Vedic Wisdom to Corporate Excellence: A Paradigm Shift and Holistic Perspective

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Abstract:
The objective of the paper is an attempt to integrate the basic principles of Vedic management and corporate social responsibility, to create new perspectives in Corporate Veda, with an insight into human nature through concept of gunas such as tamas, rajas and satva, leading to a spiritual relationship management that inspires and makes the subordinates work with a vision. When a manager is attached to the senses of materialistic gains and worldly desires, it may result in unethical practices, anger, psychological stress and loss of peace.

Keywords: Spiritual relationship management | Vedic management | business ethics | Gunas – satva | rajas and tamas | Value system and corporate social responsibility

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Introduction

Human being learns the art of managing self initially in the family environment and then in society. The human body receives enormous potential, energy and power from the nature and the universe, which needs to be essentially harnessed, channelized and nourished. Self-management is an essential and an integral aspect or component of human capital management for the society and the country at large, to harness individual's natural energies in different situations and in different environment.

Human body acquires positive, materialistic and dull elements from the nature, parents and the society at large. At a time, one element may dominate all other qualities of human behavior. One should not fall an easy pray to materialistic temptation that is detrimental to the interest of a nation. One should manage self and leave behind positive and constructive impression in the family and society. This will help to transform adversity into advantage, weakness into strength, ignorance into knowledge, negative into positive, deficiency into proficiency, crisis into opportunity and lastly problem into solution. (४. २४३) [2. Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3 Verse 43]

The manager needs to practice to control the senses, understand that the soul is supreme to self and control the mind and intellect, by helping the soul ascend to higher order, so as to move the chariot to the right and moral route. Hunger, sleep, fear and sex are common in man and animal, but what distinguishes man from animal is the knowledge of right and wrong and self-control. The world is the battleground for a moral struggle. One need not conquer the mountain but conquer self. Human body is made of the five elements of the earth, fire, water, air, space (४. २४६. maharanyak upanisad lixi – 1) and the soul (light or Gods energy) takes its origin from the heaven (४. २४६. katha upanisad ii -3-7). It is like a ashvattam tree whose roots are above the branches. That is human mind symbolizes roots. As tree is the consequence of its roots, similarly human body is a consequence of human intellect and mind at the top, followed by 24 elements that are the branches of the body.

The Vedic teachings and practices as guidelines to Corporate governance:

The business ethics are guidelines and principles for a responsible conduct in business practices, leadership and decision making. The trust and confidence of workers, assigning challenging targets and empowerment of deserving employees, relating to action and performance are the key to a successful organisation. There is a need to relate karmakshetra to Dharmakshetra that is work for the self and organization with selflessness and without any attachment.

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The corporate executive should become fearless and aggressive towards his mission by detaching himself from selfish interest and ego and integrate his goals with the organisation's goals, to achieve the growth of the organisation and its employees, incorporating rationality in corporate social responsibility.

Management – An Insight:

Management is an art of application of skills, wisdom, presence of mind and self-awareness. To quote Drucker,

“...management is thus what tradition used to call a liberal art: 'liberal' because it deals with the fundamentals of knowledge, self - knowledge, wisdom and leadership; 'art', because it is practice and application. Managers draw on all the knowledge and insights of the humanities and the social sciences – on psychology and philosophy, on economics and history, on ethics as well as on the physical sciences......” (Drucker)

Business needs to focus on quality of output, optimum utilisation of scarce resources, having alternative uses. A manager should understand that resources belong to the society and should be employed to an effective use for the mankind and maximisation of social welfare. Business ethics and responsible behaviour towards society needs to take priority in the corporate governance, in addressing the problem of choice of allocation of scarce resources to its alternative uses. A manager who does not realize his Self, is ought to be controlled by his senses and not intellect and so bound to commit mistakes.

Cases of Corporate Fraud and Unethical Practices in India:

- Kentucky Fried Chicken : KFC : Case Code : BECG044 – It was in news to use monosodium glutamate, nearly three times more than allowed.
- Nestle
- The failure of ponzi scheme, brought big financial loss to 1.7million investors, leading to committing to suicide by many.
- One reason why Subhiksha failed was over-confidence and aggressiveness, without adequate IT support, funds and controls.
- Cases of Corporate Ethical fraud globally:
- One of the biggest audit firms globally. Arthur Anderson, shattered, mainly due to the ethical violation.
- Lehman Brothers holdings Inc. was the fourth largest US Investment bank at the time of collapse.
- Ethical Considerations and Implications of Corporate Scams:
• The 2012 Global fraud society conducted by Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) reviewed 1388 incidents of fraud worldwide and found that an average organization loses 5% of its annual revenue to fraud.

• To quote Bhagavadgita,"Doorena hy Avaram karma, Buddhì-Yogaaad Dhanaanjaya Buddhau saranam anviccha, Kripaanaah phala – hetavah”, that is a manager should visualize and focus on a broader mission, rather than small task and worry for its outcome. If he sets a long term mission or perspective plan, he will work harder and meet tough challenges, to achieve the super mission of an organization and in this process, the small targets are taken care of on the daily basis.

Integration of Corporate governance, Ethics and the Vision of the Leader:

• A leader has to stop criticizing and blaming his subordinates and free himself from the past frustrations and resentments, that is sapping is energy and potential. “ All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become.” (Buddha)

The 2012 Global fraud society conducted by Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) reviewed 1388 incidents of fraud worldwide and found that an average organization loses 5% of its annual revenue to fraud.

The seven chakras represents the quality of body, nature and earth. The soul or atma or light transfer and profuses cosmic energy to all the chakras of the human body from downward to the upward so as to reach the human mind and resulting in human intellect. This light or energy reaches every cell of the body through the flow of blood, energizing every part and corner of the body and activating all the chakras and relating it to human body and mind with a meaningful life full of energy and action. If a person performs meditation, he can focus and concentrate huge amount of energy that provide immense focus and power, with good health. If one can remove all bottlenecks and hindrances, then he can fully harness and channelize his hidden potential and achieve the ultimate mental power. A healthy mind is the real strength and wealth that that stands by a person even in difficult times. Meditation helps the human body to feel and become aware of the chakras, that helps to remove all negative energy like fear, angry, sadness etc.

Arjune said to Krishna in bhagvat gita :- Prakriti and purusa, the field and the knower of the field, knowledge and object of knowledge, these I should like to know, O keshav. (the bhagavadgita ch- xii – 1) The blessed lord said, “The body, O son of kundi, is called the field and he who knows this, is a knower of the field. (8. The bhagavadgita - ch- xiii- 2) Prakriti is unconscious activity and purush is inactive consciousness. The body is called field (prakriti), inside which the events happen with the help of 24 elements, that grow, mature and die. These are :-

• Five elements of body – earth, water, fire, air and space.

• Five oragans of perception or senses are – eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. These acts as the inputs to human body.

• Five subtle elements are sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The lord said that quality of sound, touch color, taste and smell shall be pure.
The five organs of action or karmendriyas are hands, feet, speech organs, anus and reproductive organs. These are the output devices of the human body that symbolizes action, communication, movement excretion of enjoyment of the field (body). The lord said that the head, hands, feet, sides, back, belly and arms shall be pure. *(9.mahanarayana upanisad –ixv-4)

**Manah** (combination of knowledge and ego) reflects quality of mind which is positivity(satogun), materialistic (rajogun) and dullness (tamogun). Always be healthy minded.* (10.Rgveda samhita vi -52-5) A healthy mind is the real wealth which stands by a person even in difficult times. The mind is higher than the sense objects *(11. Katha upanisad-i-3-10)

**Purusa** or the soul or the light or the atma is the knower of the field or all objects. These are sahastrasar chakra reflects quality of whole body as a intellect or wisdom. Purusa (light, soul, atma, knower of the field) comprises the faculty of proper thinking, rationality, logical reasoning, equality for everybody. Intellect or sahastrasar or wisdom is higher than the mind.*(12.Chandogya Upanisad –v-1-3)

Arjun asked :- “those who neglecting the ordinances of scriptures offer sacrifices filled with faith-what is there position, O Krishna,is it one of positives or of passion or of dullness !”*(13.The bhagavadagita – ch- xvii -1)

The blessed lord said ;- 

The faith of the embodied is of these kind, borne of their nature—positive, passionate and dull . hear now about it.*(The bhagavadagita ch-xvii -2)

The faith of every individual, O Bharat is in accordance with his nature. Man is of the nature of the faith :- what his faith is that variety he is .* (The bhagavadagita ch-xvii-2)

The mind (manah, purity of blood) is composed of the knowledge and ego, which represents a continuous flow of thought. There is a close relationship and dependency among twenty four elements.

The human mind consist of immense feelings, emotions, impulses, desire, likes and dislikes on the basis of a proportional combination of knowledge and ego (manah) that combination of mind. The power and potential of a human being can be fully harnessed, if the mind is balanced and not attached to desires. A person can see, hear or analyse only through the power of mind.

Desire, resolution, doubt, faith, patience, modesty, intelligence and fear etc. are simply the variants of knowledge and ego. Management and balance of mind can make a person's of life cheerful, happy and meaningful.

One sees and hear through the mind. Desire, resolution, doubt, faith, lack of faith, patience, impatience, modesty, intelligence and fear are simply forms of mind. *(14. Brhadarnayaka Upanishad –i-5-3) The mind is a father, the organ of speech is the mother (knowledge) and the vital force is the child. *( Brhadarnayaka Upanishad i-5-7) Mind is superior to the organs. *( katha upanisad ii-3-7)

Combination of knowledge and ego (manah, mind) develops three fold quality in a person. Three fold qualities, determine the basic personality of an individual. These are as follows as :-

- **Satogun**: humility, indifferent, non attachment, self control, righteousness, faithful, selfless service, non violence, patience, purity of body and mind, steadfastness, constant equal mindedness to all desirable and undesirable happening, perception of the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain.
- **Rajogun**: passion, attachment, result – centric, restlessness, destructive, ego, selfishness, anger,
- **Tamogun**: indolence, indifference, dull, inactive, ignorance, darkness, delusion, suffering

### Satogun- positivity- knowledge:-

- **Humility**: it refers to non violence, caring and having an attitude of gratitude, kind and doing good to others.
- **Indifference**: Indifferent to the perception of fear of birth, old age, pain and sickness and not to collect wealth.
- **Non attachment**: Non attachment to the materialistic pleasures and not to be possessed of house, money and family.
- **Renunciation** is the supreme means of liberation and is ‘Brahman’. *(15.Mahanarayana Upanishad lxxix-13)
- **Sense control**: sense control use the intellect to control the worldly desires, anger, not judging others, doing introspection and not to harm others. One can reduce or nullify the sins committed and feel heaven through sense control. Since sense control is beyond the reach of ordinary beings, so it is Supreme. *(Mahanarayana Upanishad lxxix-4)
- **Righteousness**: human mind should be honest, disciplined and follower of rule of law and of code of conduct always purify the thoughts cleanse the negative aura.

The three branches of dharma are: first, sacrifice, study and gift; second is austerity and third, celibate students studying in gurukul. *(16. Tai Upanishad i-11)

- **Truthfulness**: Be truthful to self, family society and nation at large and work for the maximum welfare of all. The human action should be for the benefit of the mankind and work for the eradication of social evils.
Truth is the basic foundation for transparent democracy and growth. One who speaks the truth verily suffers; but in the end, he prospers. (Mahanarayana Upanishad lxxviii-6). One who lies diligently becomes prosperous, but suffers in the end.

- **Selfless service**: This can be achieved by thinking and working for the others, taking care of the mankind, serving the society without and self interest.

- **Conquer the mind and not the mountains**: Human being needs to control his mind by removing the negative attitude like anger, jealousy, hatred, fear etc. He need not conquer the mountains but self. Tranquility of mind results in proper channelization and direction of psychic energies into constructive disposition and serve humanity.

Sages attain Heaven through tranquility of mind, that is not accessible for ordinary beings. Hence, it is considered Supreme. (Mahanarayana Upanishad lxxix-5)

**Rajoguni – materialistic behavior** :-

- **Anger**: It is an outcome of stress, distress, internal instability, exertion and failures. It results in misery and unhappiness.

- **Greed**: The desires and wants of a human being are unlimited, but the resources to satisfy these wants are not only scarce, but limited. Desire causes the doer to act. It becomes the agent, that forces a person to act. (Mahanarayana Upanishad Ixi-1).

- **Lack of faith**: faith is an outcome of belief. Life runs on faith, that is a trust on parents, brother, sister, friends, neighbours and God. Faith on human beings is the significant factor for the existence of the mankind. A girl is married in a family out of trust. A child is depended on the mother and has faith in the parents. Lack of faith is assigned to falsehood. (17. Vajasaneyi Madbyamdina Samhita xix-76).

- **Injury**: It refers to an act done, that is detrimental to others and causes harm to a person or society. One who injures others goes to darkness. (Vajasaneyi Madbyamdina Samhita xii-44)

- **Sins**: The following sinners are mentioned in the Vedas (18. Mahanarayana Upanishad i-68) :- Akaryakari - Transgressor of scriptural conduct; Stenab – thief; Brunaba – One who commits foeticide; Gurutalpagab – one who outrages the preceptor's honour.

One commits sins by mind, speech and action. (Mahanarayana Upanishad i-56). An action done or words spoken to harm others or detrimental to other’s interests, becomes a sin. One cannot do good or benefit to self, by doing bad to others. One cannot benefit, at the cost of others. One has to face the fruits of his bad karma, sooner or later. It is very true, that what goes around, comes around.

**Tamogun (negativity)** :

- **Procrastination**: One should do the work today, as later becomes never. One who procrastinates, can never finish a task, as he becomes lazy, sleepy, slow and ineffective.

- **Ego**: One should forego ego, which brings in pride, grief and misery as well. One should practice an attitude of gratitude. A bad attitude is like a flat tyre, that cannot go anywhere, until we change it.

**Summary**

To sum up, a human being should act and perform his duties, without any greed of fruits and be responsible for one’s right or wrong behavior and benefit self, not at the cost of the welfare of the society. The restraint and freedom from desire are essential to spiritual perfection. (BG-2-47)

Attachment to objects, a sense of ego and procrastination, are the characteristics of our lower nature. If we are to rise to a knowledge of our true self, we should conquer our lower nature with its ignorance and ego and practice attitude of gratitude. Positive energy is contagious. Pristine nature has the power to heal and energise. A leader should not be disturbed by the problems, but find a solution. He has to earn trust of his subordinates by conviction that sees the welfare of one and all, taking everyone along, to the path of success and thus the accomplishment of an organisation’s mission.

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Annexure 1

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Reviewer's Comment 1:
This research is one of its own kind. Linking the basic ancient principles with the business practises. Attempt made by author to open new facets of research is highly commendable and praiseworthy.

Reviewer's Comment 2:
The author has made and attempt in a very well manner to link the learning of Bhagwat Geeta to the corporate culture and governance linking with present business practices.

Reviewer's Comment 3:
The introductory part is very well written. The author has lucidly explained ancient wisdom to the modern business practices.

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