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MANAGEMENT THOUGHTS OF VALLUVAR AND CONFUCIUS: A COMPARISON

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REVISITING NATIVE WISDOM

Introduction

The past provides examples for the future that is yet to happen. When looking into the ancient wisdom we can see various social and cultural changes humanity has undergone. But a careful look at the changes we also can derive that changes are superficial in nature. Ancient way of life and management methods evolved since the dawn of human civilisation are portrayed in the literatures and religious books. Bhagavad-Gita, Viduran-Neethi, Bhishma enunciation, Ramayana are a few religious Hindu scriptures where management concepts are abundantly found. Similarly Holy Bible also teaches many rules and practices people have to follow in personal and social management. The holy Quran sets out institutional framework for management for achieving promised results. The Diamond Sutra the most revered Mahayana Buddhism speaks of ethics in management.

Administrative reforms of ancient people are seen through the buzz words and laws of ancient Egypt, Babylonia and Greece. Organizational concept of ancient Egypt is witnessed in the project forms of pyramid building.

Ancient Babylonia of 18th century BC was commercially active where commerce became part of religion. The code of Hammurabi 1750 BC still a law to reckon with: “If a builder building a house for a man and does not make it construction firm and house which he has built collapses and causes the death a owner of house that builder shall be put to death”.

Coming near to Asia, in the ancient China the management concepts were founded by the philosopher Confucius (552-479 BC). He has left his mark on ages through moral teachings through advocacy of a mind system.

Even though most of ancient management principles of India are not codified glimpse or roots are seen in literatures. Tamil literature is glorified with Thirukural, with 1330 concepts, written by Valluvar, over 2000 year ago. Thirukural has chapters for every activity of human and resource management.

In the following pages two great philosophies, Ancient Chinese management and Ancient Tamil management systems are compared. Confucius quotes are taken from his book Analects. Valluvar’s thoughts of Kural are provided with the original form in Tamil .

Ethics of Business management

A business to be successful it should make money. The question is from where and in what form money continue to come. As long as the business is run completely consistent with ethical way and the money is earned in meaningful way and it can be enjoyed. Business ethics comprise consumers, investors and community. It is imperative of the management strictly to continue to provide quality product at a fair price. Business need to be humane, efficient and consumer oriented. Service and consumer satisfaction need to get more attention than profit maximization

According to Confucius an ideal superior has nine things which makes his thinking and acting noble.

*“In regard to use of his **eyes** he wants to see clearly, In regard to use of his **ears** he wants to hear distinctly, In regard to his **countenance** he is anxious that it is benign, In regard to his **demeanour** he is anxious it should be respectful, In regard to his **speech** he is anxious that it is sincere, , In regard to his **doing business** he is anxious that it should be reverently careful, , In regard to his **doubts** he is anxious to question others, when **angry** he thinks of difficulties, when he see **gains** he thinks of righteousness.”*

According to Confucius relationships and dependencies are organised as sum of complex relationships and interdependencies of the people in the society. Present day business terminology “corporate social responsibility” was really coined by Confucius some three thousand years earlier.

Confucius said “Without feeling of respect (to the customer) what is there to distinguish men from

beasts “ Confucius insisted that acting virtuously is always absolutely necessary . In the long run it is the way to wealth .He said “Do not do to other what you would wish not done to you”

How Valluvar thinks on ethical trading and management?

- 1) Practice of fraud's dark cunning arts they shun,
Who long for power by 'measured wisdom' won

(களவென்னும் காரறி வாண்மை அளவென்னும்
ஆற்றல் புரிந்தார்கண் இல். 287)

- 2) *It yields righteous and joy the wealth*
Acquired capably without causing any harm

(அறன்ஈனும் இன்பமும் ஈனும் திறனறிந்து
தீதின்றி வந்த பொருள். 754)

Governance philosophy

Critical management considerations are assessment and planning, managing the core process, human resources, interacting with the community, and managing information. Good managers should strive to be good leaders .Good leaders, need management skills to be effective. Leaders will have a vision of what can be achieved and then communicate this to others and evolve strategies for realizing the vision. They motivate people and are able to negotiate for resources and other support to achieve their goals. Managers ensure that the available resources are well organized and applied to produce the best results.

What are the attributes of a good leader?

Good leader has to ■ have a sense of mission; ■ are charismatic; ■ are able to influence people to work together for a common cause; ■ are decisive; ■ use creative problem solving to promote better care and a positive working environment.

In addition to maintaining harmony through the relationships, Confucianism promotes five virtues: *ren*, or benevolence; *yi*, or righteousness; *li*, propriety; *zhi*, or wisdom; and *xin*, or trustworthiness. Confucian managers are expected to be caring, moral, maintain their dignity, have wisdom, and be true to their word. In Confucian culture, managers are expected to display benevolence or humanism. The Confucian manager is expected to be a good-natured manager and to manage with kindness. The manager is expected to focus on relationship building and to be more cordial. Managers have traditionally valued dedication, trustworthiness, and loyalty more than performance. Each employee

performs to the best of abilities and works for the good of the group. Differences in individual performance are not seen as important as long as the group functions effectively. Individual self-interest is to be sacrificed for the good of the organization. The leader has to find ways of earning, managing and maintaining wealth of the company. Confucius forbade four things for leader-“One must not act on guesses; One must not demand absolute certainty; One must not be stubborn ;One must not insist on oneself”.

Confucius opined “If the ruler is right none would dare to be un-submissive; If a ruler loved trustworthiness none would dare to be insincere “.

Confucius quotes that man in governance have to possess five basic traits-“ A task master but none complains; Desirous but not greedy; Dignified but not arrogant, Awe inspiring but not fearsome .

He also lists common faults of inefficient manager-“ Orders to work without instructions-cruelty; Inspect the works without warning-Oppressiveness; Demand timely completion while slow in giving orders-Thievery; Dole out stingily what must be given -Clerkliness.”

Thirukural contains many chapters on the governance and characteristics of good leaders (kings) Chapter 39 ,Kurals 381-389 specifically details of good ruler.

- *Fearlessness, generosity, wisdom and vitality:*
these four are persistent characteristics expected of a king.

(அஞ்சாமை ஈகை அறிவுக்கம் இந்நான்கும்
எஞ்சாமை வேந்தர்க் கியல்பு. 382)

- *Vigilance, erudition and boldness:*
these three never abandon a competent ruler.

(தூங்காமை கல்வி துணிவுடைமை இம்மூன்றும்
நீங்கா நிலனாள் பவர்க்கு. 383)

- *Strategizing, earning revenues, preserving and allocating resources: a government should be capable of.*

(இயற்றலும் ஈட்டலுங் காத்தலும் காத்த
வகுத்தலும் வல்ல தரசு. 385)

- *The world will eulogize a ruler, who is easily accessible and refrains from rude rebukes .*

(காட்சிக் கெளியன் கடுஞ்சொல்லன் அல்லனைல்
மீக்கூறும் மன்னன் நிலம். 386)

In these above couplets Valluvar reflects the characteristic of a good leader, his duties to citizens, his approach to common citizens. He comments on a righteous king who renders justice will be hailed.

In the modern business world, the leader or the manager is the king and he need be strong capable and benevolent.

Strategy and Preparations

Business planning is about thinking on *business goals*, how they are necessary , and plans for reaching them. The planning may also contain thoughts about the organization or team attempting to reach those goals. Business plans may target changes in perception and marking impression by the larger community. When the existing business is to assume a major change or when planning a new venture, a 3 to 5 year business plan is required, since investors will look for their investment return in that time frame. In words of Confucius “ If you think in terms of a year plant a seed ;If you think in terms of ten years plant trees; If you think in terms of 100 years teach the people”. In the quote two important principles are provided -Management involves long term strategic planning and short term operations .Confucius principles on planning are simple and can be described in two sentences as :”Don’t seek quick results: Don’t attend to matters of minor profit .If you seek quick results, you will not attain success. If you attend the matters of minor profit, you will not succeed in great affairs”.

Organization team needs to have the following attributes- participative leadership, a quality that creates an interdependence among team members, shared responsibility, having a clear sense of purpose, creating a trust among its members, a clear focus on the task at hand and capable of working in harmony.

Confucius was once asked whom you would select for army head- “Those who would fight tigers with bare hands, who wade across rivers or one willing to die without regret”. He answered – “I would not have their company. I certainly want those who approach affairs with fearful caution and who lay careful plans for success.”

If the business is analogues to war Valluvar illustrates how war preparation need be and how would be the composition of the team in the following couplets:

Valour with honour, sure advance in glory's path, with confidence;

To warlike host these four are sure defence.

(மறமானம் மாண்ட வழிச்செலவு தேற்றம்
எனநான்கே ஏமம் படைக்கு. 766)

*An army may have brave warriors in abundance,
but will meet its end if there are no great leaders.*

(நிலைமக்கள் சால உடைத்தெனினும் தானை
தலைமக்கள் இல்வழி இல். 770)

Crisis management

Crisis is defined as any emergency situation which disturbs the employees as well as leads to instability in the organization. Crisis affects an individual, group, organization or society on the whole. Crises occur due technical failures, labor unrest, violence, accidents, natural disasters, financial failures and negotiation failures.

In case of crisis the managers have to see the early signs of crisis, warn the employees against the aftermaths and take necessary precautions for the same. Employees need to understand and analyze the causes of crisis and cope with it in the best possible way. Management have to adapt well to changes and new situations and learn lessons for future.

Organizations are to be prepared for a crisis planning, preparing and practicing are essential to bear the impact of a crisis. In Chinese language the word 'crisis' is depicted pictorially as combination of danger and opportunity. According to Confucius "success leaders see the opportunities in every difficulty rather difficulties in every opportunity. Every crisis poses a potential opportunity only if danger is managed property. He also stresses one need be prepared to face the crises. In his saying "A man who does not think far ahead will have trouble near at hand ". He advises three strategies for crisis management as -1) Look for opportunity in a crisis, 2) Think differently, 3) Get your mind around, anticipate, predict and act.

He opines that 'success (to come out of crisis) depends on previous preparation and without such preparation there is sure to be failure'. For managing crisis Confucius finds unique way "Raise up the straight and place them over crooked they will make the crooked straight"

Let us see how Valluvar anticipate crisis and its management

- a) The thoughtless man, who provides not against the calamities that may happen, will afterwards repent for his fault

*To him who nought foresees, racks not of anything,
The after woe shall sure repentance bring*

(முன்னுறக் காவாது இழுக்கியான் தன்பிழை
பின்னூறு இரங்கி விடும். 535)

a) It is the duty of a king to know quickly what all happens, daily, amongst all men
*Each day, of every subject every deed,
'It's duty of the king to learn with speed.*

(எல்லார்க்கும் எல்லாம் நிகழ்பவை எஞ்ஞான்றும்
வல்லறிதல் வேந்தன் தொழில். 582)

b) The leader who regards pain as pleasure will be hailed by his adversaries.
Who pain as pleasure takes, he shall acquire
The bliss to which his foes in vain aspire.

(இன்னாமை இன்பம் எனக்கொளின் ஆகுந்தன்
ஒன்னார் விழையுஞ் சிறப்பு. 630)

Conclusion

Confucius lived in the fifth century BC was a Chinese social philosopher, whose teachings deeply influenced East Asian life and thought. "Confucius" is a Latinization of the Chinese Kong Fu Zi or K'ung-fu-tzu, literally "Master Kong". He had provided his thoughts in his book "Analects"-twenty chapters contain thoughts of management with virtue

Thiruvalluvar the author of the Tirukkural ("Sacred Couplets"), a masterpiece of human thought, had lived sometime between the 3rd century BC and the 1st century BC. Of the 1330 couplets 1080 form lessons for personal and social managements.

Confucius preaches

The virtuous man is driven by responsibility,

The non virtuous man is driven by profit and

When Valluvar contends

There is no greater wealth than Virtue

And no greater loss than to forget it.

How will you conclude for your plans for future? Graduation is the beginning for the virtuous way of life. Source: VIMS Graduation Day Address (2018)

THE ART OF COMPLETE LIVING (Continuation)

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THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

“Be truthful to the Self,
The Self will reveal the Truth.
Truth is the Ultimate and
The Ultimate Truth is One,
Which is The Oneness.”

THE PATH OF TRUTH

The purpose of living is
To understand, experience and
Merge with Truth;
Truth is The Ultimate and
The Ultimate Truth is one.

To experience The Oneness
Is the greatest Joy;
This is the Joyless Joy.
Being in The Oneness
You realize The Self;
The Oneness is just
The Emptiness;
That is The Divine;
That is Godliness.
That is the final destination
Of Truth;
All Universal Energy and

The Life-giving force
Are generated from This Emptiness.
How do you reach
The Destination of Oneness?
By awakening the Spiritual Eye,
The Eye of The Divine.
How do you awaken
The Spiritual Eye?
Meditate with ease and
Without strain.
And
Follow simple methods:
Pure in thought, speech and action;
Unconditional Love;
Selfless Service and
Perfection in Duties.
This is the Path of Truth;
The Path is Joyful,
It is very bright and clear,
Lead by the Divine Light.
No darkness on the way and
Pleasant all the time.
The travel is beautiful and
Very soon, you will realize that
The final destination of
The path of Truth
Is Oneness, The Emptiness.

And therefore,
Be Truthful to the Self.
The Self will reveal the Truth.
Truth is the Ultimate and

The Ultimate Truth is One,
Which is The Oneness.

THE JOYLESS JOY

Be Truthful to Self,

How?

Love, Service, Sacrifice
And Meditate,

Why?

To experience witnesses of
The Divine Power;
To see and feel the gods
And great souls;

To enjoy The Divine Light;
To understand that
The Ultimate Truth is one;
To realize that birth, sickness
And death are common and
Natural to the physical bodies;
And not to challenge
The existence of The Divine Power,
Because, It is never born,
Never sick and never dead.
It is always present and
Now in you.

What is great about understanding
And experiencing
The Existence of The Divine?
You will live in compassion
And tranquility;
You will have no fear for anything;
You will have peace of mind;
You will perform your duties
With Perfection.

And even if something goes wrong,
You will have a strong mind
To pleasantly accept them; and
You will ultimately experience
The Joyless Joy.
And therefore,
Be Truthful to Self;
Love, Service, Sacrifice
And Meditate;
And, I sincerely hope that
This is no difficult to practice.

Source : The Art of Complete Living (book) by Mr M Settu