Relational Lens Book Review

Dear Prof Guptara

I have completed reading the book ‘Relational Lens’ and I am writing my comments below.

I could relate to several points made in the book. As a professional project manager working with lot of stakeholders, I can say that success of any project depends lot more on relationship between stakeholders than the tech solutions or project management methodology used. Another interesting point I found is that managers will not promote talent if they have difficulty justifying their own job. This was particularly true in my last organisation which was very top heavy.

The book states that too much of diversity is unproductive. I find this particularly true for India. India is separated along racial, linguistic, religious, caste and geographical line. As someone once said, ‘India is a continent masquerading as a country’. India’s unity is primarily based on its largest religion, Hinduism. But if a nation can be united only on the basis of religion then the entire Middle East should be one nation or all Buddhist nation in the Far East should be one nation. Middle East is far less diverse as compared to India. They are all Arabs, speak Arabic and practice the same religion and yet they are different nations. A Tamilian in India has nothing in common with a Punjabi and therefore both are apathetic to the development of the nation.

The book denounces individualism. Individualism is diagonally opposite to relational thinking. Being individualistic myself, I can see the impact individualism has on relationships. Individualism makes you extremely good at what you do but not any good for others. It makes you a well-oiled machine but not sure what you are producing.

This is fine until you become a Christian and start realising that relating to people (and God) is the fundamental requirement of this faith. No great work can be done alone, hence relationships are key to achieving one’s purpose, goals, and desires in life.

Sometimes, relationships are impossible to establish even if you want to. Example, In India, if I want to have good relationship with my neighbours, I have to participate in their religious and cultural festivals, which might conflict with my religious beliefs. I have to make choice as to which relationship I value more, relationship with God or neighbour. Choosing God means you are ostracised by your neighbourhood, community or relatives. I guess there are limitations for establishing “good” relationships.

The book has done a great job in giving an academic underpinning & framework to understand & evaluate various dimensions of relationships. We all understand the value of relationships but a technique to measure, monitor and improve relationships is a paradigm shift in management science.

I wonder how industry has embraced it though, because measuring and monitoring relationships is the easy part but improving relationships requires genuine efforts from all stakeholders and sometimes compromising your own interests which is very difficult in a corporate setting. The whole EPS driven culture is too strongly embedded in corporate psyche.

I am definitely keen to deep dive into Relational Analytics and acquire this skill. I can discuss further over a call.

The book per se is not very easy to read. It has lots of ideas and thoughts stacked very tightly together. Perhaps, because I am reading a draft version and not the final copy. It is like reading Wikipedia which has lot of information but is not very engaging to the average reader, versus an Encyclopaedia Britannica which has much better flow and presentation.

Looking forward to connecting with you again.

Many Thanks

Joyson