



'Mythoment' : Discovering Principles of Management from Hindu Mythology

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *The modern principles of management have developed in last century only. But if we study Indian mythology we find many events, activities, monuments prove that without principles of management this would have not taken place. In this article it is tried to discover whether in Indian mythology principles of management were present or not. Famous Indian mythological books like Mahabharat, Ramayan, Bhagwat Geeta, Ved etc. have been taken as base for the study. In conclusion it is found that principles of management like planning, organizing, staffing, communication, control etc. were present in that era as well. On comparison it is found that Indian mythology is having a strong base of spirituality which puts the application of principles more effective.*

Introduction

In the last century, one of highly developed areas is Management due to increased size of activities. Due to industrialization getting work done at large scale was in a priority. That has made it almost compulsory to look at the same business activity differently. As industrialisation is 'Gift' of western countries, they faced the problem of group activity first and we are finding more Western authors in the field of Management. In any group activity management is required but if we study management literature, we are not finding the age of subject more than a century. But if we study history of group activities in any mythology whether it's a building of any monument like Taj Mahal or Pyramid or any fort it's a group activity. It would have not taken place if not properly planned, organized, coordinated or controlled. If we study history of Great wars in the world we find application of management principles there. The concept of organization structure or strategic planning are derived out of army. In the war of Mahabharat, Abhimanyu - the son of Arjun, clears six layers of 'Chakravyuh' and could not crack the seventh one. This was application of strategic planning. So before birth of Henry Fayol or F.W.Taylor, centuries back there was existence of management principles. All we need to do it is to understand and interpret the meanings behind the written material available in seed form.

In this article we will study the base form of management available in Indian Mythology. Mythology is the body of stories, symbols and rituals that communicates that subjective truth of a particular culture. Different hindu mythological books like Mahabharat, Ramayan, Bhagvat Geeta, some references of Ved etc. are studied as base. From these books certain generalized common things can be seen as applied management are as follows.

1) Self Management:

If you want to manage or lead any group, you should be well managed. A self managed person can better manage the group. So the basic focus is on managing self. One must be able to understand and control his all senses. The basic quality comes in self management is control over anger. According to Indian mythology a person can control his anger is better than a person who performs Yagna for 100 years. An angry person cannot judge anything. Person can be rational if he is Karma Yogi. Bhagvat Geeta says that a person performing his duty with detachment and as an observer (Sakshibhav) is Karma Yogi. Such performer will be free from burden of failure. Such a person is enjoying the work and not the result. So result cannot frustrate him. This will make him rational. So according to western authors, management is focusing on others to get work done while Indian Mythology says that

management begins from Inside i.e. Self Management.

2) Division of Labour / Work and Specialisation:

Taylor has observed tasks performed by different workers and that precise observation has given birth to the concepts of Division of Labour and Specialisation. These concepts were limited up to performance at one business unit level i.e. micro level. In Indian mythology according to Vedic Culture Varn Vyavastha was developed. The activities performed by different classes are broadly bifurcated into four classes. According to attributes these four classes have been made.

a) Brahmin (Wise people) b) Kshatriya (Administrator)
c) Vaishya (Business men) d) Shudra (Servants)

a) Brahmins (Wise People) :

Those who possess the attributes of learning and preaching, having simplicity of mind, inner and outer purity, forgiveness, self control over body and mind used to perform duties of Brahmin. They were highly respected by the society. Even in any kingdom their place was very special. King use to take advice from them.

b) Kshatriya (Administrator)

Those who possess administrative skill, enjoy the feeling of being master or chief, always feel honoured when they protect the others. They were called Kshatriya. The kings of any kingdom were Kshatriyas. Collecting revenues, managing fund, providing different facilities and donating the poor, providing security to any class of the society were their prime duties.

c) Vaishya (Businessmen)

Those who want to undertake any business activities to earn profits were businessmen. Any economy was dependent upon this class. They used to give revenues to the kingdom from their incomes. In Ved, Vaishyas are compared with stomach – digestive system in a body, that collects all the nutritious food and transforms in to energy and supplies it to various organs in a specific required proportion and doesn't accumulate as that may result in indigestion. Just like that they are generating profits – gains thru various economic activities and distributing the gains among different classes of the society according to their needs and should not accumulate as that may result in inequality in society which will give birth to various social problems.

d) Shudra (Servant)

Those who are interested in serving different classes people they were called shudra.

This bifurcation was made on the basis of attributes and not on the basis of birth or dynasty. Example of Maharshi Vishwamitra, a character of *Ramayana*, can be studied. By birth he was from Kshtriya Family but he was having attributes like Brahmin so he chose the work of giving knowledge in Ashram. Lord Ram and his brothers were his students. It doesn't end here because his sons became shudra as they carry such attributes. So a person can choose a profession which suits with his attributes. Thus we can see that division of work is not limited up to any business unit but it was broad enough to develop any society or economy. So Indian Mythology focused on management of a society with the help of division of work based on attributes at Macro level. It is a broader view compare to western authors.

3) Planning , Strategies and Policies:

In *Vidur Niti Udyog Parva of epic Mahabharata*, it is explained that any activity should begin with clear understanding of objective behind. Not only this but the results after and how does it contribute to your development should be kept in mind before you decide it. To take any decision regarding any activity, input output ratio should be compared. If output or gain is considerably high then one should start that activity earliest. The application of strategic planning and implementation in context to army was present. *Bhishma addressing Cauravas in Virat Parv* that you must have clear measurement about the strength and weaknesses of your army. If they are highly satisfied and having high morale then war can be declared against enemy. But if satisfaction level is average then war should be avoided and compromise should be made. For amicable solution four strategic options in form of policies can be applied named *Sama, Dama, Bhed* and *Dand*. Policy of *Sama* focusing on convincing, *Dama* stands for paying money, *Bhed* explains dividing while *Dand* is punishment in any suitable form may be sometimes in form of paying more tax. These four policies should be applied according to time, situation, person. A tactful application will result in healthy environment.

4) Organising:

In *Shanti Parva of Mahabharat*, state organization structure is explained. It was a pyramidal structure. A head is appointed in every village. Head of the village has to report activities of his village to his superior who is in charge of 10 villages. The reports of 10 villages will be submitted to his higher authority who takes care of 100 villages. He has to report his chief who is in charge of 1000 villages. The chief of 1000 villages will directly report to the king. They are assigned duties and given authorities in a balanced form to work effectively. One more person can be appointed as minister to administer chief of 1000 villages. This person can be named as revenue minister. As the major task is to get the revenues from different villages. He use to take care of village people in form of safety aspect also. Has appointed his spies to report him directly as well as to control the head of the village. According to type, size and volume of business, tax was levied at reasonable rate.

5) Staffing :

To run any organization good and competent persons are needed. Finding appropriate person, testing him and appointing a right one with handsome salary and freedom of work is key of success. This group of activity is called staffing. It was applied in the same manner in the time of Mahabharat. In *Shanti Parva* it is explained. The king should be very much clear regarding the expected qualities of different positions. Certain common characteristics are... he must be qualified, honest, dedicated, loyal, having good family background, ability to plan, satisfied etc. are essential for any position. Not only this king use to test him before appointing him. Checking from variety of aspects done. To appoint any manager or minister, a highly qualified and trust worthy person with high morale and ethics is preferred. Family background was given due importance because that was one the important factor that decides his behavior in adverse situations. They were

given all the luxuries and perks by the kingdom and full freedom to work. All these must be done in very ethical manner as the aim of any kingdom is welfare of the society. Compare to western literature, the basic difference is emphasize on family background is given in Indian mythology as our behavior pattern is highly motivated by our family environment.

6) Control :

Indian mythology emphasizes self control rather than imposed control. One should be able to control his organs rather than being controlled by the needs of organs. For this, all the efforts are made by the surroundings to create the environment of ethics and morality. At school level thru different stories ethics and morality are taught. 'Panchtantra' Stories are the best way to inculcate values in person. Though due to situation, lack of self control may lead to commit some misconduct like theft, malpractice or crime. It should be controlled and protected by king. The provision of punishment should be there. The security should be given to the informer as well.

7) Communication :

Communication in today's era focuses on media, types and flow of communication means upward, downward, horizontal etc. While in era of Mahabharat, it is in context to the quality content, type of words we use and tone that we use. This will decide the feedback and approach the receiver. In *Vidur Niti* it is explain that a wise man should avoid charismatic words and make use of easy, simple and soft word to make it effective. Harshness in speech should be avoided. This may lead to disaster.

8) Leadership:

Indian mythology is full of spiritualism. So the examples of great leaders are having spiritual and holistic aspects in their personality. In Mahabharat we find two types of leaderships. On one there is an unethical, negative leader – Duryodhan. On the other hand there are positive leaders like Krishna, Yudhisthir and Arjun. The qualities of these leaders can be found even in today's world. Positive leaders are inspirational and role models irrespective of time. Krishna – A spiritual, practical and persuasive personality. Ability to motivate a surrendered person in winning temperament. The role conscious – Yudhisthir, knows very well what should be done ethically in any situation. He has ability to explain calmly but firmly the truth. Aggressive – Arjun. Having winning temperament to fight against unethical practices and still loved by all. Sensitive enough to understand the feelings. From Mahabharat we are learning a new theory of leadership – Divine Leadership. According to Hindu Mythology, great leadership characteristics should be compared with different characters. When he is expressing his happiness and joy he should be like Lord Indra, when he is punishing for misdeeds he should be cruel like Yamaraj, when he is donating for the betterment and progress of the society he should be like Kubera, while fighting against the enemies he should be aggressive like Fire. He should have depth of ocean, height of mountain like Himalaya and tolerance capacity like motherly earth.

9) Decision Making:

The decision making process includes following steps according to Peter Drucker:

- 1) Defining the Problem
- 2) Analyzing the problem
- 3) Developing alternative solutions
- 4) Deciding the best solution
- 5) Put in action

While Bhagwat Geeta gives following steps for taking decision:

- 1) Environmental scanning and searching
- 2) Understanding the problem
- 3) Develop strategic options and consulting experts if necessary

- 4) Comparing and choosing the alternatives with rationality means while we choose the alternative we should be free from anger, greed, selfishness, revenge, jealousy and affection.
- 5) Put the alternative on ethical ground. It should not be harmful for any class or spirit of the society. It's a test on holistic ground.
- 6) Execution of decision with brilliancy and skill. Efforts should be made as if we are offering something to God that means egoless
- 7) Acceptance of result as 'God Gift'.
- 8) Sharing the results with parties involved like suppliers, employees, customers, investors, government and the society.

On comparison it can be seen that more or less they are the same but the remarkable difference between both is in Geeta ethical values, morality and societal benefit is in a centre rather than personal gains. If any decision is adverse for the society that should be avoided while in process of Drucker this aspect is not considered.

Conclusion

To conclude we can say that to undertake any group activity proper planning, organizing, staffing, communication and control means Management is essential. Whether its time of

the oldest culture of the world – Vedic Culture or time of Ramayan or its time of Mahabharat – Bhagvat Geeta, management was present, management is present and it will remain forever. Any society or any group effort is ultimately made up of and for Human Being. If this factor is cultivated properly, the brightest period of any society can be felt. That's why in hindu culture in beginning or end of any event, occasion or activity it is offered to the God. All the efforts are made to create the environment of an ethical, morale and value based society. That will give birth to such a human being who is full of morality, ethics and role conscious. Whatever we do, we are offering it to our God. Our ego or 'I' is not responsible but god grace is more important. A touch of spirituality can be found in management process of Indian Mythology. Any activity performed by Brahmin, Kshtriya, Vaishya or Shudra, the aim is to achieve Moksha. Doer is not important, motivational force in form of God Grace is the only important. This approach is missing in the western literature of management. And truly this is the need of any culture.

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