

NEW MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY FROM THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL  
 SYMBOLS

**Dr. Benard Nyakweba Oyagi,**

Lecturer of Mount Kenya University,

P.O BOX 1205 Kisii-Kenya

**Dr P.K. Khicha,**

Head Department of Meera Girls College,

Rang villa, 843-A, pooja-nagar, sector 4 Udaipur

**Abstract**

*Evolution of management thought has been classifieds in terms of three distinct eras viz 'Science Management era' Human Side era and the New Mantra era. The idea of Indian management is rooted in the philosophy of life in contrast to the ides of 'American management' which is rooted in the idea of 'corporation'. Indian management offers the potentiality of broadening the 'concept of management' and implies holistic approach towards management. The symbol of spirituality provide management and leadership lessons are the Indian Flag, the four Lions, the Dia, Lotus, Samudra Manthan and Indian festivals.*

*Spiritual symbols presented provide us a new way of defining the idea of 'Indian management'. In the era of holistic globalization' time has come to globalize these ideas from Indian management for the benefit of everyone.*

**Key Words:** *Indian Management, Spirituality, Globalization, Symbolism in Indian culture, Holistic.*

## Introduction

Evolution of management thought over last hundred years can be broadly classified in terms of three distinct eras viz:

- Scientific management era (with its beginning around 1900)
- Human side era (with its beginning around 1960s)
- The new mantras era (with its beginning around 2000) where human and spiritual values seem to echo in management thought.

During the scientific management' era, management thought was deeply influenced by disciplines of engineering and economics. Scientific management consisted of four principles:

- Replace rule of thumb work methods with methods based on a scientific study of the tasks.
- Scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the workman, whereas in the past the employees chose his own work and trained himself as best he could.
- Provide "Detailed instruction and supervision of each worker in the performance of worker's discrete task".
- Divide work nearly equally between managers and workers, so that the managers apply scientific management principles to planning the work and the workers actually perform the tasks.

During the **Human side era**, Management theory and practice was deeply influenced by the discipline of psychology and related disciplinary. Its features include:

- Personnel administration,
- Organizational management
- Manpower management
- And industrial management

With the acceptance of Yoga and Meditation as stress management tools for corporate managers, the discipline of spirituality/inner sciences started influencing the management thought in general leading to many new mantras in management and leadership.

Evolution of 'management thought' has also been influenced by ideas contributed by different nations. Initially management thought was dominated by American management concepts which include legitimate power-based leadership style, employee relations policies, gain sharing, appraisals based on work team performance, strategic improvising, and strategic alliances. This continued till 1970s. Then emerged the ideas of 'Japanese management' wherein technology and culture found a new integration and many new ideas such as team building, quality circles etc emerged. Japanese management is the company union. The Workers do not have separate skill identification outside of the company. Japanese managerial style and decision making in large companies emphasizes the flow of information and initiative from the bottom up, making top management a facilitator rather than the source of authority, while middle management is both the impetus for and the shaper of policy. They learn to produce work of higher quality using few simple tools and few or no advanced industrial tools.

Taking an inspiration from this thought revolution; many Indian scholars worked on cultural dimension of management and suggested some new ideas and focused on ancient Indian wisdom to develop ideas for contemporary management theory and practice. While their work paved a way for the idea of '**Indian management**', the breakthrough was achieved because of the impact of Yoga and meditation on the corporate world, beginning with global impact of maharishi Mahesh Yogi's TM (Transcendental Meditation).

The management concept in the west developed as a result of evolutionary process, based on the changing values systems of the people- the social, political, and economics and cultural milieu. However, in the Indian historically we never evolved their concepts, keeping the Indian scenario in view. We found it convenient to transfer management technology, trust as scientific technology. As a result of these grafting processes of management, we they have created more confusion in management thinking. Ideas presented in this paper were also extended and presented as part address, under the title, six symbols of Indian management

philosophy', "Symbolism in Indian Culture" is a platform which we are providing to explain all relevant, extraneous, significant, inconsequential management practices which were we perform without understanding the why, what and how behind them. Like Japanese created a synthesis between technology and culture, Indian management has not only created many new mantras to reduce the stress of the corporate managers but also has focused on integration of spirituality and management. This can be considered as distinctive contribution of the Indian management thought. Thus, in contemporary times, management thought is directly or indirectly influenced by three knowledge streams viz, American management concepts, Japanese management concepts, and Indian management concepts.

Another interesting development in the field of management thought has been taking place as a result of the influence of many new age thinkers who are raising new issues such as environmental issues, gender issues, social equity issues etc. initial development in management thought were rooted in industrial revolution and the spirit of capitalism. New questions are being raised about these ideas because industrial revolution has turned out to be polluting revolution and spirit of capitalism ;, has created the 'crony capitalism', casino capitalism' and Matka capitalism of speculative variety besides adversely influencing the environment. Hence, search for New ideas and new mantras have begun that has led to new phrases such as integral capitalism, caring capitalism, compassionate capitalism etc. changes in managerial concepts have also facilitated the need for New Mantras in management thought rooted in holistic view of life. Indian scheme of life' takes a holistic view of life. Spirituality is integral part of this world view as reflected by the four dimensions of life viz.

- ❖ **Dharma** (Ethical foundation),
- ❖ **Arthar** (Material foundation),
- ❖ **Kama** (Pleasure seeing), and
- ❖ **Moksha** (Spiritual foundation).

According to Hindu philosophy, primary goals of a human life are Dharma (adherence to an ethical way of life), Artha (earning money), Kama (Fulfilling Desires) and, Moksha preparing oneself for life after life and seeking enlightenment and salvation from the cycle of birth).

Wealth and desires lead to worldly pleasures and Dharma and Moksha to liberation. Dharma tells in general how to keep a balance between the two and at what point of time of human life.

### **Symbols of Spirituality Contributing Toward Indian Management**

It may be indicated that the ideas of Indian management is rooted in the philosophy of life in contrast to the ideas of American management' that is largely rooted in the idea of 'corporation'. Thus, Indian management offers the potentiality of broadening the 'concept of management' from its rootedness in corporation to a broader approach to management and human development. Seven symbols of Indian management philosophy. In the following discussion we provide seven symbols of spiritual and human values representing some new mantras in the field of management thought. They also define the spirit of 'Indian management thought' as well as some interesting lessons in management and leadership. These symbols also provide us some new models and concepts of management with roots in Indian thought.

These symbols of spirituality providing us some lessons in management and leadership are presented below:

#### **1. Lesson from Indian Flag Management**



## **Bi-monthly Journal**

Indian flag is not only a flag of liberation representing liberation from colonialism but also a flag of three energies viz. physical, mental and spiritual. Its three colors have following meaning in terms of three energies/forces:

**Green:** physical energy/physical force

**White:** mental energy/knowledge force

**Saffron:** spiritual energy /spiritual force

When there is a convergence of these three energies, success is ensured.

During India's freedom struggle, these three energies found convergence and this led to liberation of India and this liberation led to liberation of many other countries from colonialism. Indian flag represents a model of management that can be referred to as PMS (physical, mental, and spiritual) model talked about by Swami Vivekanada in his writings. PMS model represents a convergence of three energies viz. physical, mental and spiritual represented by Indian flag.

In organization context, both in case of corporate development as well as well as institution building, success is achieved when there is convergence of these energies. This idea is also applicable in case of individuals. Successful managers and leaders consciously or unconsciously use this energies convergence approach to management and leadership.

## 2. Management Lesson from Four Lions



Symbolism of four lions is useful in understanding the concept of 'holistic globalization'. This concept is based on the idea of dynamic interaction among following four forces:

- Forces of market
- Forces of states/government
- Forces of the people, e.g Anna Hazzare's Movement during Lokpal bill
- Forces of self (spiritual self) spirituality

Four lions symbol is a national symbol of India that one can see in all Government buildings. The four lions representation of four forces of 'holistic Globalization' by four lions viz. lion of market, lion of State, lion of community and lion of self. In general we tend to see only three lions. The fourth lion viz. lion representing self is hidden from our view. Hence, we tend to ignore this dimension.

When we look at the four Lions symbol from 45 degree angle we see only two Lions viz. market and State. For many years we have ignored the importance of the force represented by the community and the force represented by self, but how long we will ignore the two forces?



It reflects not only material level beauty but also spiritual beauty. Thus, it represents the MS (Material + Spiritual) approach to life. In the lotus flower or for that matter any flower, one can see symbol of infinity. Therefore, flowers can be viewed in terms of intertwining and unfolding of infinities. When 'self is seen as unfolding of flower, it implies potentiality of infinity within one self and thereby self evolution implies realizing this power within.

### 5. Management Lesson from Dia' (Lamp)



'Dia' (Earthen lamp) is another symbol of spirituality. It implies spreading light and removing darkness. 'Dia' also represents the inner light. Every individual possess an inner knowledge light to others. It may be indicated that in general, India represents the philosophy of inner-lamp. Essence of Indian management also lies in lighting the inner lamp and thereby connecting oneself with the light in my heart.

Management implication of these concepts implies that corporate managers should bring the inner light into play not only their interpersonal relationship but also in decision making. Let the work places be lightened up by inner-lamp. This will create spiritual synergy at the work places.

As lamp is a metaphor of knowledge its light represents the light of knowledge. Hence, lighting of lamp implies transporting our mind to the realm of light knowledge and awakening. In this interpretation lok represent the higher level of consciousness. Perhaps because of this lamp has been used as a symbol of mediation in many meditation traditions. One can also see the symbol of infinity in the diagram of diya presented above. Therefore, the light of the lamp is also the light of infinity spreading in all directions. When corporate managers look at the problems and issues from a higher level of consciousness, they arrive at new and creative solutions to the problems. Thus, symbolism of the lamp has an interesting meaning and significance for the managers and leaders.

## 6. Management Lesson from ‘Samudra Manthan’

Samudra Manthan’ churning of the ocean, is a powerful metaphor from Indian mythology that depicts the dynamics between two opposing forces. In India, it has also found expression in the popular sport of rope pulling’ by two teams. Managers and leaders have to deal with the negative energies’ (poison) and they have to learn to deal with them through synergy approach. In essence they have to learn to convert the ‘pain points’ (problems) in to nirvana points (solutions). This becomes easier if we understand the dynamics of the Samukra Manthan representing the dynamics of the dialectics that gets manifested through various intensities of the dialectics. To properly deal with the dialectical intensities, managers need to develop “Mind Balancing Attitude” (MBA), the concept of which has been introduced at the Yoga and management division of Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (SVYASA) University, Bangalore.

## 7. Management lesson from festivals: Indian HRD festivals

In general all festivals symbolize the spirit of celebration. Indian festivals of happiness have some interesting management lessons to offer. We can refer to them as Indian ‘HRD’ festivals represented by Holi, Rakhi and Diwali. They also represent the essence of Indian management philosophy. Following are some key lessons from these festivals for management theory and practice:

**Holi:** festival of colors- different colors represent different perspectives leading to holistic approach

**Rakha:** festival of relationships, create good relationship with stakeholders

**Diwali:** festival of lights and wealth, wealth has divinity inherent in it. Take positive and responsible attitude towards wealth creation represented by the idea of Shubhlabh.

Thus managers and leaders can learn interesting lessons on management thought from these festivals. Similar lessons can be drawn from other festivals also.

## Conclusion

Many Indian scholars and practitioners have been searching for the Indian concepts in management. This has taken various roots viz. Replication of western model in India and documenting this experience through empirical research. Indian management concepts find their unfolding from many Indian symbols of spirituality. In fact, spiritual symbols presented in this research paper provide us a new way of defining the idea of Indian management. In the era of 'holistic Globalization', time has come to globalize these ideas from Indian management for the benefit of everyone. These symbols represent New Mantras in management and leadership. Lessons from these spiritual symbols should go from Indians in all directions. Ie, what we saw during Anna Hazare Lokpal bill should be learned all over the world. It was beautiful non-violence protesting.

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