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Indian Ethos & Values in Modern Management

Himadri Barman

“Certainly we should take care not to make *intellect* our God. Intellect has, of course, powerful muscles but no personality. It cannot lead. It can only serve. It is not fastidious about its choice of leaders (Mind or Soul). The intellect has a sharp eye for tools and methods but is blind to *Ends* and *Values*”. – Albert Einstein

“It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a *western* beginning in business management will have to have an *Indian* ending, when the world adopts rich thoughts of Indian ethos and wisdom, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race”. – Arnold Toynbee, Nobel Laureate

‡ What constitutes Indian Ethos?

Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines Ethos as “the set of beliefs, ideas, etc. about social behaviour and relationship of a person or group” while Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines it as “the moral ideas and attitudes that belong to a particular group or society”. Indian Ethos is all about what can be termed as “national ethos”. Formally, the body of knowledge which derives its solutions from the rich and huge Indian system of ethics (moral philosophy) is known as Indian Ethos in Management (IEM). Is IEM some kind of Hindu concept of management? Certainly not. Management is behavioral science and it has to be culture specific. IEM has as its basis, the culture base of India and as a country whose culture has its roots in religion - it does draw its lessons from the religions of the land - be it Hinduism, Buddhism, or any other. The salient ideas and thoughts of Indian Ethos in Management revealed by our ancient scriptures are:

1. *Atmano Mokshartham, Jagat hitaya cha*: All work is an opportunity for doing good to the world and thus gaining materially and spiritually in our lives
2. *Archet dana manabhyam*: Worship people not only with material things but also by showing respect to their enterprising divinity within.
3. *Atmana Vindyate Viryam*: Strength and inspiration for excelling in work comes from the Divine, God within, through prayer, spiritual readings and unselfish work.
4. *Yogah karmashu Kaushalam, Samatvam yoga uchyate*: He who works with calm and even mind achieves the most.
5. *Yadishi bhavana yasya siddhi bhavati tadrishi*: As we think, so we succeed, so we become. Attention to means ensures the end.
6. *Parasparam bhavayantah shreyah param bhavapsyathah*: By mutual cooperation, respect and fellow feeling, all of us enjoy the highest good both material and spiritual.
7. *Tesham sukhm tesham shanti shaswati*: Infinite happiness and infinite peace come to them who see the Divine in all beings.
8. *Paraspar Devo Bhav*: Regard the other person as a divine being. All of us have the same consciousness though our packages and containers are different.

Basic principles of Indian Ethos for Management (IEM):

1. Immense potential, energy and talents for perfection as human being has the spirit within his heart.
2. Holistic approach indicating unity between the Divine (The Divine means perfection in knowledge, wisdom and power), individual self and the universe.
3. Subtle, intangible subject and gross tangible objects are equally important. One must develop one’s Third Eye, *Jnana Chaksu*, the Eye of Wisdom, Vision, Insight and Foresight. Inner resources are much more powerful than outer resources. Divine virtues are inner resources. Capital, materials and plant & machinery are outer resources.
4. *Karma Yoga* (selfless work) offers double benefits, private benefit in the form of self purification and public benefit. *

* See section on *Karma Yoga*

5. *Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam* - Excellence at work through self-motivation and self-development with devotion and without attachment. [†]
6. Co-operation is a powerful instrument for team work and success in any enterprise involving collective work.

Principles of IEM are universally applicable. IEM can help develop an effective and holistic management pattern which will assure all round growth in productivity, marketing and profitability. This will help in synchronizing private and public benefits and encourage individuals to lead an enriched quality of life together with worldly achievements. The best form of management has to be holistic and value driven which is the objective of IEM.

Items	Management (Oriented by Science and Technology, Western Approach)	Management (Oriented by Values and adopting holistic approach, Indian and Eastern)
Belief	Production, Productivity, Profit at any cost	Material gain with belief in achieving human and social welfare in unison
Guidance	Management guided by mind only, led away by ego and desire. Soulless management	Management by consciousness, power beyond mind i.e., soul. Interiorized management
Emphasis	Worker development, management of others, profit maximization, human being only given lip sympathy	Development of man, integrated growth harmony, happiness and health, management of self
Tools	5 Ms as Resources – men, money, materials, machines and markets. Science & Technology, information for decision making	Men, machines, materials and methods as conscious partners – all having consciousness whether manifested or dormant. Information and intuition for decisions. Ethics and values combined with skills
Problem solving	Conflict resolution by negotiation, compromise, arbitration. Liquidation of differences only for a temporary period. No reference to higher consciousness	Conflicts resolution through integration and synthesis on stressing super ordinate common goals so that enduring harmony and unity is assured. Self introspection, stepping back aids for solution
Decision making	Brain storming	Brain stilling
Development process	Physical, Vital and Mental only. Soul or spirit ignored. Material development only even at the cost of man and nature	Integrated development. Whole man approach, breath-control and meditation emphasized. Human enrichment and total quality
Approach	External behaviour. Mental, material, selfish only. Soulless	Noble attitudes, inner guidance, team spirit, total harmony, global good

Management Concepts Redefined

Term	General Definition (At Present)	IEM Definition
Management	Getting things done	Helping other people to produce extraordinary results

[†] See section on Quality of Work Life and Work Ethic

In Total Quality Management, *Karma Yoga* and *Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam* provide valuable contributions. Go through the section on TQM

Productivity	Output centric	People centric
Planning	Management by results	Management by strategy
Effective supervision	Concern for task and not for people	Produce performers. Help the subordinates to develop leadership quality
Motivation of people	Maslow's Theory of Needs with some modifications	Emphasis on self-motivation, subordinates encouraged to be creative and given autonomy
Resources	Reliance almost on external resources	Reliance almost on internal resources
Health of the company	Balance Sheet and P/L a/c; money-oriented	People oriented performance, environment friendly. Private – public benefit
Profitability	In terms of money. Social costs not included in Balance Sheet	In terms of good public image. Social costs internalized. Trust of customers and society
Hygiene factor	Attention only on job enrichment	Primary emphasis on mind enrichment
Rights and duties	Emphasis on taking not on giving. Rights become primary. Duties become subsidiary	Emphasis on giving not on taking. Duties given great importance and Rights assume secondary value
Marketing	Keen competition to capture and retain demand, market driven economy	Through cooperation by playing complementary role. Social awareness in marketing
System	Set of inter-related elements working as a whole. More emphasis on quantity and objective aspect	Pattern of particular response expressed through organizational functioning. Equal emphasis on quality/quantity with emphasis on subjective aspect
Structure	Hierarchical	Organic evolution, autonomous
Growth	Ultimately dependent on turnover of goods	Coordinating private and public benefit
Job satisfaction	Hygiene factor. Creativity ignored	Through innovation, uniqueness, extraordinary result, trouble shooting
Training	Functional skills, not value oriented and holistic	Value oriented, holistic approach and equal emphasis on both (skills / values)
Man – machine equation	Machine dominates man as human being receives lip sympathy	Man behind the machine given due regard. Healthy philosophy of life. Emotional stability
Man Placement	As per qualifications and experiences	More stress on natural inclination and character
Quality	Product quality by ISO, TQM, QC. Human value, quality plays minor role	Human quality, values, character, mind enrichment, whole man approach.

Indian ethos demands a *subjective* management system which leads to an understanding of the following:

(a) Management Attitude – Top management having firm belief in value-oriented holistic management. Profit is earned through service and satisfaction of all stakeholders – employees, customers, shareholders and citizens. Fulfillment of social responsibility must be ensured.

(b) Humanising the Organisation – Looking at the three aspects of humane organisations, i.e., inter-personal relations, man-machine equation where man is the prime concern and inner management through mental and spiritual growth of individuals.

(c) Interiorising Management – Self management or management by consciousness. When the *soul* manages the other four members of the human being, namely, the body, mind, intellect and the heart, the conflict these four have amongst themselves can be resolved. This is management by consciousness. The objective of self management is to first know and manage oneself and then manage others.

(d) Self-introspection – Embark upon self-study, self-analysis and self-criticism to locate areas of friction and disharmony, a self examination of one's own thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations and passions and a desire to reduce and subdue the ego.

(e) Brain-stilling – For rational and enduring decisions, silent mind is a necessity. A perfect *Mounum* (calm mind enjoying tranquility) is necessary. Brain-stilling or meditative silence is the most reliable method to discover solutions to problems and difficulties which seem to be difficult to be tackled by reason and intellect because through this one can come into contact with the inner mind or higher consciousness called *Chetana*.

(f) Stepping Back (for a while) – Never decide anything, never speak a word, never throw yourself into action without stepping-back. The stepping back from a situation for a while enables one to control and master a situation.

(g) Self-dynamising Meditation – A dynamic meditation is meditation of transformation of lower consciousness into higher consciousness and hence is called *transforming meditation*. Through meditation, in a silent and calm mind, one reaches a higher level of consciousness which offers guidance in the form of intuitions to tackle a multitude of problems. This is called *consciousness approach* to management.

(h) Role of Intuition – Intuition is the act of coming to direct knowledge or certainty without reasoning or inferring. It is immediate cognition by the inner mind and when fully developed, is efficient and effective for taking prompt and sound decisions. Intuition skills enable one to cope with confidence the fluctuating environment and rapid changes. *Faith* is a prerequisite to develop and realize the power of intuition.

A Manager's Mind Set

General Concept	IEM Concept
Produce results	Produce performers
Organize men, materials, machines and money	Mobilize men and sound out other readiness
Plan, set goals, prepare schedules, checklists	Obtain agreement and commitment on means and ends
Motivate, praise, reprimand, punish, push people	Inspire, empower, celebrate success, mourn failure, draw people
Check, control, report at the command post	Set personal examples: be visible, accessible and always on the move
Coordinate, requisition, convene meetings	Facilitate, show ways to overcome obstacles, take part in informal gatherings
Instruct, issue notices, order, demand compliance	Make queries, sound out ideas, encourage suggestions
Manage others: I-centered	Manage yourself. Other centered, not egoistic

§ Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga is a good pathway for – self purification and self-development, individual as well as collective growth and welfare, minimum play of passion, jealousy, hatred, greed, anger and arrogance, team spirit, team work, autonomous management, minimum control and supervision, etc. The result is all round happiness and prosperity.

Karma Yoga is an end-state or an alias of *Nishkam Karma (NK)*. Yoga means union between 'individual consciousness' and 'supreme consciousnesses'. Work is one of the several

methods of achieving this union. Juxtaposed against the NK is the other attitude to work called *Sakam Karma (SK)*. Let us have a look at the main points of difference between NK & SK:

NK (Detached Involvement)	SK (Attached Involvement)
Psychological Energy Conservation	Psychological Energy Dissipation / Burn Out
Reactionless Action	Reactionful Action
Perfection is the Aim – to handle both success & failure	Success is the Aim – success excludes failure
Inner Autonomy / Sufficiency	Dependence on Externals, Thriving on Comparison
Being in the world, but not of it	Being in the world and also of it
Socio-economically relevant	Socio-economically questionable
Work-commitment	Reward-commitment
Mind enrichment	Job enrichment
Excellence through ‘work is worship’	Excellence through competitive rivalry

It is evident that NK offers the most wholesome work psychology and should therefore be the “Right Attitude to Work” because it is based purely on the tremendous logic in its theory and the infinite power in its practice.

Lord Krishna in the Gita says:

*“Karmanyeva Adhtkaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadhachana
Ma Karma-phala-heturbuhu Ma The’ Sangab Asthu Akarmani”*

This means “You have the right only to action, and never to the fruits of your actions, nor be attached to inaction”.

A practioner of NK should possess three important skills:

- (i) An ability to deal with situations in a mature way
- (ii) An ability to deal with relationships in a humane manner
- (iii) Understanding and tapping the power of the mind, which is infinitely flexible

† **Quality of Work Life and Work Ethic**

Why work?

To purify the mind and the heart (*Chittashuddhi*) and to become wise; to provide public benefit

What is work?

To nurture each other. It is a form of *Yagna*, sacrifice. It is the worship of the Divine

How to work?

With the spirit of renunciation, i.e., *Tyag* and to serve others without self-interest

Spirit of work

Excellence and perfection in work

† **Human Values – Indian Insights**

Values are basic convictions that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. *Value system* indicates a hierarchy based on ranking of an individual’s values in terms of their intensity. *Terminal values* are desirable end-states of existence; the goals that a person would like to achieve during his/her life time. *Instrumental values* are preferable modes of behaviour or means of achieving one’s terminal values. Values are called *gunas*.

A broad definition of *values*, derived from an insight into ancient India's psycho-philosophical wisdom literature is:

"Values are states of feelings/emotions that underpin the content of a choice/decision and determine the manner of using the intellect/reason for justifying and implementing that choice/decision."

Character is the foundation of values. The sequence being:
Character -> Values -> Attitudes -> Behaviour

Human Values is the sum total of qualities like truthfulness, integrity, gratitude, humbleness, forgiveness, patience, transparency, charitableness, simplicity, etc. Human Values make a person *Antarmukhi* (interiorized) while skills will make him more and more *Bahirmukhi* (exteriorized). Human values transcend moral, ethical and spiritual values.

Golden Rule of Ethics

The following are the forms of the golden rule in ethics. Each of these forms the basis of all human values. These are the core values to change one *first*.

1. Everything you want others to do to you, you shall do to others.
2. Do not do to others that which you do not wish them to do to you.
3. Do not do anything to others that if done to you, would cause harm to you.

Values v/s Skills

1. To 'become', we need values. To 'do', we need skills.
2. 'Becoming' (needing values) must precede 'doing' (needing skills). Values should act as the basis of the skills acquired.
3. Values are the means of perfection. Skills must have sound system of values as the base. Otherwise, one can manipulate skills for ulterior motives.
4. Values are internal, dealing with internal development of a person, purifying mind and heart. Skills on the other hand only make a person proficient. Values are the means of perfection of personality.
5. The field of values is governed by union, holism and relatedness. More often than not, skills are used to bring about division, fragmentation and separation.
6. Values bring about excellence and universal good. Skills see us through mechanics of management.
7. Skills are not enduring, values are.
8. Skills change with passage of time. Policy is flexible, principles and values are not. We have permanent fundamental values.

"Skills must pass through the corridors of values and the corridors have to be kept not dark and untidy, but well lit and clean."

Skill – Value Matrix

		Values	
		Strong	Weak
Skills	Strong	Most Desirable	Dangerous
	Weak	Tolerable	Useless

The discussion in no way speaks against acquiring skills but tries to guard against *only* acquiring skills, as the matrix above testifies. Of course, the discussion in no uncertain terms makes it clear that values are more important than skills.

§ Value-Oriented Holistic Management

The etymological root of the term 'holism' or 'holistic' is the Latin word 'holon' meaning total, whole or integrated as opposed to fragmented or splintered. It is generally used to mean 'a total view'. It can be looked from the following two approaches:

- (a) A 'Rational' approach, involving a process of 'aggregation'
- (b) A 'Perceptive' approach involving a process of 'synthesis'

Rational is a 'bottom up' approach – putting together the fragments or components or constituent elements and thus construct the whole. The perceptive approach is a 'top down' approach – see the whole first and then go into the constituent elements. This is considered to be real 'holism'.

Value-Oriented Holistic Management is the essence of the Indian Management thought which has been enriched by the rich Indian heritage and culture; the way we have looked at life over the ages. Management based only on skills can never be total or holistic. It is beyond doubt that management based on values supplemented by adequate skills can only be holistic and that is why we have this concept of "Value-Oriented Holistic Management". This time tested approach to Management can help stop the rot that has crept into individuals and organizations.

¶ Indianizing Total Quality Management

Sashkin and Kiser have defined TQM as "Creating an organizational culture committed to the continuous improvement of skills, teamwork, processes, product and service quality, and customer satisfaction". TQM stresses three principles: customer satisfaction, employee involvement, and continuous improvements in quality, which some refer to as the *quality trilogy*. TQM is also said to be based on four fundamental commitments:

1. Commitment to the customer's total satisfaction
2. Commitment to understanding and improving the organization's processes
3. Commitment to employee improvement
4. Commitment to data-based decision making

Shared *vision* and *values* provide the foundation for making these commitments. Because the four commitments often require behaviour that is not customary to managers, in most organizations, unusual steps must be taken to ensure that workers and customers do not perceive the commitments as hollow promises.

It is pertinent to note here that it is *values* and the *value system* that gives real meaning to TQM efforts. It provides the substratum or a solid foundation for TQM and elevating the capacity of people and organizations to produce extraordinary results on the basis of available material resources. In many ways, it teaches a worker to control the temptation of jumping into 'who is wrong?' rather than concentrate on 'what is wrong?', which is a core idea of TQM. *Jnana Chaksu* and the concept of 'Brain Stilling' can help solve problems which otherwise seems to be beyond grasp of even the most well known problem solving tools. *Karma Yoga* of all workers in an organization will guarantee internal as well as external quality. *Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam* (excellence in work) guarantees *total* employee involvement. Indian ethos gives the key to effective motivation, which is a key requirement in achieving 'total quality'.

HRD Interventions in TQM

A Microsoft ad theme is 'People Ready Organizations' which reflects the importance organizations give to its human resource. TQM is now directly equated with HRD and they are regarded as two sides of the same coin. When we talk about HRD Interventions in TQM, we are talking of primarily two things – Emphasis on Quality of Life and Focus on Quality of Work Life. These two emphasize the fact that the worker is not merely a component of the production process. HRD intervention is needed to bring about "Total Quality People", for whom total quality is what brings about *Atmananda* (a sense of pride and self satisfaction).

¶ Stress & Indian Ethos

Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. More typically, stress is associated with *constraints* and demands. The former prevents an individual from doing what he/she

desires while the latter refers to the loss of something desired. The word 'stress' is derived from the Latin word 'Stringer' which means to 'draw tight'.

Causes of Stress

- Mostly external and outside our control like Rapid obsolescence of skills, Uncongenial work environment, political and economic factors, etc.
- Stress generating events & situations in life – partly controllable and partly not like Death of family member / close relative, Wedding, Retirement, Loss of Job, etc.
- Mostly internal and by and large within our control. These are classified into
 - (a) Strong negative emotions – the 5 As of anger, ambition, anxiety, apprehension and arrogance.
 - (b) Materialistic world view including a hedonistic culture that promotes crass consumerism and is sustained by some powerful unwholesome emotions like selfishness, greed, grabbing mentality, envy, egocentricity, etc.
 - (c) Living an impure, illegal and unethical life ruled by the senses; for example having extra-marital relationship and being a victim of lust and passion, engaged in shady corrupt deals and being a victim of easy money, etc.
 - (d) Personality composition / make-up
 - (e) Interplay of duality that is a fact of life and human existence[‡]

Consequences of Stress

There is almost a unanimous view that there are four components of the consequences of stress. These are:

- Physiological – blood pressure problems, problems related to the heart, indigestion, insomnia, etc. These are termed nowadays as *lifestyle* diseases!
- Emotional – anxiety, anger, depression, fear (phobias), etc.
- Behavioural – over dependence, argumentativeness, disturbed work life/schedule, etc.
- Cognitive – adverse effects on mental functions such as reasoning, thinking, concentration, and memory, and incapability in decision making

The Indian View on Stress

Ancient Indian literature does not talk about stress itself. Some of the terms used are *bishad*, *klesha* and *dukh*. *Klesha* refers to the stressor aspect. Our ancient literature does talk of *tritap* which refers to three kinds or rather sources of distress and miseries (*dukha-traya*) in human life, mainly

- *Adhibhautika* – due to beings, i.e., wild animals, reptiles and cruel humans
- *Adhidaiivika* – due to 'Acts of God', i.e., natural calamities which are ordinarily beyond human control
- *Adhyatwika* – relating to one's own body and mind, i.e., physical and mental illness

Out of the three, those in the second group are ipso facto outside our control, the first group may be avoided if we are careful enough and the third are by and large within our control. As can be observed, these are very similar to the Causes of Stress as already mentioned above.

Methods of Stress Prevention (What our Scriptures say?)

- Effective management of the 5As
- Developing a spirit of progressive renunciation
- The ethico-moral law of cause and effect (The *Theory of Karma*)
- Conscious efforts towards developing a healthy personality

Managing Anger

The origin of anger is desire unfulfilled. Anger bursts are the results of frustrations and insecurities emanating from the same. What results is aggression – against inanimate objects like furniture, glassware, etc., against animate beings like parents, friends, relatives, etc. and aggression against self like suicide.

[‡] An Indian Equivalent is the *Dwandik Theory of Stress*

Anger could be both a cause and an effect of stress. There are two methods for dealing with anger. The Modern (Western) Approach which says accept & express and the Classical (Eastern) Approach which says deny & reject. There is almost complete unanimity among the psychologists that the classical approach is valid.

The Dwandik Theory of Stress

It is a contribution from *The Gita* which says that stress arises from the universal phenomenon of the constant interplay of dualities or opposites or contraries in the “fabric of life” of our existence – both the outer/physical world (e.g., night and day or hot and cold) and the inner/psychological domain (e.g., pleasure and pain or success and failure). The Gita suggests two alternative approaches to deal with *Dwanda* or Dualities, *Samattwa* (i.e., treating the two as equal) and *Nirdwandwa* (i.e., transcending the dualities). The first approach suits the *Bhakta* and is called the *Bhakti-Yoga* while the second is for the *Gyani* and is called the *Gyan-Yoga*. The first approach is relatively easier.

We end with the following two verses from *The Gita* which reflects the *Samattwa* and the *Nirdwandwa* approaches:

‘*sukha-sukhe same krtva – labhalabhau jayajayau...*’ [To regard pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat as alike]

‘*yo na hrsyati na dvesti – na socati na kankasati – subhsubha – parityagi...*’ [He who neither rejoices nor dislikes nor grieves nor desires, who renounces good and evil]

A Few Guidelines

Stress is a reality of modern life; there is no escape from it. Our objectives should be how to:

- (i) increase the threshold level (between challenges & stress)
- (ii) prevent ourselves from becoming stressful
- (iii) effectively cope with stress so that we can soon revert back to the stress-free state.

Practical steps need to be taken to attain these objectives. A few of these can be:

- Control anger by all means
- Exercise regularly
- Have good food habits
- Work efficiently but avoid competition with others
- Don’t be a workaholic
- Look for ‘*sat sangh*’ (company of wise and good people)
- Remember *The Theory of Karma*
- Be content with whatever you have

Disclaimer:

Some of the views expressed in this write-up are entirely of the author and no claim is made regarding their validity in the context in which this has been written. The author has taken the liberty in expressing the contents of the sources which he has referred to in his own style and in the process may have altered the original views and underlying themes.

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