

Connecting Mythology and Management

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Book Review on *Business Sutra: A Very Indian Approach to Management*

An unusual combination for being a management author and a doctor (MBBS) by profession with love for mythology, which was reinforced with formal education post-graduate diploma in Comparative Mythology from Mumbai University. In his book *Business Sutra*, the author Devdutt Pattanaik convincingly connects mythology to management.

As management graduates we all have read books which are written by Europeans and Americans which we swear by and try to emulate them. In this book 'Business Sutra', one comes across the Indian approach to management and asks if there is a remote possibility if we can imbibe this very Indian approach to Business.

Devdutt Pattanaik research states that the western culture starts with the people who were enslaved, deemed of dignity, freedom and resources until the prophet came and showed the vision of the promised land and to get there the needed commandants, rules, do's and don'ts. To get to the so called Promised Land they face problems along the way, as what we all know in management language as COMPLIANCE.

This is how management is taught to us...start with a problem statement, next is the mission and vision, then the objectives, the goal and the target coupled with regulations, guidelines, principles and auditors...now move to the promised land called PROFITS. If modern management can be based on western culture, why can't we use inspiring stories from our PURANAS (ancient chronicles of Indian mythology). And Pattanaik draws his logic from the same.

The Indian culture talks of three promised lands, first called Swarga (means Paradise), second KAILASH and third VAIKUNTHA. The Swarga has cow called Kamadhenu, tree called Kalpataru and jewel called Chintamani, all these three can fulfill your wishes for hunger, money wealth, power etc., in management parlance it is called infinite returns with no investments (you will get your salary without going to work). The lord of this land is lord Indra, who has everything but is insecure. Cynic one would say it is all theory and meant for orange robes and not business suits.

The Second Promised Land is KAILASH, where your hunger is destroyed or outgrown so there is no desire, want or wish. Lord of this land being Shiva, who is always at peace. Drawing meaning from the Shiva's habitat he elucidates that there is no fear in this land Nandi the bull does not fear

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Druga's lion in turn Karthikeya's peacock does not eat Shiva's snake, nor does the snake eat Ganesh's rat. There is neither predator nor prey as hunger is destroyed. Critic of this would comment what about my hunger---this will not work.

The third Promised Land is VAIKUNTHA whose lord is Vishnu, signifies affluence, abundance, prosperity and peace. What is different here is that is a Rangabhoomi and not a Ranabhoomi. Everybody's hunger is taken care off by Vishnu as he engages with the world, sometimes as king or as priest or as prince. This is what the western culture calls the "AVATAR". A cynic here would say, how we can focus on other people's hunger.

Question is whose hunger matters first ---the shareholder, the employee, the customer, is it the vendor, politician or the regulator, the rest of society or environment? Similarly, in relationships whose hunger matters – Parent or child; husband or wife; relative or stranger and your's or mine? Hence there is no temple of Indra but there are temples for Shiva and Vishnu ---Hari and Hara. So by satisfying your hunger one is outgrowing their hunger, this is not the vocabulary one reads and hears in management books and schools.

Add to the three Promised Land is the differences between human and animal hunger. Human hunger he says is of, food for today, tomorrow and generations later and for status, power and property (which is bequeathed generation to generation). As humans have imagination and therefore empathy which we can feel for others i.e. the hunger both qualitatively and quantitatively.

No management is complete without a model so to bind all this he presents the 3B model, BELIEF, BEHAVIOUR and BUSINESS which says in a gist that "AS IS YOUR BELIEF, SO IS YOUR BEHAVIOUR, SO IS YOUR BUIINESS". Jaisa Vishwas, Vyasa Vyavahar, Vaysa Vyapar.

If you believe that my (one's own) hunger matters first you will create a battle ground and there will be prosperity but no peace. If you believe that you're (other's) hunger matters first then there is a possibility of creating a playground a Rangabhoomi, where there is prosperity and peace. You can see statistically where businesses are going now. There is a possibility to create prosperity with peace where we focus on other people's hunger. So ask yourself what is your belief and when you choose your belief you create your promised land. It can be Swarga where hunger is indulged, it can be Kailash where there is no hunger or it can be Vaikuntha where everyone's hunger is satisfied and my hunger is outgrown.

Pattanaik says that his book is a reflective exercise for management professionals. Do managers have time for long-term reflection in a highly competitive environment? In the end a successful manager needs to imbibe the best from everywhere depending on the context. The importance of an imaginative mind so evident in Indian mythology-will always help.