysis of management phenomenon is not merely a theoretical fascination but is replete with positive practical advantage.

It is an accepted fact that the bulk of management practices has been borrowed from the west. The transfer of these concepts has posed complex difficulties not the least of which is that many of these practices come into conflict with the traditional values of Indian society. The same experience has been reflected with reference to the transfer and adoption of Japanese patterns and styles of management. Efforts have been made to overcome some of these serious and complex problems by deputing manpower for training in Japan, but as can be imagined, this has led only to marginal outcomes in terms of job performance, quality of gradation and product excellence. There is no doubt that cross-cultural linkages and relationships are a rich source of learning but the role of the local cultural environment remains crucial in so far as cross-cultural insights have to be tested and interpreted in one's own cultural context. A systematic perusal of Indian Management through the ages brings out clearly the close nexus between cultural values and management and administrative practices. A historical analysis also establishes the fact that varying cultural influences have impacted on the social structure of Indian society making it

imperative for administrative and management processes to constantly adapt themselves to these dynamic changes in the socio-cultural environment. The information about the nature of social organisation prevalent before the influx of Aryans is scarce and vague. There is very little understanding of the administrative, organisational structures which characterized the lifestyles of the people of that period. However, in the period characterised as the Vedic, sufficient evidence is available to indicate the broad feature of the social organization of the society as also its administrative processes. It is during this period that direct and strong linkage between administrative styles and sociological variables is seen - The entire administrative system was closely intertwined with the practices of "Varna" or the caste system. This system prescribed in a definitive manner the duties and responsibilities every member of the social organisation from the king at the top to the lowest functionary.

This indigenous pattern of social administration was subjected to a series of contacts with alien cultures beginning with the Greeks creating conditions for rapid assimilation and absorption of new cultural ideas. This period also witnessed the birth and rise of empires in India as also the creation of a more organized and coherent framework of administration.

Kautilya in his "Arthashastra" enunciated in a very systematic manner the strategy of administering empires. Building on the earlier contributions by Manu Brihaspati and Usunas, Kautilya confined the leadership pattern for kings, the duties of officials of the state structure of wages and the systems of punishment. The major thrust of Kautilya's work was mistrust of subjects and the need for the king to protect himself at all times. Nevertheless, it was during this period that elements of decentralised administration were created and the birth of guilds provided some viable basis for grass-roots organisational functioning. This pattern of management and administration revolving around the fulcrum provided by the caste system continued with marginal modifications almost well into tenth century A.D. The coming of the Persians and Afghan invasion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries brought in its wake significant developments in the management and administrative systems.

Patronage was the central feature of the new administrative culture and this was buttressed by the creation of large and strong armies and an elaborate system of taxation. The rise of the system of patronage evolved during this period still persists as a key characteristic of Indian Management.

The British came in India during the role of the Mughal King Jehangir primarily in the role of traders. However, the nearly 250 years of their rule left a deep and enduring cultural and economic impact on the traditional structure of the Indian society. One of the major systematic changes introduced by the British was the rigorous selection procedures particularly for offices for the top and middle levels. In the very nature of circumstances, the top positions were filled by the British and the middle level by Indians who had acquired formal educational qualifications. This system of formal education, a major change introduced by the British served to socialise the Indians into western cultural values in general and the British version in particular. During this period the system of management in India was family owned and there was very little evidence of the development of 'professional' management. Indian industry was very much influenced by caste, region, birth and other socio-economic variables in selecting personnel. This period also witnessed the setting up of the managing agency system. The management of companies was performed by managing agents who acted on behalf of absentee proprietors and owners.

Indian Ethos for Management

In the words of Albert Einstein, "Certainly we should take care not to make intellect our God. Intellect has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead. It can only serve. It is not fastidious about its choice of leaders (Mind or Soul). The intellect has a sharp eye for tools and methods, but is blind to Ends and Values". Arnold Toynbee, Nobel Laureate expressed, "It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a western beginning in business management will have to have an Indian ending when the world adopts rich thoughts of Indian ethos and wisdom if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race."

Indian ethos for management means the applications of principles of management as revealed in our ancient wisdom brought forth in our sacred books like "Gita", "Upanishads", "Bible" and "Quran". Formally, the body of knowledge which derives its solutions from the rich and huge Indian system of ethics is known as Indian Ethos for Management. Management is behavioral science and it has to be culture specific. Indian ethos for Management has as its basis, the cultural base of India and as a country whose culture has its roots in religion - it does draw its lessons from the religions of the land - be it Hinduism, Buddhism, or any other. There are some basic ideas and thoughts revealed by our ancient scriptures which are applicable in today's management world. They are:

1. "Atmano Mokshartham, Jagathitaya cha": All work is an opportunity for doing well to the world and thus gaining materially and spiritually in our lives.

2. "Archetdanamanabhyam": Worship people not only with material things, but also by showing respect to their enterprising divinity within.

3. "AtmanaVindyateViryam": Strength and inspiration for excelling in work comes from the Divine, God within, through prayer, spiritual readings and unselfish work.

4. "Yogahkarmashu Kaushalam, Samatvam yoga uchyate": He who works with calm and even mind achieves the most.

5. "Yadishibhavanayasya siddhi bhavatitadrishi": As we think, so we succeed, so we come. Attention to means ensures the end.

6. "Parasparambhavayantahshreyahparambhavapsyathah": By mutual cooperation, respect and fellow feeling, all of us enjoy the highest good both material and spiritual.

7. "Teshamsukhmtesham shanti shaswati": Infinite happiness and infinite peace come to them who see the Divine in all beings.

8. "Paraspar DevoBhav": Regard the other person as a divine being. All of us have the same consciousness, though our packages and containers are different.

Basic principles of Indian Ethos of Management

There are six basic principles, which come to light in the holy books applicable into day's management world. They are:

1. Each soul is a potential God: Immense potential, energy, and talents for perfection as a human being have the spirit within his heart. A human being has a soul, a spark of the divine. The Divine resides in the heart of a person. The Divine means perfection of knowledge, wisdom, and power. Therefore a human being has the immense potential power or energy for self-development. Thus, human efforts can achieve even an apparently an impossible goal and convert into a reality. The association of God and human being can show an extraordinary result; only if human being decides willingly to collaborate with God and actively participates in the

society by right action under the guidance and grace of God. A human being can develop not only personal development, harmony, and happiness, but also the prosperity of the organization and the society without injustice to others.

2. *Holistic approach:* It indicates the unity between the Divine (The Divine means perfection in knowledge, wisdom, and power), individual self and the universe. The holistic approach of management is based on the spiritual principle of unity, oneness, and non-dual concept. Under these principles of unity, the Universe is an undivided whole where each and every particle is connected with every other particle. Hence, entire humanity is one.

3. *Equal importance to subjectivity/ objectivity:* Subtle, intangible subject and gross tangible objects are equally important. One must develop one's Third Eye, "JnanaChaksu", the Eye of Wisdom, Vision, Insight and Foresight. Inner resources are much more powerful than outer resources. Divine virtues are inner resources. Capital, materials and plant &machinery are outer resources.

4. *"Karma Yoga":* "Karma Yoga" (selfless work) offers double benefits, private benefit in the form of self purification and public benefit. "Karma Yoga" is a good pathway for– self purification and self-development, individual as well as collective growth and welfare,minimum play of passion, jealousy, hatred, greed, anger and arrogance, team spirit, teamwork, autonomous management, minimum control and supervision, etc. The result is all-round happiness and prosperity. "Karma Yoga" is an end-state or an alias of "NishkamaKarma" (NK). Yoga means union between "individual consciousness" and "supreme consciousnesses". Work is one of the several methods of achieving this union. Juxtaposed against the NK is the other attitude to work called "Sakam Karma" (SK).

5. *"YogahKarmasuKaushalam":* It indicates excellence at work through self-motivation and self-development with devotion and without attachment. This theory is mainly based on the concept of "Karma Yoga" as indicated by Lord Krishna in "Bhagavad-Gita" Chapter 2, Shloka 50-

"Buddhiyuktojahaatihaubhesukrtaduskrte

tasmaadyogaayayujyasvayogahkarmasukaushalam"

Endowed with the wisdom of evenness of mind, one casts off in this life, both good deeds and evil deeds: therefore, devote yourself to yoga. Skill in Action is Yoga.

If we look at the first line of the above verses – we will find the most important principle of Indian Ethos – Yoga of Equanimity of Mind in the phrase- "BuddhiYukto". The phrase in second line "YogahKarmasuKausalam" indicates- the practice of such Yoga develops dexterity in action, which means our future Managers should learn the art of detaching themselves from the fears of failures and should maintain evenness of mind in all conditions to take the right decision without getting overpowered by emotions. At the same time, managers should also be able to maintain calmness and give all the credit to the Supreme Divine if they are blessed with success in their respective projects. This will again help them to analyze and introspect on their work and the processes adopted while arriving at successor even failures. The reason to always stress on actions and not result is that the actions, being in our hand can always be replicated or avoided, but the results are many times depending on external and uncontrollable factors. Thus harnessing of skills and processes in such a way always leads to perfection and helps in manifesting all-round excellence.

6. *Co-operation:* Co-operation is a powerful instrument for teamwork and success in any enterprise involving collective work. The idea of cut-throat competition is founded on the concept of "struggle for existence" and survival of the fittest. Indian ethos denotes that the royal

road for human beings is co-operation which is a powerful motive for the teamwork. We are human beings having the mind and the power of discrimination.

Conclusion

Right from the post-independence phase of development, no adequate and serious grass root efforts were ever made to evolve management processes that could be in tune with the Indian Ethos. An understanding of our cultural milieu, norms, values, and beliefs should help us to evolve styles and management systems suited to our requirements. A social system is a living and organic system simply rejects that which is too discordant and incongruent with its ethos and thus a need for management policies and practices compatible with the cultural values and work level expectation.

Principles of Indian Ethos of Management are universally applicable. Indian Ethos for Management can help to develop an effective and holistic management pattern which will assure all-round growth in productivity, marketing, and profitability. This will help in synchronizing private and public benefits and encourage individuals to lead an enriched quality of life together with worldly achievements. The best form of management has to be holistic and value-driven, which is the objective of Indian Management Ethos.

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