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Effective business management Principles its relevance in modern Era as mentioned in Mahabharat

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Abstract

The Mahabharat is not a management text. However, Indian sages, in their instruction to the king, insisted upon the proper planning, strategy, decision making human and natural resource management, agriculture and trade. People were advised to live in harmony with all natural forces, and also not excessively disturb the balance of an organisation. Training to be a pious person starts in a family and should continue throughout the journey of life. The morale of kings, journals, administrators, planners, and policy-makers of that particular period will guide us fo the uplifting the society as well as in business world.

Keywords: Mahabharat, management, Indian-culture, epic, leader, Srikrishna, Kourav, Pandav planning, goal

Introduction

Management is a process that involves integrating and coordinating the work of others so that the goals of an organisation ae achieved efficiently and effectively. It is interdisciplinary field with contributions from various subjects such as Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics and Finance. Contemporary management also includes issues related to cross- cultural management and international management. Increasingly the understanding of management is coming to depend on analysing and predicting organisational behaviour which is the basis for human resource management. The earliest civilisation flourished because of the organised human efforts, so management of men has naturally received much importance and attention in human society. Applicability of ancient Indian concept in modern business management is of relevance because of the fact that without strong management techniques India could not have seen an organised and culturally advanced civilisation. The Indian culture throughout was very much organised and had its own leadership style and management system. The Indian epics inspire every manager and leader to reflect, investigate and cogitate.

The study of Mahabharat reveals management topics which are exactly the same in today, s management system. The genesis of modern management can be vividly found in Mahabharat is useful, beyond doubt and suspicion. For instance “There is certain virtues a king should have. Only by attending them will he acquire merit. The king should perform his duties without wrath and malice, he should not abandon kindness, he should acquire wealth without persecution or cruelty, he should pursue pleasure without attachment ^[1].”

In this epic which depicts lessons on spirituality and ethics through dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjun who is at a great crisis of his life. The Karma Yoga, Samkhya Yoga, Bhakti Yoga notion of three Gunas have very important implicationa in the context of ethical leadership, decision making and other management techniques.

The few hidden factors that made Pandavas win over Kouravas in spite of having more resources than pandavs are:

Ethical laadership The leader in the whole story of Mahabharat is Lord Krishna who guided Pandavas. all through their tough times and kept their spirits high by reminding them of their duties and objective of life. Though Krishna was the leader, it can be seen that he never played any role in the battle. Instead he acted.

As bacon to the Pandavas and stood to the John Maxwell, s definition of a leader:

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“Leader become great not because of their power but because of their ability to empower others”---John Maxwell
For instance—“The eternal duty of a king is the happiness of his subjects, observance of truth and sincerity in behaviour.”

“A leader should learn the duties of all orders of men. That will aid him in observing his own duties, whether when he is in his own country or in the realm of another.”¹ Brihaspati said this: “The king should not always be mild but neither should be fierce. He should be like a vernal sun, neither too hot nor too cold [2].”

The qualities of leader as king are defined many times in mahabharat such as: “He is the best of king who has wisdom, who possessed of liberty, who is ready to take advantage of the weakness of his foes, who is conversant with what is bad for each of the four orders of his subjects, who is prompt in action, who has his wealth under control. Who is not vindictive, who is high minded...he is the best of kings whose men live fearlessly, like in the house of sires [3].” A good example of distributed leadership is seen in the war of Mahabharat, likewise if in the organisations also it has been followed then it will be beneficial to both the individual as well as to the organisation. A good leader will always share responsibilities so that he focus on their work and achieve the goal. Pandavas had distributed leadership in seven commanders like Virat (king of Matsya), Drupad (king of Panchala), Sahadev (king of Magadh), Dhristketu (king of Chedi), Satyaki (only warrior of Dwarka) and others for the seven divisions. It means one man command for one akshouhini.

Planning & Strategy: Planning is the first the managerial activities had drawn the attention of the composer of the epic Mahabharat in these words:

Krityani purvam parisankhyay sarvanyaavyaye
canurupam ca vrittim
Sangrahinyadanurupam sahayam asadhyani hi
duskarani⁵

In the beginning, the exact dimensions of work, the budget, the reasonable wages etc. should be looked into, decided and settled. Thereafter, able and qualified helpers should be recruited for the reason that even the toughest work can be accomplished with the assistance of competent helpers.

The message given by Vidur to Dhritrastra is known as ‘Viduropadesh’, which is the part of Mahabharat, when he was terribly confused whether to support his son Duryodhana who was practising all adharmas or support Yudhishthira who was embodied of dharma. Here, we present only main strategy points in short which are:

- A scholar/ manager should have spiritual knowledge, devotion towards work patience, endurance and moral strength.
- He should have faith in good and concentration towards work.
- He should take other’s advice /opinion before undertaking / doing work.
- He should not disclose everything about a work before it is completed.
- Try to listen as much as possible from all sources
- **Turn weakness into strength:** Pandava as for the war did proper preparation and turned their weakness into the strength. Arjun set a mission to acquire divyastra

and Yudhishthira acquired teachings from different rishis.

- **Necessity of diversification:** “Do not put all your eggs in the same basket.”— is repeatedly told in our Indian ethos. It is what is exactly done by all the brother Pandav family. In company, survives on single product, then the risk involved is extremely high.
- **Team –Work:** Everyone on the side of Pandavs was highly committed to their goal. They were selfless and bound to their ultimate aim of dharma. Even in the times of difficulty they motivated and stood by each other.
- **The organisation is bigger than individual:** Yudhishthira decides to gamble away his entire kingdom not just once but twice. That time Droupadi asked him a question directly—“who gave him right to lose her wife, his brother and the kingdom?” Being a king, does not entitle him to gamble away his kingdom. The individual has no right to destroy the organisation, even he has founded it.

The knowledge, qualifications, method of action and attitudes should also complement each other: The qualities that any person ought to possess in order to be a successful and effective have been enumerated in Mahabharat as:

Atmajnanam samarambhastitiksha
Yamrthann apasksranti Dharmanityata sa vai pandit
ucayat [6]

The person who possesses the knowledge of real self, has capacity to bear the agony, remain engaged in performance of duty is and is never distracted is called pandit, a learned one.

Take calculated risks but always have dynamic strategies: In the beginning of the war, Yudhishthira went to ask for blessings of the elders, who invariably revealed the secrets of their defect.

Pandavas and Kouravas both took risks but while Duryodhana,s decisions were whimsical and egoist, the Pandavs took calculated risks which mostly paid off.

How to communicate: Denying some favour as to give something if it is not done wisely, may go to the extent of causing verbal injury which is worse than bodily injury. A wound may get healed up in due course of time but a verbal injury may not.

“Vaca diruktam vibhatsam na sanrohati vakkshatam” [7]

Principle of Decision- Making

The Indian ethos is based on cooperation to grow along with others and to share with others. An organisation which does not cultivate a culture of innovation or at least knowledge sharing, does not have a proper compensation structure, in that organisation people lack passion(Rajas), tend to engage in corrupt and unethical practices(lack of Sattva) and tend to find reasons for inactivity. Such organisations foster ‘Tamas’ in their culture and hence are out of business. The Guna theory states that three ‘gunas’ that from the Prakriti are:

1. Sattva - Knowledge & Wisdom, Ethical and moral conduct
2. Rajas - Passion, action and perseverance
3. Tamas - Inactivity, ignorance and recklessness

Unethical practices like favouritism, financial misrepresentation etc. lead to sudden degradation of “Sattvik” guna within the organisational culture. This may lead to emergence of “Tamsik” tendencies and can break the delicate between Sattvik –Rajas gunas. The Rajas may exceedingly dominate the Sattvik gunas which will lead to making wrong organisational decisions at various levels. As the Bhagavad Gita says:

Sattva sanjayate jnanam rajasolobha eva ca
Pramada mohou tamaso bhavato jnanam eva ca [8]

Which means that is the from ethical and moral conduct comes wisdom (Sattava); passion leads to greed (Rajas); ignorance and inactivity leads to illusion.

Principles of control and Vigilance: The concept of Self was elaborated in the Karma Yoga of Bhagavad Gita where Lord Krishna said:

Indryani parany ahur iddriyebhyah param manah
Manas tu para buddhir yobuddheh paratas tu sah [9]

This means that—“The senses are said to be superior to the body, the mind is superior to the senses, and intellect is superior to the mind and that which is superior to the intellect is Self (Atman).”

People who never realise their Self, they are controlled by their senses instead of their mind or intellect. And hence take decisions based on temptations and invariably make mistakes.

Bhishma, when he was steadily dying on the bed of arrows (sharshaiya), sermonises Yudhishtira about the governance as he narrated in Shanti/ Anushasa Parva of the great epic. He says that vigilance is the main attribute of governance. The second tenet is self- discipline. Bhishma gives 36 components of it and expected to the king to have self-control over him. Bhishma has already lectured Yudhishtira on impartiality as tenet of governance. Trust is the attribute as it is said,” It is the duty of the king to make sure that there are no signs of any distrust among the people and officials.”

The Mahabharat is also concerned about public wealth and taxation. It says that taxation should be handled as bumble bee does a flower, extracts its sweetness but does not damage it. Fear is the next tenet and Bhishma has its two concepts. When Arjuna said without the fear of law and rules, the social edifice would crash, Bhishma agreed to do it and added that the king should also be afraid of hands of law which could hook him, similarly an Adharmi should have this fear but a Dharmatma should always enjoy the freedom from fear.

The Mahabharat also emphasised on proper balancing of Kshama (Reconciliation) and Bala (Force). Bhishma says in Shantiparva that a king should be like an autumn sun which is neither very hot nor very cold, i.e. He should neither be too harsh nor extremely gentle.

Human resource management and importance of other resources

In Mahabharat, ‘Arth’ means natural factors like the subjects of five senses, i.e. Eyes, Ears Nose, Tongue and Skin [10]. It means that it is dark if one does not recognise the importance of ‘Arth’—

“Apajnanam tamobhoot prajnanam tu prakashita [11]”

Further it is stated in same text that—

“dhanyam yashasyamayushyam swargyam ca paramam yashah [12]”

It means that money can bring age, honour and heavenly abode and represents highly dignified and famous status. It also well explained in Mahabharat that-

“Sukhmarthvatam loke kricharanamam vimokshanam [13]”

Money drives away many problems and evils and, therefore, rich persons can enjoy leisure in their life in the world. Despite all these, the Mahabharat also quote the following—

Aajeevibhyo dhanam prapya chaturdha vibhajed
budhah
Dharmayarthaya kamay aaptprashamnaay ca [14]

The money must be spent on religion, Arth meaning thereby all senses along with physical body, work and removal and eradication of contingent or emergent situation.

Yudhishtira made allies with those who believed in his righteousness of going to war. Lord Krishna joined his army, as he knew that Pandavas are doing their best. In Mahabharat, there are certain virtues a king should have. These mentioned qualities of a king are: “He should never employ persons not devoted to him as his spies and secret agents, he should never seek to accomplish his objects by means of persecution, he should never disclose his purpose to people who are wicked and he must with humility upon the gods” “A king should take care of seven things: his own self, his counsellors, his treasury, his machinery for according punishment, his friend, his provinces and his capital.

The thinking of Mahabharat proves that any event can have multiple outcomes. This challenges leaders to think of many options as well as accept different results. Every human being wants to feel he matters and he wants to be given attention. It is well said by Mahamuni Vyasa:

“If men be treated with honour, they can for the sake of honour he may give them, abandon their very wives and sons.”

“The king who, even when overcome with danger and fear, still keeps on eye on the duties of all men, earns the merit of the people.”

“The king should himself supervise his spies and counsellors, his treasury and the agency that inflicts chastisement. Upon them everything may be said to depend.”

All of these factors deal with interpersonal relationship and maintain good relation with everyone in organisation. Pandavas, no wealth, no power of their own but they had made powerful allies all over India. They had relationship

with: Panchala, Dwarka, Magadh, Chedi, Kekaya, Matsya, the rakshasas and nagas.

The Mahabharat is not an agricultural text, however great sage in their instruction to the kings insisted upon the protection of 'Varta' (agriculture, animal husbandry and trade) for the welfare of the human being:

"Agriculture, animal husbandry and trade are the very life of people."

"Have you ensured that the cultivators are not reduced to deserting the country because of the exactions imposed by you? It is indeed the cultivators who carry the burden of the king on their shoulders and also provide for the sustenance of all others"

Lord Krishna teaches Yudhishtira the greatness of sharing food with others: "Who wish to attain well-being in this world and beyond should offer food all those to seek. One should give food in accordance, with time and place, and should giving to limits of one, s capacity, even if it is to cause inconvenience to one, s own family."

Time Management

Time the most precious resource need a planned use. Indian thinker and sages were cautious of this important factor.

Nishchtya yah prakramate nantravasati karmanah
Avandhykalo vashyatma sa vai pandit ucayate^[15]

"One who first decides and plans the work and then starts it, does not stop in between, does not waste time and remains fully attentive, has self control is called a learned person."

Equanimity in Mahabharat

Equanimity is one of the most sublime-emotion and it is considered as the foundation stone for wisdom and freedom. It is considered as the protector of compassion and love. A mind filled with equanimity is abundant, exalted, without resentment and without ill will. A great leader always maintains equanimity of mind in whatever condition he is. The seven mental qualities support the development of equanimity. All these seven qualities mentioned are:

1. Virtue of integrity,
2. The sense of assurance that comes from faith (shraddha),
3. Well-developed-mind,
4. Sense of wellbeing
5. Understanding or wisdom,
6. 6 Insight and
7. 7 Freedom.

Conclusion

Clearly the concept of Management by objectives with the teaching of Mahabharat, managing self or workmanship is not possible without Knowledge creation and acquisition. The recent event of economic downturn in the western countries based on effective management practices really puts a question on the existing models of leadership in their organisations. Since most of the organisations failed due to wrong decisions or on unethical grounds where the existing shareholders and stakeholders of the organisation lose hope and trust on the management and leadership. In this situation, we need to incorporate ethics and integrity in the existing framework of leadership and management. A leader must have self-control having conquered his senses at the same time should be well educated in the various branches

of knowledge. He should cultivate his intellect by associations with elders and keep his eyes open through spies He should ensure the observance of Dharma by the people by authorities and should avoid associations with harmful persons and indulging in harmful activities.

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