



## **The Cultural Dilemma in Indian Management**

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### **Introduction:**

The management concept in the west developed as a result of evolutionary process, based on the changing values systems of the people - the social, political, and economic environment as well as educational and cultural milieu. However, in India, historically we never evolved our own concepts, keeping the Indian scenario in view. We found it convenient to transfer management technology, just as scientific technology. As a result of this grafting process of management, we have created more confusion in management thinking. However, due to success of the Japanese methods of management, even the western countries have started doubting their own concepts and are trying to emulate the Japanese lessons. This has further confused the Indian managers as well as the management experts, who all along were following as a gospel truth whatever the westerners had developed.

### **Is management universal or culture specific?**

The broad concepts of management and administration are in a sense universal. The culture specificity obtains to the extent to which these are applied. The concepts of planning, recruitment, training, financial systems and control, etc., are there in any culture, but the specificity is in how they are run and implemented. In India, too, down the ages there have been the existence of these universal principles and concepts of management and administration. But the difference in Indian administration and management lies in the subtle variation in how planning is carried out, how much is implemented, how recruitment takes place, what are the considerations, how are the financial controls effected and so on. The differences that manifest in Indian management and administrative practices are the result of the norms and expectations of the people through their history.



### **What is wrong with western management?**

The western management concepts got evolved when there was proprietary ownership and was based on the decision making process of organizing, planning, directing, coordinating, controlling etc and the manager having the right and prerogative to plan, organize, direct and control. However, over the years the ownership patterns of the organization changed from proprietary ownership to public ownership (including diffused share holding). In due course various interest groups emerged which acted as countervailing forces. These are trade unions, public audit and accountability, consumer forums, governmental norms, national and international forums like WTO, which drastically limit the exercise of managerial rights and prerogatives. The managers find that though on paper they have the prerogatives, but in reality they cannot use these powers due to strong countervailing forces of various interest groups. The management fads still keep on talking of managerial prerogative and rights, empowerment etc which in many cases the manager is unable to use fully resulting in frustration and disenchantment with the so called theories of management.

The western management is passing through a confused state of evolutionary process where the past management concepts based on managerial rights and prerogatives are dead due to various countervailing forces, and the new concepts are yet to be born. Periodically the management gurus and consultants try to evolve new concepts which emerge as latest fads every now and then but do not last long because the western management specially American management find it difficult to give up their traditional thinking of managerial powers, rights and prerogatives.

### **Personality Orientation in Management**

There is a strong perception in western management that entire change process in the organization has to be brought in by the man at the top. Examples have been quoted of some of the most successful managers or top executives like Lee I coca or Jack Welch who were responsible for bringing in substantial change and making the organization healthy and vibrant during their tenure. Many such organizations collapsed when the top man left as seen in the case of Lee I cocas after his exit from Chrysler. The model organizations is not the one which, as widely believed in west and in India,



where one man runs a spectacular show while he is there, to see it crumble after his exit.

### **Why organizations fail?**

One of the studies in America indicated that in spite of new management concepts emerging in the last few decades, only one third of the leading companies identified in 1970's still existed today. In their book "In Search of Excellence", Peters and Waterman identified eight properties of successful companies, which appealed to the managers to move their organization ahead. Yet of the forty-three organizations identified as excellent, two thirds had fallen from the list within five years.

The problem with western management and business schools appears to be that management systems, education and training in management are geared to achieve short- term quick results. The yard sticks of performance management and appraisal systems in most organizations are based on how much results have been achieved in the immediate past ignoring the long range planning. Even the compensation and reward systems are based on immediate short-term results. The result is that with the change in technology, innovation of new products and processes gets a subsidiary treatment. In the mean time new organizations, with latest technology, new products, new processes and the systems emerge and the existing, once prosperous organizations, fail to respond to the new challenges and gradually start decaying.

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