



## ANCIENT INDIAN WISDOM: A REVIEW OF ITS IMPLICATION TO MODERN MANAGEMENT

**Akriti Jaiswal**

*Research Scholar, Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.*

### **Abstract**

Management has certainly drawn a lot with the help of interdisciplinary researches from various fields of social and natural sciences but still ethical leadership remains low in a priority list. This paper attempts to review the essence of the teachings of ancient Indian scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Arthashastra, etc. Since ethics remains low in the priority list of management that's why in spite of organizations coming with innovative management and best practices, corporate scams, bankruptcy are still the cause of worry in the business world. This paper on the basis of discussions can conclude that through the wisdom of Ancient Indian scriptures such as Vedas, Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishad, Arthashastra, Mahabharata and Ramayana etc. we can make the modern management paradigms more effective.

**Key Words:** (Ancient Indian wisdom, Vedas, Upanishad, Ramayana, Mahabharat, Bhagwad Gita and Kautilya's arthshastra).

### **Introduction**

Management is required in each and every field whether an organization, business, defence, etc to achieve organizational goals and attain competitive advantage in the market. Management is not new concept it has been practiced since the start of the concept of the society. In earlier times kings used to manage their kingdoms and from that onwards the concept of management theory has started. Various theories of management were developed in the west in the last 150 years (Mahadevan, 2008). At times question arise in our mind why most of the theories and definition are from the other nation? Why not an Indian theory? India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world and one of the wealthiest nations at one point of time there was no problem of hunger and unemployment under the rule of Vedic Rajrshis. When we talk of effective governance (Desai, 2009), we often give example of Rama Rajya (Ramayan).

Today we are supposed to be the fastest growing economies but also one of the most corrupted Nation, we are having large number of MNC's on one side but our farmers are committing suicide on the other side. This is not the nation that we dreamt of we have to go to the past to develop our future. It has been noted by (Rarick & Nickerson, 2009) that who are interested in furthering their understanding of good leadership are advised to look back to the past for answer to the future. No major Indian companies have seen the stage of Bankruptcy during global financial crisis. Suddenly India has also improved its position in Global ranking of ease of doing Business. This leads to the question that, How ancient Indian wisdom can contribute towards making the existing modern management more effective? Ethics remains low in the priority list of management that's in spite of organizations coming with innovative management and best practices, corporate scams, bankruptcy are still the cause of worry in the business world. The reason for the failure of organization is the lack of good governance. A good governance in this 21<sup>st</sup> century of modern world, management would lead the nation to prosperity when all of us self actualized, remove the barrier of gender discrimination, caste, religion, region, community, country, reaching out to the world as global citizens glorifying our higher selves for the betterment of humanity. Then our earth would turn into a paradise we dream of (Chakravarty, 2013)

### **Sources of Ancient Indian Wisdom**

India has many sources of ancient knowledge such as **Vedas** a collection of ancient scriptures (Rig, Yajur, Sama, & Atharva), the **Upanishads, Puranas and Itihas, Bhagavad Gita**, the epic **Mahabharat** and **Ramayana, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Manusmriti** and **Buddhism**, they contain all ideas and facts of management principles and practices. Wisdom found in this bank can be applied and extended to Indian management problems. Ancient Indian ethics can help Modern Management to create more sustainable model of management. Our traditional Indian knowledge and wisdom can help us in addressing the problems of modern management (Singh, 2017). One cannot deny the fact that India had a glorious past with its wisdom literature. It is a way of life or a philosophy to motivate us on to the direction of enrichment.



**Fig. 1 Sources of Indian Wisdom**

### **Essence of Indian Wisdom in Modern Management**

Management involves three aspects such as maximum utilization of resources, achieving organizational goals with efficiency and effectiveness, value addition to the world suggesting social responsibility. All these aspects of management can be achieved in a healthy environment consist of ethics and ethical behavior. Essence of Indian management is about society, it requires that people should develop with purity, ethics and morale, karma-yoga (Work action), knowledge, evenness of mind, objectivity of work, faith and that each and every person need to work efficiently without expecting any result in order to keep moving the wheels of universe (Tripathi, 2009). Ancient knowledge give prime importance to certain values and qualities like humanity, pride less, non-violence, tolerance, simplicity, self control, absence of ego, non-attachment etc (Murali 2009). The inherent power of lord Rama and the wisdom of lord Krishna expressed in Gita will make Indian management vibrant, active, and effective (Virmani B, 2000). Indian wisdom can be applied effectively in any managerial area and is able to answer many of the management relates issues. However, the contribution of western management philosophies and theories cannot be ignored but integration with the Ancient Indian wisdom will be helpful in achieving effective result. Indian wisdom is full of some great works by great leaders such as Swami Vivekanada's thoughts on "Work and its Secret", "Karma Yoga" teach us the importance of work and the purification of mind and soul that can be achieved by selfless work and devotion (Rajak, 2014)

### **Essence of Vedas in Modern Management**

The Vedas mainly focused on Pravritti Marga (the path of action). Thus it covers different branches of knowledge-physics, chemistry, botany, economics, music etc. Emotional Intelligence which plays a pivotal role in all areas of human functioning is based on the ancient Indian literature (Goparaj and Sharma, 2011). Good Governance is a buzz in today's corporate scenario, it is a combination of two aspects such as effective functioning and high values. For good governance two views can be adopted by corporate i.e. Business and Spiritual view, the spiritual view is backed by authoritative statements of the ancient Indian texts (Radhaswamy & Basotia, 2003). Dharma (Righteousness), Lok Sangrha (Public good), Vividhta (Innovation), Kausalam (Efficiency) and Jigyasa (Learning) were some ancient Indian wisdom that can be applied for effective corporate governance (Bashin, 2010). Vedas consist of ancient value systems that emphasize on 1) Satayam or truth, 2) Tapah or Austery, 3) Damah or Sense control, 4) Samah or Peace of mind, 5) Dharma or Righteousness, 6) Danam or Charity, 7) Daya or Mercy and 8) Nyasah or Renunciation. The Vedas indicate the path of attaining knowledge and realize the abstract through concrete. There are number of western approach of motivating employees such as Theory X, Theory Y or Theory Z but the ancient wisdom suggest the Vedantic approach or Theory V approach that enhance employees performance by stimulating employee sense of devotion or commitment to the higher cause of organizational and societal good (Rajeev, 2007). Vedanta believes that every individual has a divine power for self development and if an individual



brings about his or her self-development then automatically it will benefit the organization and the society as he or she is part of the organization or society provided he or she is duty bound or impartial. Humanistic approach of management by Peter F. Drucker suggests that employees are the assets and not a liability, one should focus on.

### Relevance of Upanishad in Modern Management

The wisdom of ancient times can be extended and applied to Indian management problems and helpful in adjusting western theories in Indian settings. Many themes in the vedic literature helps to achieve the central themes of Karma (Creation, Action, Work-Life), Bhakti (Devotion, Commitment, Loyalty), and Jnana (Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom) (Mascaro, 1962) and helps to reach objectives such as 1) Inspire employees to excel in work 2) Enhance employee commitment to the organization 3) Use knowledge to achieve business excellence in a very unique way by integrating it with spiritual development of an Individual. The inclusion of these three element form the Individual attitude towards all aspects of life including the work life and leads to organization's and society's benefit. Upanishad tells us that the "Light of the Self" illuminates everything in the world. In order to attain Self-Realization it is necessary to perform some action or work (Rajeev, 2007). Upanishad suggests that by using the business knowledge (Jnana), the organization will be able to get success through leadership (Karma) with devotion (Bhakti) towards the organization. Ancient Indian scriptures revealed ideas and thoughts of Indian ethos in management (Himadri Barman) such as:

1. Atmano Mokshartham, Jagat hitya cha: Each and every works is an opportunity for doing everything good in the world and thus gaining materialty and spirituality in our lives.
2. Archet Dana Manabhyam: Worship people not only with material things but also by showing respect to their enterprising divinity within.
3. Atmana vindyate viryam: Strength, motivation and inspiration for doing work in an excellent and effective way comes from the divine. God within, through prayer, spiritual readings and unselfish work.
4. Yogah Karmashu Kaushalam, Samatvam Yoga Uchyate: He who works with calm and even mind achieve the most.
5. Yadishi Bhavana Yasya Siddhi Bhavati Tadrishi: What we think, we become, and accordingly we succeed. Attention to mean ensures the end.
6. Parasparam bhavayantha shreyah param bhavapsyathah: Through mutual cooperation, respect and feelings for others, everyone can enjoy the highest good on both ends i.e. material and spiritual.
7. Tesham Sukham Tesham Shanti Shaswati: Infinite peace and happiness come to them who see divine in everyone.
8. Paraspar Devo Bhav: Every person has divine power, we should regard all person as a divine being. All of us have same consciousness with different packages and containers.

Indian thoughts and ideas can help in developing an effective and holistic pattern of management which will ensure overall growth in productivity, marketing and profitability. Basic principles of Indian ethos (which are based on upanishad, vedas, bhagvad gita, mahabharat, ramayana and arthshastra) for management is Karma yoga i.e. selfless work, it offers dual benefits, personal benefit in the form of self purification and public benefit in the form of Co-Operation, it is a powerful instrument for team work and success in an organization involving collective work. There are various principles in the ancient Indian ethos that can be applied to modern management for the development of organization.

### Essence of Bhagavad-Gita in Modern Management

The Bhagavad-Gita teaches us the importance of work without expecting results and self-management. As it said in the Bhagavad-Gita that what the great man do the commoners follows so self-management is essential. Managing is not about only managing others, but oneself if a person is able to manage him or her than he or she can set example for others. The philosophy of Bhagavad-Gita should be viewed as guide in developing managerial effectiveness and not as spiritual perspective. Managerial effectiveness can be gained from Bhagavad-Gita in three ways: mind-management, management of duties and the principles of self-management (Munipam, 2007). Specific models of administration, management, and leadership have been described on the basis of Gita (Sharma, 1999). The teachings of Bhagavad-Gita can be relate to the modern concept of Altruism which means doing something for others without a motive of self-interest or self-gain (Lakshmi, 2013). The Bhagavad-Gita guides one to work with commitment by practicing detachment which can be gained through self control by conquering the desires. Work culture in an organization is ensured when everyone perform without any conflict for the betterment of his or her own as well as of others. It also suggests that we can manage ourselves like Arjun in the battlefield if we raise our spirits to overcome our weakness and open the door of opportunities awaiting us. The Gita also believes in the concept of Karma or work but it is presented in the different manner. It teaches us that work should be seen as form of worship to the lord. When work is seen as an offering to the God and is done with complete devotion then it becomes a thing of joy leading to an increase in ones capabilities far beyond what one thinks is possible and it also improves the quality of work-life. Ancient Indian philosophy does not discourage the value of work but it attempt to synthesize work with joy as the outcome becomes more fruitful & fulfilling.



### **Role of Mahabharat and Ramayana in Modern Management**

Ramayana believes in the principle of work life and effective management which can be applicable even today. Ramayana is based on the life of Rama, who ruled with great justice and equity to ensure protection and prosperity. In the Ramayana lord Rama were given the title of “Maryada purushattam” he set an example of effective governance what we often called Rama Rajya for managers or decision makers. He suggest that in the management everyone is answerable to the public, superiors, subordinates, shareholders, stake holders, board of directors to ensure transparency for the day to day operation of the organization. Lord Rama followed the path of ethics and set an example for Kings that duty comes before his personal comfort. The Mahabharat also provide guidance to the corporate world on the various lessons of management. It teaches us how we can transform our weakness into strength.

The pandavas were united and work in team under the leadership of Lord Krishna by each other’s responsibilities. A manager should never be shy away from taking risks as pandavas undertook risks at the time of crisis manager should undertake risks, but remain cool and composed, accept the challenge and realize the set goal successfully. Mahabharat emphasizes on the attainment of the ultimate goal of an individual’s life, Moksha (self realization) and man can achieve this goal by the help of Dharma (code of conduct), Artha (Material attainment i.e. wealth), Kama (Desire), Moksha (excellence in work , to go beyond material desire). Human values in the management proceed from Dharma (**Ranganathananda, 1993**). One can become a better worker, a better manager, a better teacher etc by committing one-self to the higher plane of Self realization which is higher than self-actualization.

### **Significance of Kautilya’s Arthashastra in Modern Management**

Kautilya wrote a book on politics and art of good governance which will act as a helping guide for leaders. Kautilya’s Arthashastra strategy such as requirement of information, principles of management, keep an open mind, managing multiple projects, constant training, right timing, CSR, time management etc provide guidance to present managers and leaders of organizations particularly on the strategic application in business process (**Narayanan, 2015**). Chanakya suggest the king and the administration to avoid the extreme decision and apply soft actions. Authority can only prevail with mutual operation of others. The king and the administrators are considered as the servants of the people and answerable to the public. Chanakya says “Sukhasya Mulam Dharma” which means that righteousness (Ethics) is the basis of happiness and prosperity. The wisdom of Kautilya’s Arthashastra provide various economic policy measures to promote economic development in the economy and teach us how to promote more ethical and responsible leadership in an individual and organizational level but it also teach us to move in the direction of restoring harmony among the organizations in order to establish a sustainable business through spiritual congruence (**Tanwar; Patki, 2014**).

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

This paper on the basis of above discussion can conclude that through the wisdom of Ancient Indian scriptures such as Vedas, Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishad, Arthashastra, Mahabharata and Ramayana etc. we can make the modern management paradigms more effective. Clear understanding of wisdom and management, its applicability and relevance to the management has the potential to achieve organizational performance and success (**Ekmekci et al., 2014**). With the help of this ancient wisdom we can make a more responsible leaders or managers on individual as well as institutional level. It will also help in restoring the world peace and creating a better world through globalization with spiritual congruence (**Bhattacharjee, 2011**). Ancient Indian Scriptures provides an opportunity to integrate the wisdom with current management practices like TQM, Sustainable development, Environment protection, CSR, etc. for achieving a higher purpose, and for creation of an ethical environment and can help us to live in peace, co-operation, and harmony. It also gives ethical direction to the modern managers and helps them to become extra ordinary leaders who can guide us towards a new horizon (**Rajak & Prasad, 2014**).

The wisdom of Kautilya’s Arthashastra teaches us how to promote more ethical and responsible leadership in an individual and organizational level but also help in achieving harmony in organizations to set up a sustainable business environment through spiritual congruence (**Sreedhar, 2016**). Mahabharata teaches us how we can transform our weakness into strength. Lord Rama followed the path of ethics and set an example for Kings that duty comes before his personal comfort. The Bhagavad-Gita teaches us the importance of work without expecting results and self-management. It is the time that management should look into the Ancient Indian scriptures and incorporates its teachings to make the modern management more effective and restoring peace in the world. Vedic integration of modern management, new age management and transcendental management in the form vedic management is essential to improve the material and spiritual conditions of humanity (**Sharma, 2005**). In addition it also ensures proper balance between prosperity, equity and spirituality which was conceived in the Vedas given by vedic intellectuals.



## References

1. Bhattacharjee, A. (2011). Modern Management Through Ancient Indian Wisdom: Towards a More Sustainable Paradigm. *Purushartha*, 4(1), 14-37.
2. Chakravarty, R. (2013). Realizing our Ancient Indian Ethos in the world of modern Management. *SIT Journal of Management*, 3(2), 181-191.
3. Desai, P. (2009). Spiritual psychology: A way to effective management. *African Journal of marketing Management*, 165-171.
4. Ekmekci, A.K., Teraman, S.B.S., & Acar, P. (2014). Wisdom and Management: A Conceptual Study on Wisdom management. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 150, 1199-1204
5. Goparaj, H., & Sharma, R. (2011). Emotional Intelligence: Vedic and Modern Perspective. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261850600>
6. Lakshmi. K. (2013). Altruism and Dana: Impact on self and well being. *Journal of Human Values*, 65-71.
7. Mahadevan, B. (2008). Management lessons from Bhagvad Gita. *Vedants Kesari*, 118-121.
8. Munipam, B. (2007). Exploring managerial effectiveness from the perspectives of the Bhagavad-Gita. Paper presented at the 2nd South and Southeast Asian Association of Study of Culture and Religion (SSEASR) Conference. Thailand.
9. Narayanan, S. (2013). Effective Strategy for Organizational Development: With Reference to Kautilya's Arthshastra. *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research*, 2(5), 79-82
10. Pataki, P. (2014). Application of Ancient Indian Sutras in Modern Management Framework: Towards a Sustainable Paradigm. *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research (IJMSSR)*, 3(1), 80-85. Retrieved from <http://www.irjournals.org/ijmssr/Jan2014/13.pdf>.
11. Radhaswamy, M., & Basotia, V. (2003). Value Based Corporate Governance. In S. Bhargava, "Transformational leadership- Value Based Management for Indian Organization"(pp. 56-65). Response Books (A Unit of Sage Publications).
12. Rajak, & Prasad, M. (2014). Ancient Indian Wisdom in Modern Management: Review of its scope and prospects. *Aweshkar Research Journal*, 18(2), 18-29.
13. Rajak, M.P. (2014). Ancient Indian Wisdom in Modern Management: A Review of its scope and prospects. *A Peer Reviewed Research Journal*, 18(2), 18-29.
14. Rajeew, P (2007). Wisdom from Ancient Indian Philosophy for the Corporate World. *International Management Review*, 3(1), 72-81.
15. Ranganathananda, S. (1993). Eternal values for a changing society. Vol1, Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan.
16. Rarick, C. A., & Nickerson, I. (2009). *Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business*. Retrieved April 14, 2013, from [www.aabri.com](http://www.aabri.com): <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/09151.pdf>
17. Sharma S. (1999). Corporate Gita: Lessons for Management, Administration and Leadership. *Journal of Human Values*, 5, 103-123.
18. Singh, N. (2017). Relevance of Ancient Indian Wisdom to Modern Management. *The Indian Journal of Management*, 10.
19. Sreedhar, J. (2016). Application of Ancient Indian Philosophy in Modern Management. *International Journal of Research and Development- A Management Review*, 5(4), 36-39.
20. Tanwar, R. (2014). An Analytical Study of the relevance of Arthshastra in Modern India. *IOSR journal of Economics and Finance*, 5(3), 32-35.
21. Virmani, B. (2000). Managing People in Organizations- The Challenges of Change. Response Books (A Unit of Sage Publications).