

BOOK REVIEW

Indian Management And Leadership: Spiritual And Ethical Values For Corporate And Personal Success

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The author of Indian “Management and Leadership”, Swami Bodhananda has time to time enriched management literature by his incisive writings on various issues relating to management with insight into Vedantic philosophy. The present compendium is a collection of his learned lectures delivered at various elite organizations like IITs, IIMs, management associations. The contents of the book make a fluent reading and Swami Ji’s style deftly combines his wit with ancient Indian wisdom.

Swami Ji presents very valuable material for modern managers so that they may attain excellence in their work. Indian wisdom says that individual is the ultimate resource and if we can change his mind set, we can change the organization itself. Swami Ji advocates spirituality for creation of wealth for clients by optimally using scarce resources. In Bhagvad Geeta, Krishna tells Arjun to practice spirituality in the battle field itself. The core teaching of Indian wisdom is that spirituality has to be practiced in daily life. It has to be expressed in action to face challenging situations on moment to moment basis. However, Geeta advises restraint on the fruits of work.

One chapter has been devoted to an interesting aspect of management, that is, personality re-engineering. Although it is a western concept but it has roots in the Indian philosophy which says that you cannot reorganize or reengineer an organization unless you reorganize the individuals therein. The essential ingredients of personality re-engineering are: managers should have spiritual courage which can be developed through contemplation, inner calm and other creative processes; secondly, personality grows from within , inside out, by changing the external appearance; thirdly you have to grow by facing challenges and unfolding your potential; fourthly, we should have ‘detached engagement’ by becoming a creative player and at the same time keeping our health, sanity and balance; fifthly, spiritual education makes you follow your bliss by awakening the conscience, the inner light, the inner voice and the path of bliss. These five principles, the author asserts, should be followed to achieve dynamism and personality re-engineering.

The chapter on Guna (attributes) Analysis so essential to understand the human mind is a must for HRD managers. The Guna theory categorizes people into three types according to their attributes, namely, sattvic, rajasic and tamasic. While rajasic types display qualities of love, caring, wisdom and inner peace, the rajasic type love of power, domination, ambition, valour personal courage and manipulative skills. On the contrary, the tamasic type is usually dull, indifferent, stubborn and pays little attention to work and responsibilities. This theory can be applied to the work place in order to identify the right person for the right job. This chapter

gives a good insight into the power and working of the human mind, so essential for rational personnel management.

A chapter has been allocated to work culture and team building so essential for good corporate management. In India today there is hardly any work culture; in fact, there is shirk culture- shirk the work. It may be due to our past colonial back ground or socio-economic hierarchy which is still dictated by Manu's caste system. Further, we do not have much civic sense. Therefore, we have to change our work culture, particularly after opening up of the economy, and be able to compete in the global environment. The first requirement of developing a healthy work culture is to invoke spiritual potential and discover inner source of infinite energy. Secondly, the corporate goals should be crystal clear and all workers should be fully aware of the vision and mission statement of the organization. Thirdly, the people in the organization should be able to inspire themselves by self-motivation. The author has drawn an instrument from our scriptures, that is 'yajna', for developing work culture. To perform yajna you have to set up a 'yajna shala' which can be compared to a modern factory or work place. The purpose of yajna is to create wealth and human resources. The participants of yajna are priests and rishis who formulate mantras. In a yajna, everybody has to contribute his mite and pool his resources and create synergy in order to achieve a common objective. An interesting and apt analogy has been drawn by comparing management with the churning of ocean (Ksheer sagar) in our mythology which is known as sagar manthan. It teaches us as to how collaboration between two competing factions should be achieved in a crisis situation to meet a common objective. The objective is to obtain amrit for age-lessness, by churning the ocean where the asuras and the devtas would have to make joint efforts. Thereafter, the instruments should be identified- manthara the mountain as churning rod and vasuki the serpent as the churning rope; visualize the collateral damages, if any. Strategies had to be devised- as Vasuki would throw up deadly poison; therefore, asuras had to be persuaded to stand at the head of Vasuki- this was ensured after prolonged negotiations between asuras and devas; in times of crisis, the chief should be able to do trouble shooting as was done by Vishnu when Manthara, the mountain, slipped into the ocean bed and Vishnu had to do rescue work by plunging into the ocean as giant turtle and lift Manthara on his back. Thus, Vishnu acted as an effective leader who not only delegated powers but also intervened effectively to put the project on rails once again. Another crisis occurred when Vasuki emitted poison and Shiva rose to the occasion as a leader and swallowed the poison. The leader emerges as stronger after a crisis as Shiva became Neelkanth after his rearguard action. A more serious crisis was created when Dhanvantari came out of the ocean with a pot of Amrit which was snatched away by the asuras. Vishnu then became a beautiful damsel and bewitched the asuras into surrendering the pot of amrit which was duly entrusted to devas. There were problems in distribution of amrit which had to be managed by the leaders of devas while keeping the asuras at arm's length. Thus there is a great management lesson embedded in this story from Puranas.

In the 5th chapter relating to Mind set and Managerial Effectiveness, the author enumerates four types of intelligence: pragmatic, emotional, physical and spiritual to deal with a very complex and competitive world. Competition has become very intricate in the context of globalization and cross border transactions as well as explosion of information from all parts of the world through the www.

As a result, the world is changing at a break-neck speed, needing ongoing assessment of situation, collection, processing and analysis of the information for quick decision making. The mind set for managers requires reflection and introspection by doing Swadhyaya ie self-study. The mind should be quietened by practicing postures, pranayam, prayer and

meditation. Secondly the manager should be a master of analysis, devoid of emotions, to deal with organizational challenges. Thirdly, the manager should be sensitive to society and must contribute to shoulder corporate social responsibility (CSR). Fourthly, the manager should have a collaborative mind set and explore areas of consensus to avoid dissensions and disputes. Last but not the least, the manager should be able to proactively take charge and respond quickly to situations and take well-timed decisions.

The author elucidates the qualities of a leader in chapter 7. A leader has to be calm, composed and unruffled in all situations. Geeta says wise people do not get perturbed over events past or present. A leader should never be overpowered or agitated by events. Sankaracharya has said that a leader should be like an ocean, if a stone is put in the ocean, it is not disturbed. A leader should be able to give attention to diverse aspects of a given problem and deliver solutions. He should be able to inspire and himself get inspired and self-motivated. Other qualities of a leader are that he should be able to communicate effectively, recognize talent and organize effectively to achieve the objectives.

In the 8th and 9th chapters on Leadership Lessons from Indian Mythology and Conflict Resolution and Decision-making, the author has given illustrations of Rama's leadership who had not only IQ but also EQ (Emotional Intelligence) The author extols the virtues of Spiritual Intelligence Which enables a manager to face all the baseless criticism and rise above all, keeping a mental balance all the time. Rama welcomed challenges-he went to the forest, met and paid respect to the rishis and enhanced his knowledge in their company. He was an expert in building coalitions.

He befriended Nishadraj, Sugreeva, Hanuman Vibhishana. He had the capacity to synergise diverse human talents and never complain about the work force. He converted monkeys into fighters. He was able to lose his temper at the appropriate time; when Varuna was not cooperating in building of the bridge, he was ready to punish him. He knew that there should be fine balance between fear and love (Bhay binu hot na priti)The author quotes the example of Krishna in Mahabharat where he helped take difficult decisions in hostile circumstances. He was instrumental in conflict resolution by taking recourse to Sam, Dam, Dand, Bhed.

Swami Ji has given some good advice to managers in the context of global competitiveness in chapters 11 to 13.

The ultimate chapter of the book pertains to Ten Spiritual Principles of Indian Management as propounded by Swami Ji, based on his profound knowledge of spirituality, as enshrined in the Indian Vedic philosophy, and its linkage with other religions. He explains: Truth is one but its descriptions are diverse, reflecting the dilemmas and contradictions of the complex world of management. The spirit of 'vasudhaivas kutumbakam,' that is, the entire world is one family, points towards the composite culture of India in the context of globalization. Indian culture has love and respect for natural resources of all types which is conducive to global model of development. Change is the law of nature reflected in the dictum 'charaivedi charaivedi'- keep going- which has immense possibilities and drives the manager to reinvent himself according to situations. Wealth is created by joint enterprise of give and take among God, nature and humans, known as yajna culture, as explained in an earlier paragraph. Individuals are infinite resource. Theory of Karma says that every individual is influenced by the principle of cause and effect. Modern management believes in the power of reason and collective human action; it can learn a lot from the theory of karma; the worker has to be motivated by his own sense of work ethics or by making work itself a source of joy. Geeta's instruction that work should be undertaken without regard to personal reward is a motivating

factor. 'Moksha' – individual growth- and 'lokasamgraha'- common good are complementary pursuits and a good manager should always keep it in mind.

The book is a must for the managers who want to excel in their field with the help of Indian management traditions as western concepts are not always applicable to Indian conditions while the former are very relevant in the global context too.

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