

Ancient Indian advice for modern Managers

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The science of management can never be explained only on the theoretical basis. It has more to do with the practical approach than looking into the theoretical aspects. The essence of management is an experience and experiment between the managed and the manager on various issues. Many factors influence the science of managing crisis. Both the individual and issues are to be dealt with evaluating all the points pertaining to arriving at a compromise or solution of the problem. No one has to fail and no one has to claim the victory in the management. It is finding out a solution for the smooth functioning of the individuals or companies. In the modern management physical, psychological, economical, social and educational bases are focused. Undoubtedly these parameters vary from individual to individual and issue to issue. Hence, no theoretical capsule can solve the management deficiency problem. But an advice, on broad direction to be followed, calibers required, qualifications acquired, can be given to a manager. This is what the modern management experts and books are trying to do!

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Almost exactly in the same way ancient Indians also handled the science of management. With every issue, they explained the qualifications required by citing examples. Literally, a wonderful approach was followed in the ancient Indian management books. They gave every advice with illustration. Perhaps that is why these advices are still remembered as *Subhashitam*, which means good words or advice. The management books are generally classified as *NEETISARAMS* which means the essence of justice. Many ancient *Neetisaram* books are available.

Bhartruhari's *Neetisatakam* (AD 700) is an exceptionally great and meritorious book in this approach. For the benefit of modern Managers, selected advices of Bhartruhari are quoted below:

- *When I had but a smattering knowledge, I grew blind with pride like a ruddy elephant. I fancied myself to be omniscient and my mind was steeped in haughtiness. When, bit by bit, I imbibed (true) knowledge from the company of the wise, I realized how little I knew and*

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my pride, which was like a fever, vanished. **Essence:** **Keep the company of wise people.**

- Amiability towards kinsfolk, compassion towards dependants, craftiness always towards rogues, affection towards the good, diplomacy towards kings, sincerity towards the learned, valour towards foes, forbearance towards elders and rectitude towards ladies - only on those people who are adept in these arts, rests the sustainment of the world - **Essence: Know to deal with different types of people appropriately.**
- Association of the good removes dullness of the intellect, cultivates truthfulness in speech, confers elevation of honour, dispels sins, tranquillizes the mind and extends one's fame in all directions - **Essence: Keep the company of meritorious, experienced people.**
- The dog wags its tail, scratches the earth with its paws, falls flat on the ground, cringes by showing its mouth and belly before the man who gives it just amorsel of food. The mighty elephant, on the other hand, looks (at its feeder) majestically and eats only after a hundred words of coaxing - **Essence: Keep the dignity and high personal integrity.**
- A lion, though a cub, pounces upon elephants whose broad temples are dirty with rut. Such is the very nature of the mighty. Age is not at all the deciding factor for valour - **Essence: Develop the culture of boldness at all situations.**
- Charity, enjoyment and loss are the three different courses for the disposal of wealth. He who neither gives alms nor spends on his own enjoyment, is left with the third alternative. **Essence: Judiciously evaluate the method of spending.**
- Exercise of authority, attainment of fame, protection of scholars, giving of alms, personal enjoyment, supporting of friends - to those who do not put into practice these six virtues, what purpose can be served by resorting to the patronage of the king? - **Essence: Be a support for all colleagues and create that feeling.**

- Pitilessness, unreasonable quarrel, covetousness towards the wealth and wives of others, jealousy towards the good and the relatives - these are the intrinsic qualities of the wicked. **Essence: Get rid of wickedness from the mind and thought.**
- A villain ought to be shunned though adorned with learning. Is not a serpent frightful though adorned with the gem. **Essence: Keep away from problem creators, even though they are learned.**
- There is not a single merit of the virtuous which is not branded as a defect by wicked men. Modesty is counted as dullness, religious practice as obstentation, honesty as dissimulation, valour as mercilessness, meditation as lack of intelligence, gentleness of speech as feebleness, prowess as arrogance and strong power of expression as garrulousness - **Essence: Do things straight forward and ignore biased and ill motivated comments.**
- The moon that is bedimmed during the day, the loving lady who has lost her youth, the lake that is devoid of lotuses, the face of a handsome man who is illiterate, a master who is miserly, a virtuous man who is ever poor and the presence of a rogue in the King's court - these seven factors pierce my heart like arrows - **Essence: Brightness of many virtues are seen only if they are accompanied with qualifications.**
- Fire, when touched, burns the very person who feeds it with oblations. Similarly kings who are fiery in their temper, look upon no one with (genuine) affection - **Essence: Keep a distance even from the closest.**
- The servant, if he is silent, is branded as being dumb and if he talks well, he is a chatterer or prattler. If he moves closely (with his master) he is imprudent and if he keeps away he is a funk. If he is patient he is styled as timid and if impatient he is considered a ruffian. Thus the role of a servant is very difficult to fulfill and surpasses the comprehension even of Yogins. - **Essence: For all decisions and actions, there may be a misinterpretation; mentally prepare for that and keep a midway.**

- Who can live happily in the kingdom of a contemptible ruler, who raises all scoundrels to eminence, who is not bound by any rule of conduct, who has willfully forgotten the low status from which he has risen; who has obtained his sovereignty by sheer luck and who detests men of virtue - **Essence: Try always to reach the expectations of good people.**
- Friendship of the wicked is like shadow of the forenoon, strong (long) in the beginning and weakening (shortening) gradually, but the friendship of the good is like the shadow of afternoon, light (short) at first and growing stronger (longer) with the advance of time. - **Essence: Elevate oneself through acquiring knowledge from the experienced.**
- Desire for the company of good, appreciation of the merits of others, reverence to elders, effort in learning, experience of pleasure in the company of one's own wife, fear of public censure, devotion to God, power or self-control and casting off the company of the wicked - to men in whom these spotless virtues abide, we offer our obeisance - **Essence: These qualities are essential for managers.**
- Fortitude in misery, forbearance in prosperity, eloquence of speech in an assembly, valour in war, delight in the acquisition of fame, and joyful effort to study the scriptures - these qualities are innate in men of noble nature - **Essence: These words are useful while handling crisis.**
- Praiseworthy act of charity is an ornament of the hand, humble salutation at the master's feet to the head, truthful speech to the mouth, triumphant and matchless prowess to the arms, perfect purity of thought to the mind, and receiving the instruction of the Vedas to the ears - these are the adornments to the naturally great men, acquired without the need for wealth - **Essence: Remember that as every organ has a duty, so is every man; utilize them.**
- Abstinence from slaughter of life, restraint of mind from coveting the wealth of others, utterance of truth, timely charity to the limit of one's capacity, dumbness in gossiping about the young wives of others, obstruction of the stream of greed obedience to elders, compassion to all creatures, equal regard for the rules laid down in all scriptures and unflinching performance of one's duties - these constitute the path to all kinds of prosperity. - **Essence: Learn to approach and act appropriately with different situations.**
- He is a true son who delights his father by his deeds of virtue; she is a real wife who cares only for the wellbeing of her husband and he is a genuine friend who behaves with equal affection both in joy and sorrow. - **Essence: Know the merits and demerits of everyone for using them appropriately.**
- The good have defined a true friend as one who restrains his companion from sin and directs him towards virtue, conceals his secrets and proclaims his merits, does not desert him when involved in danger and gives aid in times of need. - **Essence: Proper noble behaviour builds up best relations.**
- People of low type do not begin a task out of fear of obstacles. Those of the middle class commence a deed but give it up when faced with impediments. But men of the noblest caliber do not abandon a task once commenced, although repeatedly assailed by difficulties. **Essence: Learn the ideal behaviour pattern to win the society.**
- That hero conquers all the three worlds, whose heart, the side-long looks of lovely ladies cannot pierce, the scorching fire of anger cannot burn and the powerful objects of the senses cannot drag by the strings of temptation. - **Do not get tempted on minor attractions of benefits.**
- It is preferable to get the body shattered by falling somewhere on the uneven ground of hard stones from the lofty peak of a great mountain; it is preferable to thrust one's hand into the mouth of a fierce serpent possessing sharp fangs; it is preferable to throw oneself into the fire; but never should one give up his character. - **Essence: Remember that most precious virtue for a manager is character.**
