



Management Principles – An Indian Perspective

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Management

Management has become a part and parcel of everyday life, be it at home, office, factory, Government, or in any other organization where a group of human beings assemble for a common purpose. Management principles come into play through their various facets like management of time, resources, personnel, materials, machinery, finance, planning, priorities, policies and practice.

Management is a systematic way of doing all activities in any field of human effort. It is about keeping oneself engaged in interactive relationship with other human beings in the course of performing one's duty. Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their weaknesses irrelevant -so says the Management Guru Peter Drucker.

It strikes harmony in working -equilibrium in thoughts and actions, goals and achievements, plans and performance, products and markets. It resolves situations of scarcities be they in the physical, technical or human fields through maximum utilization with the minimum available processes to achieve the goal

The lack of management will cause disorder, confusion, wastage, delay, destruction and even depression.

Man is the first syllable in management which speaks volumes on the role and significance of man in a scheme of management practices. (Of course the word “man” includes both the genders)

When the world has become a big global village now, management practices have become more complex and what was once considered a golden rule is now thought to be an anachronism.

Western thought on Management.

Great feats of human achievement primarily seen in constructions --- such as the Egyptian pyramids, the Great Wall of China, the Colosseum in Rome and the Taj Mahal in India are testimony to skilled management in ancient times. However, the formal study of management only began late in the 19th century.

The main driving force behind this development of management as a science was the transition from 19th century “entrepreneurial capitalism” to early 20th century “managerial capitalism”. Whereas the first capitalists were business owners who used their own finances to fund organizations that they managed themselves, rapid industrial growth saw the formation of large organizations with capital often provided by outsiders. This created a “gap” between owners or shareholders and management.

Scientific Management

One of the early pioneers of management theory was Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915), a mechanical engineer who believed that it was management's task to design jobs properly and to provide incentives to motivate workers to achieve higher productivity.

He conducted studies into how workers or machines performed tasks, measuring and analyzing each measurable aspect of the work. He determined standard times and sequences for the completion of each task. As is apparent – measurement was a key criteria for evaluation and improvement.

Taylor's scientific management changed the role of managers from being whip men to specialized foremen who were adequately equipped to supervise each phase of the production process.

The Administrative Approach

Across the Atlantic ocean Jules Henri Fayol (1841-1925), a fellow engineer and manager of a group of French mines, came to the conclusion that management was an activity common to all human undertakings (including home, business, government, schools, etc.) and that all these undertakings needed five basic administrative functions (planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling). He later sub-divided these five functions into 14 and they become quite well known to students of Management as the cardinal principles of management.

Fayol's approach rejected the old notion that "managers are born, not made", proposing instead that management is a skill which can be acquired if its principles are understood.

The Bureaucratic Approach

Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German sociologist who approached management by focusing on organizational structure, dividing organizations into hierarchies with clear lines

of authority and control. This meant that managers were given “legal authority” based on their position in the organizational structure, to enforce rules and policy.

Weber’s bureaucratic system helped large organizations to function in a more stable, organized and systematic manner.

The Human Relations Movement

Elton Mayo (1880-1949) was a Harvard professor who proposed that managers should become more “people-oriented”. Conducting experiments on conditions in the workplace and incorporating the well-published findings of the Hawthorne

Studies, Mayo declared that “logical factors were far less important than emotional factors in determining productive efficiency”.

He and other proponents of this movement therefore called for managers to

“accept a new role” in their relationship with workers; develop a new concept of

authority; and help foster a new social order in the workplace. In practice managers were encouraged to consult workers about change, take note of their views, and to show concern for their physical and mental health.

Servant Leadership

Although the concept of servant-leadership is found in the Bible and might even date further back into antiquity, it was first proposed as a management approach by Peter Greenleaf (1904-1990) in his book *Servant Leadership* (Smit & Cronje, 2002). He explained that becoming a servant-leader “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve” followed by the aspiration to lead.

This approach completely revolutionized the role of managers in organizations as it calls for leaders to place the priorities and needs of their followers before their own or that of the organization. It also differentiates clearly between the functions of leadership and management, although the ideal is that modern day servant leader / managers should be able to perform both functions simultaneously.

Servant-leadership “ encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment as a way of improving the life of the individuals and/or the organizations”.

According to Greenleaf, the ultimate test for successful servant leadership is whether or not followers have grown as persons as a result of being served – becoming “healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely themselves to become servants”.

Origin of Indian Management Thought

The Indian Civilisation is the oldest civilization in the world. We gave the world wisdom, knowledge, and learning. We were the fore runners in the thought process of various fields like Economics, Philosophy, Spirituality, Astronomy, Literature, Arts, Mathematics, and Management. We should be proud of our past. Now we should do things which will make our future proud of us.

Dating back from the Indus Valley Civilisation – 3300 BC – 1300 BC and the Vedic
Period between – 1300 BC – 500 BC

Ancient India - 500 BC - 550 AD

Medieval Period 550 AD – 1818 AD

Colonial Era 1818 AD to 1947 AD

The Colonial Era started with the British taking control over almost all the parts of India
and ended with the freedom of India in 1947.

We will find adequate, complete, and anecdotal references to management – management of self, households, organizations, principalities and kingdoms in many of our ancient texts. We will find enough and more references to them in our Epics and mythology.

In fact there are texts prescribed for various kinds of kings – those ruling over principalities and those over large kingdoms. The level of details is so significant, that it even enumerates the kind of punishment which should be meted out to different kind of wrong-doers for various wrong doing--- eg... stating that a crime against a woman is more serious than a crime against another man; cheating a poor man is to be viewed more seriously than the cheating of a relatively well-off person, persons in trust who belie that trust must be treated very harshly, etc etc. There are texts like the Brihat Samhita (505AD) which clearly enunciate management principles which are important for leaders to follow.

One must not wash away these advices merely because they refer to kings and subjects. The king is a veritable leader. In fact even in Manusmriti, it clearly states that kingship is not acquired by birth alone, but by behavior, and the king is perfectly within his rights to choose a person other than his heir to be king if he feels that his own progeny does not have the attributes of a good leader / king. And in truth the king was to be seen as a leader of men. Over a period of time, for various reasons, kings became dynastic.

Indian Philosophy on Management clearly brings out the facet that human beings are different and motivated by different factors, so there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. There is a deep acceptance that human beings will be swayed by emotions, and often not respond in the most appropriate or correct manner (no matter what their actual accomplishments be). There is an inbuilt acknowledgement of fuzzy logic, which is not necessarily black and white. And above all, there is a view that one event/person/action cannot be viewed in isolation, but each leader must cultivate a holistic approach and look at the larger good of mankind to achieve the goal of “better and improved life quality for all”.

When all this body of work was available, why did we – Indians- not shine in the forefront of modern management philosophy in the world? A very important event occurred during that time which caused much damage to the intellectual capital of Indian thinkers.

The colonialists wanted to achieve supremacy over the country and countrymen. There is substantiated and documented proof that there was a systematic plan to destroy the backbone of Indian society at that time – the education system as well as the supremacy of the academic and philosophical thinkers.

Lord Macaulay said the following about India in 1835 in British Parliament.

"I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation."

As per his advice and plan, there was a systematic approach to devalue everything Indian. The use of local languages was discarded, and discouraged. Indian festivals were looked down upon. Religion was used to divide and create factions within the countrymen. And organizations were divided into many subtle ways. One primary sacrifice was the language. Usage of Sanskrit was greatly restricted, and as most of the ancient texts were in Sanskrit, it fell into disuse, and many of these texts were lost forever in the shadows of time. There was no reference material available to the few scholars who were keen to follow up and re-create, rejuvenate the ancient learning. So, soon it became inevitable for Indian intellectuals to refer to Western philosophy in various fields.

Now, we seem to completely swing the other way, embracing the western culture, thought and viewpoints without any hesitation. Even though at times we realised the pitfalls of accepting something which might not fit in with our philosophy we continued to ape and imitate them. It is almost like cutting the body to fit the garment!!

For these and various reasons, we do not value our past or respect the learning and wisdom as much as we should. We have swung in either one extreme direction – either we have condemned our old traditions, texts, values as being out of date, or we have swung the other

extreme – linking everything to religion-Gods and Goddesses, thereby cutting out a large number of people not belonging to that faith,

Summary of Western and Indian Management Thinking

One may attempt to succinctly summarize the key highlights of the Western Management thought and Indian Management thought in the following manner:

Western Management Philosophy

1. Measurement oriented.

That which can be measured is valuable – is the premise of Western Management Philosophy. So, anything which could be translated into numbers were treated as important aspects of business – production, productivity, sales, revenue , costs etc. However, things like employee satisfaction, goodwill etc tend to be unstated though they are extremely valuable to the business. For very long Western Management did not include these in metrics of success. And today, even where they are included, the methodology of measurement is still flawed.

2. Materialistic approach.

The Western Management Approach is strongly oriented in materialism. There is a strong belief that aspirational needs of all human beings are the same – bigger cars, houses, more money, etc. This has translated into bigger production lines, reduced costs, outsourcing, super specialization etc.

This has also created a huge hype about how human beings should behave – a social system has been created which wants people to behave the same way, aspire for the same things, and constantly compete for resources.

3. Strong base in rationalism.

The Western Management approach believes in rationalism, and expects rational behavior from all the participants. It assumes that all shareholders want to maximize profit in the short term, that all resources can be optimally used, that managers will always make the most rational and logical decisions, and that workmen will be fair. It assumes that the markets will behave rationally, allocating resources accordingly.

4. *The Professional Approach*

Modern management has come up with a new term -- 'being professional'. It basically means doing your job without indulging any emotions. You don't feel, you don't think, you just do. For behaviour is the bottom-line.

Processes are another way to be professional. The job has to get done whether your mind is in it or not. So we create rules, and a system of rewards and recognition, to get people do what we want them to do, forcing them to act in a certain way, even if they are not aware or attentive. Hence the phrase " Don't get involved. Just be professional".

5. *Perennial thirst for profit.*

This is very important premise on which Western Management Philosophy is based. It is assumed that profits will guide human endeavour all the time. It assumes that making the largest profit in the shortest period of time is both a measure of success as well as a key purpose of business.

6. *Indoctrination of colonial rulers.*

There was a time when much of the world was under colonial rule (*The sun never sets on the British empire*, was an oft repeated statement). Colonial rulership made people behave, think and orient themselves towards security, monetary supremacy and a highly bureaucratic system. This has influenced Western Management Philosophy to some extent. Discipline, Authority, Rules and procedures were of paramount importance in large Engineering organisations – which were among the

first studied and used a basis for creating or evaluating management theories.

Indian Management Thinking

The Indian philosophy on management has sprung from the grass roots so to speak. It appears more “experiential” rather than prescriptive.

1. Subjective Criteria acceptance.

Indian Management thinking accepts subjective criteria as a basis for performance, behavior and thinking. Based on this, any event can have multiple outcomes. This challenges leaders to think of many options as well as accept different results. Managers and leaders accept that people will make choices based on subjective criteria (and often not the best choice for their own benefit). Indian managers are able to understand when people do not make career moves for reasons which may not appear to be rational to their counterparts in the western world.

Indian management thought plays a great deal of value on awareness or attention. Awareness is about perspective and attention is about focus. Every human being wants to feel he matters. And he wants to be given attention. Customers love it when service-providers lavish them with attention. Bosses love it when subordinates make them feel important. Employees love it when management shows awareness of their issues and anticipates their concerns.

In Kalidasa’s *Shakuntalayam*, the rishi Durvasa gets very upset because Kanva’s daughter Shakuntala refuses to pay attention to him. She is too busy thinking of her beloved, Dushayanta. So Durvasa curses Shakuntala that her beloved will forget her. Even Vishnu is punished for not displaying awareness and not giving attention to the rishi Bhrigu, when he is the company of Lakshmi. Bhrigu is so angry that he kicks Vishnu on the chest. The point being, it is important to “be aware” of the other, else there will be consequences.

2. *Holistic View*

Indian thinking wants leaders to take a holistic view. What is the end-game? What is the goal to be achieved? Accepting that there could be more than one path to that goal, ensures that leaders encourage people to try out new/ untried/ unconventional ways to achieve them. As Krishna says in the Gita, it is acceptable to tweak the means if the end you would like to achieve is for the good of mankind. However, it also puts a huge responsibility on the manager, to convince himself/herself that that is indeed the case. As it often quoted “it is important to do your “dharma” everyday (duty may be too limited a word to describe dharma). But to figure out what is your Dharma may take a lifetime!

3. *Acceptance of Fuzzy Logic*

Indian Management Philosophy accepts Fuzzy logic. It accepts that something can be true and false at the same time; that the actual truth may lie somewhere between the absolute truth and the completely false. It therefore accepts that a range of options are certainly conceivable. There are any number of examples in the Epics to highlight this.

It is important to learn the principle – that truth is very often not absolute nor complete.

4. *High preference for human element*

Indian Management Philosophy is deeply rooted in the human element. It believes that the human interaction (or lack of it) creates certain results. It places humans at the centre of all actions, contrary to Western Philosophy, where processes and procedures are placed central to behavior, and they want the “system” to work, even if the people do not.

This belief that human beings are the central characters and they define

organizations, also then accepts the fact that organizations will be as perfect as their leaders.

The Mahabharata is the story of a kingdom where the royal couple has no eyes. The king, Dhritarashtra, is blind and his queen, Gandhari, is blindfolded. The result: children who feel unobserved. The father cannot see; the mother chooses not to see. The children grow up with a warped value system. Since no one is seeing them, they feel they can get away with anything. As a result the law of the jungle reigns supreme in the kingdom of Dhritarashtra. A woman is publicly disrobed and lands are grabbed by force.

Indian Management thought, wants that a leader must see his people. He must recognize them for who they are, rather than what he wants them to be. More often than not, leaders see only themselves. Their eyes are only for their vision of the world.

5. *Change is permanent.*

Leaders have to adapt to change. Their leadership styles have to change and this is the key to their success. A study of the avatars of Vishnu indicates a clear shift in tactics and strategy. From Varaha to Narasimha to Vamana (the incarnations of Vishnu as Boar, half lion-halfman, and pygmy boy) there is a shift from brute force, to brain rather than brawn and finally an exercise in outgrowing rather than outwitting.

The demons are becoming increasingly complex – Hiranayaksha is violent, Hiranakashipu is clever and there is no real fault in Bali; his goodness disturbs cosmic balance. Each one forces Vishnu to change, adapt, and evolve. There is no standard approach; each approach is customized. What is significant is the shift from animal to human, from strength to cunning, from external drive to internal drive. So, leaders have to learn to change—from without and within.

Progress and Western thought

It is intriguing that though now we boast that most of the original thinkers and philosophers and mathematicians etc, came from India, there isn't a single management education institution devoted primarily to the Indian way of management. But the reasons are not far to seek.

The management thoughts emanating from the Western countries are based mostly on the lure for materialism and a perennial thirst for profit irrespective of the means adopted to achieve that goal. This came to be widely recognized as the very obvious and tangible benefits of Western philosophy of management, as "wealth and money" were openly visible and measurable.

Management by materialism caught the fancy of all the countries the world over, India being no exception to this trend. Per se, there is nothing wrong in this approach. However, as happens often, abundance does not necessarily lead to better distribution of resources. Soon there was a "have" and "have nots" divide.

If we look at the Indian Management philosophy we find emphasis on "greater good", "managing oneself, before others", "acceptance of differences between individuals" as some principles which alert us to the pitfalls of mindless materialism.

The western idea of management has placed utmost reliance on the worker (which includes Managers also) to make him more efficient, to increase his productivity. They pay him more so that he may work more, produce more, sell more and will stick to the organization without looking for alternatives.

The sole aim of extracting better and more work from him is for improving the bottom-line of the enterprise. Worker has become a hire-able commodity, which can be used, replaced and discarded at will.

Soon, we have reached a situation where management and workers have become separate and contradictory entities wherein their approaches are different and interests are

conflicting. There is no common goal or understanding which predictably leads to constant suspicion, friction, disillusion and mistrust because of working at cross purposes. The absence of human values and erosion of human touch in the organizational structure resulted in a permanent crisis of confidence.

The western management thoughts although acquired prosperity for some has not ensured betterment of individual life and social welfare. It has become an oasis of plenty for a chosen few in the midst of poor quality of life to many. Hence there is a need to have a re-look at the prevalent management discipline on its objectives, scope and content.

Why is it that most of us, today, are dissatisfied with our jobs, always feel that the remuneration we receive is lesser than what we deserve, constantly look at ways to better our lifestyle, with scant regard for our valued life. “Yeh dil maange more” (the heart desires more) has become the refrain everywhere.

We must aim at redefining management and the work place, with a holistic view. We must understand that at the very core of all management is a human being, not an automaton. Human beings have positive and negative characteristics and are unique in behaviour. It is important to understand that leaders have to be intuitive, and sensitive.

The Indian Epics

Most Indians have been exposed to the great Epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata, albeit in many versions by different authors, translators, analysts etc. (and many thru Amar Chitra Katha comics!!).

(A short synopsis of the Epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata have been provided as an Annexure to this document – for those who might want a little refresher)

Epics – what do they convey?

The Epics fairly bursts with an astonishing treasure of riches. At one level they are a great tale with heroic deeds, of beautiful women, of power, greed, envy, bad decisions. Yet at

another level it is a treasure trove of philosophical learning's, of behavior patterns, of choices and decisions.

It is a huge, truly memorable cast of vivid characters-men, noble and ignoble, warriors, saints, kings, and women of beauty and intelligence. Unbearable sacrifice, shining nobility, great courage and virtue, insatiable greed, satanic hatred and sinister intrigue are all part and parcel of the dynastic struggle between two sets of real beings, and in the case of the Mahabharata - two branches of a family which culminates in a bloody eighteen-day war on the plain of Kurukshetra. The tragic battle of Kurukshetra symbolizes man's constant struggle to distinguish between right and wrong, of choosing correct action over misdeeds.

The Bhagavad-Gita which forms a part of this epic is perhaps the single most influential scripture of Indian philosophic thought and spiritual understanding.

Mahabharata is not simply the story of a fratricidal war or a fount of wisdom for philosophers. It reveals the secrets of leadership and the path to success. For a student of management, the understanding of the Ramayana and Mahabharata is as important as the study of other treatises, such as The Art of War, The Prince and Go Rin No Sho - The Book of Five Rings.

Along with the above, though strictly not an epic, one may consider some verses of Kautilya's Arthashastra as relevant.

Considered to be a master in statesmanship, politics, financial matters, governance, he has given some sterling advice to managers.

A student of such literature will immediately recognize that there are many levels at which we can read the same text. While it can be reduced to a story for the young ones, it can be symbolic to the adults. It can be philosophically understood by some whereas there could be a completely divine interpretation by another. And all of them would find it complete, engaging and very relevant.

There are many who claim that the epics are mythology and imagination. They say that these

are stories intended to give moral education to the world.

However, there are others who claim that these are “*ithihas- purana*”, meaning they are historical in nature: That such kings existed and those events actually occurred. It is not the purpose or the platform to discuss the veracity of each of these view points. But whether as history or as mythology, one can certainly learn the principles of management and lean on their wisdom.

Just as Chanakya says in a couplet “The knowledge is like a holy Kamadhenu cow. It provides in all seasons, for all reasons. It protects and rewards. That is why knowledge alone is the ultimate treasure”

In another couplet he explains “Be content with what you have as wife, food and income. But never be content with what you have as knowledge, self improvement and charity”

Therefore it is important to be a constant student- learning, exchanging, discussing and learning and comprehending.

We can compare characters in the Ramayana and Mahabharata to India Inc. Whether it is human behavior, organizational behavior, group theory, motivational theory, game theory, succession planning, management by objectives or line of control, all facets of modern management can be discovered in Rama, Ravana, Krishna, Arjuna, Bhishma, Dronacharya and others.

The Corporate Battlefield

The present day corporate world is a battlefield over market shares, customer satisfaction, share value, innovation and quality products. Companies consist of people with varying interests, backgrounds and expectations. To knit them together and motivate them to pursue a shared goal is difficult involving many compromises.

What is the state of CEOs in the battlefield of market competition? The corporate CEO is

looking at the short term goal of quarterly performance and share value. He is not spared the long term goal aspirations either. At times the short term and long term goals do not segue into each other, and sometimes contradict too. Investment into R&D may result in a long term benefit for the company, however, in the short term; will the shareholders be willing to wait?

In today's "quick-fix" world, will the CEO last long enough to enable all the stakeholders to see the long term view? Will he be sacrificed at the altar of

"quick" return?

And there is the question of ethics -- should he transgress the laws of the land as well as corporate ethics in the pursuit of profit in a highly competitive world? Is his role that of the profit enabler, the creator of "manna" for the shareholders? Is that his "dharma"? Will the end justify the means?

"Today there is intense competition within as well as between organizations. One important lesson we learn from Mahabharata is that an all-out zero-sum battle ends with the destruction of all. The victors of the Mahabharata battle suffered equally as the losers, and what they got was a desolate land and a ravaged country."

So the very important lesson which stands out is that competitors must try to find areas of collaboration wherever is possible, pool their resources for research and development and offer innovative solutions for customer's money. Companies must also look into the social as well as environmental implications of their activities.

So, having discussed the prime highlights of Western Management Philosophy and the Indian Management thought, let us try to draw parallels between the primary principles enunciated.

Amongst the foremost Management thinkers, we must acknowledge that Taylor and Henri Fayol were most prolific and their principles of management continue to be among the basic fundamentals of business management being taught in business schools even today. So we

are using some of the principles they considered extremely important.

Basic Management Principles

The basic management principles they highlighted were :

1. Vision and Focus
2. Planning and Strategy
3. Resource management
4. Motivation
5. Common Business Goals (subordination of personal interest to organizational goals)

Communication, is strictly not a management principle, though it could be included. It is indeed **the life-blood** of any organization. However, it is a vast subject, which has been given great emphasis even in the Epics, but has been kept outside this paper, due to constraints on length.

Of course there are many other principles, but they are derived from the above, like Commitment, Delegation and Specialization etc.

Let us examine these five principles of management – and how thru the stories of Mythology, Indian Management thought has highlighted the principle – making the lesson as interesting as the moral.

Vision and Focus

Vision

Some definitions or explanations of “vision” are :

Vision is expressed passion. Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

“Corporate vision is a short, succinct, and inspiring statement of what the organization intends to become and to achieve at some point in the future, often stated in competitive terms. “

“Vision refers to the category of intentions that are broad, all-inclusive and forward-thinking. It is the image that a business must have of its goals before it sets out to reach them.”

"To choose a direction, an executive must have developed a mental image of the possible and desirable future state of the organization".

“A vision is a dream – with legs”

“You have to create a grand, noble vision which elevates the energy, enthusiasm and self-esteem of everyone in the company while ensuring that everybody sees a benefit in following the vision. “

All these are expressions by senior business leaders about Vision – and its primary importance for success in business.

To have a vision and plan for it through an appropriate strategy is what will determine success.

MAHABHARATA

Veda Vyasa

Sage Veda Vyasa was a visionary. Son of Sage Parashara (and a fisher woman

– Matsyagandhi, who later became the Queen of Hastinapura), Veda Vyasa spent a large part of his childhood with his father who moved from Ashram to Ashram spreading the word of Dharma.

After the cruel death of his father, Veda Vyasa was like a man possessed. He constantly had one vision, very different from what he saw around him.

At that time all the kings were engaged in feudal wars amongst themselves, there was no respect for learning or the learned. The “WORD” – the Vedas were being disregarded.

Self preservation was paramount – all the Brahmins and learned people had suffered at the marauding forces of the Haihayas – notably Kartiveeryarjuna. Though he had been killed in battle by Parashurama, the chaos he had caused was so deep that it would take a long, long time for normality to restore.

There was no common order. Yes there were islands of calm – Kampilya to the north – ruled by Drupada, and Hastinapura to the South East, lorded by Shantanu and Gangeya.

The threat of Jarasandha loomed large – he was known to be very anti-Aryavarta. There were small chieftains and principalities which having no common ground, were constantly engaged in skirmishes and clashes.

Sadly he even found the learned Brahmins squabbling over whether the Vedas were three or four. He saw that certain aspects of learning was being marginalized. Each wanted to believe that what they knew of the Vedas was the only right way!

Even amidst this chaos, Veda Vyasa dreamt of a united “Aryavarta”. A place where there was a common code of conduct. Where women were treated as equals, where learning was considered not only important but necessary. He visualized a land where the learned were treated with respect and dignity, where peace was considered the most important criteria of success of kings. Where complementing each other was chosen over confrontation, where all forms of learning was equally revered.

His mission was to make his vision a reality. He knew it was a stupendous task

– he was no king, he had no authority, no power, no money, not even an ashram (his father's ashram was burnt down and was now referred to as the

Field of Ashes) nothing -- but a dream. Yet, he embarked on his journey with determination, with a plan of execution, with enthusiasm.

Towards ensuring that he was able to realize his vision, Veda vyasa worked tirelessly. He preached, he practiced. He set an example. He pleaded with the learned to help him in the endeavor. He enlisted the help of younger Strotriyas (Brahmins). He was like a man possessed. And in the end, he was able to make it all come together. He was able to get all to respect the “Word” – The Vedas. He ensured that schools of learning were set up and supported. He procured the blessings of various kings to ensure that there was protection to those who pursued learning. He was able to create a unified code within “Aryavatha”. And with this unity he found all the kingdoms flourished – the big and the small.

Vision can make the difference between existence and really living. The ones who have a vision, have more than a hope of success.

Focus

Focus is an ability to stay concentrated on a certain task, till the desired result is achieved. Another word for focus is Commitment.

While it may be possible to have a vision and a dream to achieve big things, often we face failures because the commitment and focus is lacking.

One can create fire by focusing a magnifying glass on some dried leaves; similarly one may create the fire of achievement in the organization by having all the individuals focused on the goals and tasks.

MAHABHARATA

Bhagiratha brings Ganga

Sagara was a great king, who ruled most of the Indian Subcontinent. He had many children, who were burnt to death by the curse of Sage Kapila. He was very sad that his children met with such a drastic end, and were even denied heaven (because they were cursed).

Sagara's grandson, Anshumanta, was keen to fulfill his grandfather's wishes.

He sought the solution to ensuring heaven for his uncles

Some learned people gave him the impossible solution -- bring the celestial river Ganga to flow over the ashes of the sons of Sagara.

So Anshumanta decided that he would do whatever it takes to get Ganga to earth. But before he could do so, he passed away. His son Dileepa also took up the same gauntlet but sadly he could not get much further.

His son Bhagiratha was also as determined. He continued his prayers and ultimately Ganga agreed to come down to earth, but would the earth be able to bear her weight if jumped down from the skies, she asked?

So Bhagiratha was stymied. He then prayed to Lord Shiva for help. Shiva was pleased with his devotion and agreed to let Ganga jump on his head. And when she did, she was trapped in his matted locks!!

Again Bhagiratha had to pray to Shiva to release Ganga. Then Shiva undid a small portion of his locks so she could flow out -- but Ganga was an impetuous river!! She flooded out and caused havoc. Sage Jhanu was upset and with the power of his penance, just drank her up!!

Again Bhagiratha had to pray to the Sage, to let Ganga go, so that she would be helpful to

wipe the curse off his ancestors. Sage Jhanu relented and Ganga came flowing out of his ear (which is why Ganga is also called Jhanavi – daughter of Sage Jhanu). And so Ganga was brought to earth by the Herculean task undertaken by Bhagiratha.

So, great was his task that even today, when someone undertakes a great task it is said to be “bhagiratha prayathna”

Summary

To see what one wants to achieve even before starting the journey is vision. To achieve big results we need visionary leaders; visionaries who can see the light at the end of the tunnel; those who can visualize the success of their endeavors.

Commitment is key to achieving goals. There will be obstacles, problems, issues, but one has to address them and not be sidetracked.

Planning and Strategy

Planning

Failing to plan, is as good as planning to fail – is a very apt saying.

Planning in organizations and public policy is both the organizational process of creating and maintaining a plan; and the psychological process of thinking about the activities required to create a desired goal on some scale.

The term is also used to describe the formal procedures used in such an endeavor, such as the creation of documents diagrams, or meetings to discuss, the important issues to be addressed, the objectives to be met, and the strategy to be followed.

"Take hold of the future or the future will take hold of you." Patrick Dixon, author of Futurewise.

Strategy

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. The word strategy has military connotations, because it derives from the Greek word for army.

How a battle is fought is a matter of tactics: whether it should be fought at all is a matter of strategy.

"Strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long-term: which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a challenging environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfill stakeholder expectations".

In other words, strategy is about:

Where is the business trying to get to in the long term? – Direction

Which markets should a business compete in and what kinds of activities are involved in such markets? – Scope

How can the business perform better than the competition? - Advantage

What resources (skills, assets, finance, relationships, technical competence, and facilities) are required in order to be able to compete? – Resources

What are the values and expectations of those who have power in and around the business? – Stakeholders. Strategy is about action. But all action is not strategy. Strategy is that action, which is taken up after a consideration of various possibilities. It is the result of second guessing the future. Of course once it is put in place, it may need to be tweaked and changed.

Mahabharata

Jarasandha at Draupadi's swayamvara

Drupada was determined to give his daughter to the best warrior in Aryavarta. Someone who would avenge his insult by Drona, should be his son in law. His daughter Draupadi was also beholden to his promise.

Krishna suggested to Drupada that he holds a Swayamvara – a challenge which would ensure that only the best warrior can win.

All preparations for the Swayamvara (the choice of the groom by the bride) were on in full swing. Invitations had gone out to all the powerful, important kings of Aryavarta and beyond.

The Kashi king was there, and so was the king of Chedi – Shishupala. Though Drupada had invited them against his wishes, he knew that it was protocol to invite the Kuru princes – so Duryodhana was there too. It would have amounted to insult to not invite Emperor Jarasandha, so he was invited and he arrived too – with the largest contingent.

Leonine, powerfully built, Jarasandha sat in his tent, reflecting on life. One look at him, and anyone could guess that he spent a lot of time wrestling – broad shoulders, and bulging biceps, showed the power he had – he was known to crush the heads of his enemies with his bare hands.

He had taken over the reins of the kingdom of Magadha from his father Brihadhratha, who was forced into retirement. He was cruel, loved intrigue and hated the Arya ways – he thought that rules of conduct and behaviour were only for the common man, not for the kings!!

He thought it unnecessary – but he knew that most of the Indian Sub continent were ruled by Arya kings. So, in spite of his dislike, at times he had to engage with kings of Aryavarta, though he nursed a secret desire to overthrow every single one of them

Here he was at Kampilya- the capital of Panchala. He along with his son Sahadeva and

grandson Megasandhi, discussed various options and later settled on a plan of action – to kidnap Draupadi!! He was depending on the surprise element. He had scant regard for the Arya ways and if anyone dared challenge him, he was sure he could defeat a few of them in war! Having so decided, they retired for the night.

In the middle of the night, the watchman of the Magadhan (Jarasandha's) camp was surprised that there was a visitor. When Jarasandha heard about the visitor, he was angry – both at being aroused at this late hour, and at the temerity of the visitor.

When he came in, he did not bother to disguise his anger. The visitor was

Krishna. “Why have you come here? You do not care for your life? I can kill you with my bare hands” – growled Jarasandha.

Krishna smiled and said – “You well may, but you know the canons of conduct of the Swayamvara. If there is a mishap, all the Arya kings will ensure that you are punished. So dare not.”

He continued “I know the plan you have and I have come to advice you against it”. “I know you plan to kidnap the bride Draupadi, when she goes to the temple for worship, just before the swayamvara. Don't try it. If you did, I will be waiting there with my Yadava warriors, and you will be dead before you can look at the road to Girivraja”

“Yes, another piece of advice – Leave from this Swayamvara. You know you will not win the bride – a test of archery has been prescribed, and you are not the best archer – you are great at mace wielding.

“Imagine -- if you as the Emperor Jarasandha participate in the contest and lose

– you will lose the respect which your feudatories and other kings have for you.”

“ And if at all you win – you will be the laughing stock of all the kings – for you covet a

bride, who is younger than your youngest grandson!! Either way, you stand to lose, so give up this idea and go home”.

Jarasandha was beside himself with rage. How had this cowherd, guessed his plan to kidnap the bride?

And yes, he was right – whether he won or lost – either way he would lose – his pride or his respect.

He fell back on his cushions, while Krishna exited the tent.

Next day at the Swayamvara, all the kings were assembled in all their finery. The King Drupada, came forward, welcomed everyone and explained the rules of the challenge – to shoot the eye of a revolving fish by looking at its reflection in the pool.

He pledged that whoever completed the task would be chosen by the bride Draupadi as her husband, and the marriage would be blessed by all.

It was a tough challenge. But the prize was great too. All the kings looked at the bride – Draupadi – tall, dark, beautiful, with flashing eyes and noble carriage – and were enthused to take on the challenge.

A few bold kings – Shishupala of Chedi and Duryodhana of Hastinapura came forward and failed miserably – they were unable to even lift the bow, let alone string it and shoot at the target.

Then up rose Jarasandha. The hall fell silent. He walked majestically up to where the bow was kept, and waited there, while the bards finished giving details of his lineage and exploits.

Then he went up to Drupada and said “O King! You have indeed prescribed a tough test. Though I am an expert mace wielder, I am good at archery too. But I cannot enter this contest.

I am old enough to be the bride’s grandfather! So my blessings to you and the bride – I take

leave of you to leave for Girvrija right now” (He shot Krishna a triumphant glance)

All the assembled kings were greatly impressed. What a noble exit!

Jarasandha had turned the situation to his advantage. He was now respected by many of the Arya kings too.

The strategy of Krishna worked. He was able to get rid of Jarasandha without any unnecessary bloodshed or trouble, which would have marred the function.

A perfect win-win situation. Strategy and planning by Krishna made a huge difference. His explanation of the situation to Jarasandha, helped to convert the situation from possible war to advantage.

Summary

Planning is crucial. While it is not easy to predict the future, often it is possible to second guess it. Prepare. Plan. Set up mock events. Look at various scenarios. Second guess the opponents.

Each event brings learning – learn and use it to better the next action. Create an atmosphere of enthusiasm and learning amongst the group. The competitive spirit is important to succeed. Preparation, planning and training - these are important qualities for warriors as well as for present day business persons.

Motivation

Motivation is the set of reasons that determines one to engage in a particular behavior.

Motivation has been described as the art of making people do what you want them to do, as if they wanted to do it!!

Motivation is not about loud speeches but about sensitivity to another's feelings.

When a kind word is spoken, its impact is not only on the mind, but on the heart.

People are motivated by a whole lot of things, and only one among them is money. A kind word, appreciation, encouraging words, a hug, a pat on the shoulder, all these motivate.

Ramayana

Jambavanta motivates Hanuman

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were in the forest, banished there by their step mother - Kaikeyi. Ravana, a demon king from Lanka, through trickery and cunning abducted Sita.

Rama and Lakshmana sought the help of Sugriva to locate Sita. Hanuman was a trusted lieutenant of Sugriva. He was greatly impressed with Rama and Lakshmana and was soon their trusted aide.

Dividing the monkey army into four factions, Sugriva sent them out in the four directions, to enquire and find the whereabouts of Sita. Soon, it was clear that Ravana had carried away Sita to Lanka (an island in the Indian ocean)

After much debate it was agreed that there was only one way to get to Lanka – and that was to jump – far and high to reach there.

Though there were many monkeys (Gaja, Gavaaksha, Gavaya, Sharabha, Gandhamaadana, Mainda and Dvividha, and Susheshana, etc) who were proud of their ability to jump high and far, all of them agreed that they could not possibly jump that far across the sea to Lanka.

Then Jambavanta began weaving his magic spell with words. He was able to motivate Hanuman who, though not lacking in ability was not confident or aware of his ability to do

the task.

Jambavanta used beautiful language to motivate Hanuman. He praises his parents, and illustrious lineage. He reminds him of his duty to Sugriva and to Rama. He challenges him, he prods him, he goads him, he encourages him. Most importantly he displays confidence in his ability to do the task.

Soon Hanuman is enthused and with the name of Rama on his lips he takes a deep breath and jumps: and then reaches Lanka.

Mahabharata

Yudhishtira – the motivator

The war of Kurukshetra was fought over 18 days. While the the war was going on, as per the laws agreed upon during those times, the battle was fought from sunrise to sunset. After that, each army retired, to resume again the next day.

At night the wounded were treated, the horses and elephants cared for, strategies planned, and soldiers motivated.

Yudhishtira went from one camp to another, followed by servants who carried pots filled with herbs and medications. He went to each soldier, and enquired about them, cared for their wounds, personally bandaged some of them, gave them succor and thanked them.

The next day, even the most grievously hurt would turn up for battle. They believed they owed their life to their leader, who did not treat them like hired help, and actually came and tended to them personally. This was motivation of the highest order. They were willing to give up their life and willingly.

Summary

Motivation is the fuel of the fire of performance. Each person is capable of doing great deeds. The motivation is the key.

It may be difficult to know what motivates each person. We are all very aware that money does motivate, but only to an extent. Praise and appreciation too does so, but again to a degree.

What motivates different kinds of human beings? Chanakya says “Those that desire only wealth are truly lowly persons. Those that desire wealth and respect are average. Those that desire honor and respect are truly evolved”

Motivation is not about external efforts only. Each of us is motivated by various factors, both internal and external. Each has its own value and place in encouraging and building confidence.

Motivation is as easy as it is difficult. And only when it is heartfelt, does its results have far reaching effects. Motivation and recognition are the primary reason why there are still a large number of people working for small organizations.

And an important aspect of Motivation is that that it can rarely be delegated. Motivation has to come from the senior most in the organization. If they appear enthused, the organization will carry that. If they lack interest, or do not communicate the same, it is unlikely that the people down the line will work towards achieving goals and objectives.

Resource management

Resources have always been in great demand. Whether monetary resources or human resources always there is a desire for more and better. A manager constantly battles with the dilemma of resource management; of finding the best, most effective and efficient resource.

Of all resources, human resources are the biggest challenge. One aspect of resource management is identification of the strengths and allocating work accordingly. While it does appear rather simplistic to say this, in actual fact, this is the most challenging aspect of human resource management.

Natural Resources

Ramayana

Rama and the monkey army

Rama was banished to the forest by his mother Kaikeyi. He along with Sita (his wife) and Lakshmana (his brother) live in the forests.

Ravana using treachery carried away Sita. Rama is heart broken. He searched for her in vain.

Sugriva (a monkey) befriended him and agreed to help him to find Sita.

Soon, groups of Sugriva's monkeys, who were divided into 4 battalions, traversing different directions, came back with the news that Ravana had carried away Sita in a southerly direction.

With the help of Hanuman and the other monkeys, Rama was able to vanquish Ravana, and get Sita back.

A man with no army, no kingship, no great allies, no power, was able to defeat a powerful king, far away in an island in the sea.

The only resources he had access to, was an army of monkeys, bears, some eagles and vultures and some help from squirrels! By using resources available to him Rama was able to accomplish the impossible.

So, it is not what you have that is important, but what you make of what you have that is the deciding factor.

Human resources are important. And more important is the composition of that resource. Experience is important, and so is adaptability and learn ability. And paramount is enthusiasm.

Human resources

Mahabharata

Youth --The young Pandava commanders

There were cries of war all around. Everyone was aligned with or against the Pandavas. Everyone was apprehensive of the outcome.

Commanders of battles were working on their strategies. They were organizing their armies. It appeared everyone had something to win or lose in this mother of all battles.

The Pandavas ultimately won the war. One of the reasons could be that their commanders were all young – much younger than those in the Kaurava Army.

The commanders of the Pandava Army :

- Virata (King of Matsya) – same age group as Yudhishitira
- Drupada (King of Panchala).As old as Drona
- Sahadeva (King of Magadha). Younger than Bhima.
- Dhrishtaketu (King of Chedi) -Younger than Krishna and Arjuna.
- Satyaki (Warrior from Dwarka).Same age as Krishna
- Shikandin (Prince of Panchala). Younger than Arjuna

- Dhrishtadyumna – (Another Prince of Panchala and Commander in Chief) As old as Bhima

Compared this to the to the age group of the commanders in the Kaurava army:

- Bhishma – great grandfather of the Pandavas
- Drona – Teacher of the Pandavas
- Karna – Older than Yudhishtira
- Shalya – Maternal uncle of Pandavas
- Ashwathama – as old as Duryodhana

Enthusiasm though not directly a function of, is certainly a contributing factor to age.

With younger commanders, it was no surprise that ultimately the Pandavas won the war.

Women

The human resource is made up of both men and women. Each of them brings a specific set of skills and attributes. In today's world both are important. As the business challenges become increasingly complex, the skill of being intuitive is crucial.

Women by nature are intuitive. They are nurturers and are sensitive. They can “sense” many things which men cannot see. They can be effective in avoiding confrontation. They are naturally collaborative.

The absence of women in the Kaurava side is conspicuous. On the Pandava side there are many women, who by their strength and extra-ordinary qualities forge events – two of them stand out prominently.

Mahabharata

Women -Kunti- the mother of the Pandavas

Kunti, born as Pritha, went thru many trials and tribulations – from having to spend a large part of her life in the forest, to bringing up her five sons single-handedly, to keeping them safe from the palace intrigue, to ensuring that they remained together as a family, inspite of their different personalities, to motivating them when it was time for war, to consoling them when there were losses.

She was a wise woman who knew that her role was more advisory once her sons were married. She was able to lead a life of example, by ensuring that everyone respected the elders, inspite of the war. She made sure that even in war there was no bitterness and hatred. She knew when to give up – going away to the forest after the war.

Women – Draupadi – the Queen who suffered

Fiery, feisty, and devoted to her father and later her husbands, she is beautiful and intelligent. She is dark, endowed with enchanting bodily fragrance and rivetingly lovely. She is well versed in the art of war and the court. She is a capable administrator and fine judge of persons. She replaces Kunti as the nave of the Pandava-wheel, and also acts as the axle for the Panchala-Pandava-Yadava chariot.

Draupadi's suffering is almost unimaginable. Though a queen, humiliated in the court of Hastinapura, molested publicly in the court of Virata by Keechaka, asked to “not make a scene” by her husband – Yudhishtira, any lesser mortal would have gone insane. To add insult to injury, her husbands want to forgive the perpetrators of the crimes!

But yet, she remains loyal to them, keeps them united, and yet ensures that the spirit of revenge does not die. Her character remains fiery and controlled. She is the uniting and

motivating force behind her husbands.

She is a great communicator too. When Krishna is going as a peace negotiator to avoid war, she manages to convey her hurt and sadness. While she does not seek war, she certainly seeks revenge for all the wrongs done to her.

She is astute enough to know when to use the powers of her unrivalled charms and intellect to achieve her ends. She is courteous, and concerned. After the war, she devotedly serves Gandhari even though her sons (the Kauravas) caused her so much suffering.

Draupadi is also an empathetic mother. After Abhimanyu's death, she consoled his grieving widow, Uttara. She encouraged Uttara to gather her strength for the sake of her and Abhimanyu's unborn child. And yet, she herself was mourning – she lost all her 5 sons in the war.

Apart from the above two extra-ordinary women, the Pandava camp has many other women who are powerful, strong, intelligent and influential. All this has great bearing on the outcome of the war.

Summary

Women bring certain skills which are not the forte of men. A smart manager will ensure that he recognizes the contribution of the female gender and ensures that they are given positions within organisation which utilises their natural talents and abilities for the benefit of the organisation.

Subordination of individual interest

All organizations are set up with an objective. This objective should be clear and understood

by all. The only way the organization will be able to achieve those objectives, is if everyone within the organization works towards its achievement.

Often organizations fail because there is lack of cohesiveness in action amongst the people within the organization.

This is easier said than done. Communicating the objective, the strategy is often ignored by the business leaders. Even after communication, there are subtle changes which need to be communicated. Also the business dynamics change and influence the short term strategy and tactics.

All human beings also have their own interests, objectives, and goals, which they are keen to achieve. It is important that individual objectives are aligned to organizational objectives.

Mahabharata

The Divided Kauravas

Duryodhana's petulance and stubbornness ensured that the war was inevitable.

But most of the leaders did not want war. They were well aware of the destruction it would bring. They were also concerned that each king would have to align himself against one or the other party. This would polarize the entire nation.

This would be a war amongst relatives: people who have earlier enjoyed confidences, love and respect.

All outcomes would be colored by the over riding emotions of hatred and violence.

The Kaurava side included great warriors and stalwarts like Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Shalya, Karna etc. Though all of them were going to be part of the war, their level of commitment was different.

Bhishma

The great grandfather and guardian of the throne, he was believed to be “truth incarnate”. His vow of protecting the throne of Hastinapura was the only reason he was part of the Kaurava family.

A person who loved fairness, and truth above all else, his heart was torn asunder when the war became a reality. He was aggrieved that he will have to fight the Pandavas – who were so affectionate, peace loving and truthful. He had practically raised them when they were young. He had marvelled at their prowess in arms and learning of the statecraft.

Not participating in the war was not an option he could consider. Moving to the Pandava side was a door not open either.

So, he made it clear to Duryodhana that he will not kill the Pandavas. He will only kill a thousand soldiers a day.

His personal commitment superseded the organizational interest.

Drona

Drona was a complex person. The son of Sage Bharadwaj he had riled against the self imposed poverty that his father had lived under.

Once he completed his basic education under his father, he became the disciple of Parashurama – where again he lived a life of hardships and simplicity.

So when he came to Hastinapura he was determined to use the power as the teacher of the princes to ensure that his own area of influence was constantly increasing.

Soon, he became an important part of the Kaurava court. His disciples came to be known for their learning and skill in arms. Though as a teacher he was not partisan to any student, his affection for Arjuna in particular and the Pandavas in general was not a secret.

His participation in the war was also under certain conditions – that he will be commander in chief of the entire army, and will not take orders from anyone. So, he would be commander only if Bhishma is not! And the other condition was that he would not kill the Pandavas, but only try to capture them.

These conditions also display that his personal agenda was more important than the organizational (Kuru) interests.

Karna

A faithful friend and ally of Duryodhana, he was extremely brave and a skilled archer.

He constantly riled at being called a charioteer's son. Though of noble mien, handsome face and exemplary behavior, he was constantly snubbed by the likes of Bhishma and Drona.

On the eve of the war, Kunti – the mother of the Pandavas, comes to him and shares the secret of his birth with him.

Kunti (also known as Pritha) served the Sage Durvasa with great devotion that she gave her the secret incantation, which could summon any god to her side to bless her with a child.

Youthful and curious, Kunti wanted to “try” the mantra, which she did looking at the bright resplendent sun. Lo and behold!! The sun god appeared before and would not leave without blessing her with a child. Panic stricken, she was sure that her father's future and hers would be wrecked if she produced a child out of wedlock. So she abandoned the child. That child was Karna. No, he was not a charioteer's son, but the son of a Sun God and a Kshatriya princess.

But both Karna and Kunti knew that this fact could not be proclaimed to the world now, or ever.

Karna promised Kunti, that even after the war, she would have five sons – he would only target Arjuna, and none else.

Another case of personal commitment overriding organizational goals.

The above were the four Kaurava Army commanders in succession. As one can see, each of them had a personal agenda which was stronger than the agenda of the group (organization). All wanted to win the war – but their passion was not winning, but ensuring that their own views, beliefs, biases etc were paramount.

Was there a contrast in the way the Pandavas were fighting the war?

The United Pandavas

All of the Pandavas had individual goals – but they all were subsets of the same goal – winning the war.

Each of the Pandavas was committed to eliminate certain persons in the Kaurava army. There were many different reasons for each of them wanting someone in the Kaurava side dead.

Dhrishtadyumana

Dhrishtadyumana wanted to avenge the insult which Drona had caused to his father Drupada.

When very young, both Drupada and Drona were disciples of Parashurama. As is common with the flush of youth, Drona, promised that he would give me a part of his kingdom.

Time passed, and Drupada became the king of the very large kingdom of Panchala.

On learning of this Drona asked him to fulfill the promise and give him a share of the kingdom. Drupada scoffed him for believing a promise made at such a tender age without understanding the repercussions of making such a promise!

Drona was affronted and smarted at the insult. Later he became the teacher of the princes of Hastinapura. He sent his students (Arjuna and others) who defeated Drupada, and insulted him too.

Drupada smarted under this for a long time. He made retribution the underscore of his life, even bringing up his children on a diet of revenge.

So, Dhristadyumana was intent on killing Drona (though he was not averse to killing any others!!)

Bhima

Bhima was a pillar of power, strength and courage. Impetuous by nature, and large hearted, he was a happy go lucky person, easy to arouse to anger and as easily appeased. His only weakness was his loyalty to his brother – Yudhishtira.

On losing the game of dice, where Yudhishtira lost his brothers too, Bhima felt greatly insulted. But he could do nothing. Keeping up a united face became paramount. He could not show the Kauravas that they had internal differences between themselves.

But when Draupadi was humiliated and insulted in the court, Bhima could not keep quiet. Even while realizing that he could not help her, he stood up, quivering with anger and said “Duryodhana, you that have insulted our wife, the noble Draupadi, by inviting her to sit on your lap as a slave – I pledge to break that very thigh of yours.”

In a voice loud enough to wake the dead he proclaimed “Dushasana, you that have laid your hands on the beautiful tresses of Draupadi, to drag her into the court, remember that I shall take the blood from your heart to anoint her hair”

And that promise was to be fulfilled. Bhima waited to get his hands on Duryodhana and his brother, Dushasana.

Shikandin

Shikhandin was third child of King Drupada, but he thought his was a cursed life. He was born a girl, but passed off by his mother as a boy. As a child, he was betrothed to be married to the daughter of a neighboring king, by Drupada, his father.

Later when Drupada he realized the truth, he was distraught. When the bride came home to live with the husband, everyone would find out and he would now become the laughing stock of all the kings and accused of passing his daughter off as a son!!

Shikandin was sensitive to the father's dilemma. He wanted to end his life, which would be the only way to save the family honor.

On advice from Krishna, he went to Sthoonakarna – a Yaksha. After undergoing untold torture and troubles, Shikandin emerged – a man (a sex change operation?)

Shikandin was focused on killing Bhishma. However, Bhishma labored under the view that Shikandin was a woman, and so refused to fight, and was killed.

Thus all the Pandavas had different goals, which fed into the same goal – which is why the Pandavas won the war.

Summary

Similarly in organizations, though there is a purpose, goal and objective, often leaders and group heads are working at cross purposes, sometimes knowingly, sometimes unwittingly.

It is the job of a good leader to ensure that the vision, goal and strategy of the organization is clearly transmitted to all the relevant players, and there is constant alignment of thought and action. The business leader has to be constantly vigilant and ensure that there are reiterations,

repetitions, and re alignments at regular intervals.

Conclusion

We have seen in the preceding paragraphs, certain principles of management – explained with the help of stories from the Epics.

We have seen how characters, who were just as human as any of us, reacted to certain circumstances, made decisions based on their understanding and stood to enjoy the result.

It is not about time – in every time and age, there will be people with issues, biases, beliefs. The emotions of love and hate, greed, envy, ego and charity will remain. The desire of man to achieve, to acquire, to grow, to keep for posterity will remain. The setting will change but the basic fundamentals will remain.

When we read these stories, we must be able to look at the fundamental value and learn from them. We must realize that ultimately, no matter what, the buck stops at you. You and only you will be responsible for all that happens in your life.

Management is and will remain an imperfect science. As long as humans are managers, and managing human events and activities, there will be an element of un-predictability, of uncertainty.

Just as we today look at the characters and either accept their views or learn from their mistakes, similarly, somewhere our current world will be chronicled. Maybe hundreds of years later someone will look at our actions and critique them.

Therefore our responses now, would reflect our present, but also be a beacon for the future generations.

They say “History has no way to get answers, than by repeating the questions”.

We could use these Management principles as our guiding light when we make our decisions.

We should understand that fundamentally almost all human beings desires are similar. We have to approach business and its various stakeholders in a manner that offers vision, fosters participation, boosts motivation, bridges communication, helps delegation and endorses achievement – without losing the respect and joy of life.

Some Interesting Trivia about Mahabharata :

It is the second Longest Epic of the World

Archeologists and historians believe it was written around 3000 BC. It was narrated thrice :

1. As “Jaya” by Vyasa to Ganesha
2. As “Bharata” by Vaishampayana to Janamejaya
3. As “Mahabharata” by Suta/Sauti to the Rishis at Naimisharanya. It has some “mind boggling” revelations.

Astronomy: Existence of Uranus (Shweta) and Neptune (Ksharaka). Geography: Lands as far as Cambodia (Kamboja) Kazakhstan and

Scandinavia Uttarakuru)

Mathematics: No's to the range of 10 raised to powers of 16 and -16. Military : Descriptions of Weapons which resemble modern day weaponry

including Nuclear and/or Chemical Weapons. Complex Military Formations and Strategies.

Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Spirituality, Religion, Politics and

Management Lessons.

The Mahabharata lists that the Kauravas had 11 contingents – called Akshouhini --- and the Pandvas only 7

(One Akshouhini was equal to 21870 Chariot and riders, 21870 Elephants and riders, 65610 horses and riders, 109350 foot soldiers (ratio of 1:1:13:5))

The name Bharatavarsha comes from Bharata – one of the illustrious kings. Bharata the eponymous dynast had displayed the true qualities of greatness.

Finding all his sons unworthy to rule, he discarded blind adherence to custom, adopted the Brahmin Bharadwaj and, renaming him Vitatha, gave him the kingdom.

This over-riding concern for the welfare of the people instead of caring for the claims of one's progeny is what sets Bharata apart.

Annexure

Ramayana

This epic was written by Sage Valmiki.

Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya, had three wives and four sons, the eldest of them was Rama.

When Rama was to be crowned king, the third wife demanded the fulfilment of the promises which the king had given her a long time ago. Her demand was that Rama be banished to the forests for 14 years, and that her son – Bharata be made king.

Rama, Sita (his wife) and Lakshmana (the brother) go to the forests cheerfully. While in the forests, Sita is carried off by Ravana, a demon king, who rules the land of Lanka (an island in the Indian ocean)

Rama and Lakshmana, in search of Sita, befriend the king of monkeys-Sugriva and his aide Hanuman and with his help go to Lanka, kill Ravana in a war and rescue Sita.

Mahabharata

Hastinapura, is an important and one of the largest kingdom in Aryavarta (Bharatavarsha) – Indian subcontinent.

Dhritarashtra, the elder prince, cannot be king, because he is born blind. Pandu the younger brother becomes king and the story is about the struggle for power and the kingdom between the sons of the blind king and the sons of Pandu.

Through cunning and guile the sons of Pandu (Pandavas) are constantly challenged, exiled, humiliated. Krishna, a cousin of the Pandavas is constantly guiding them through this obstacle race, to help them emerge victorious and righteous.

It culminates in a war which the Pandavas win, but it destroys almost every thing and everybody. It is a story of the fratricidal war which brings utter destruction.