

# Efficient Organization Management in the Indian Perspective: A Deliberation in Light of Swami Vivekananda's Thoughts

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## Abstract

Human management has emerged as an important area of study in the new millennium. While the western ideas of human management are largely based on the tenet of maximum profit attainment, the Indian idea of human management has traditionally focused on the upbringing of both the individual and the organisation that he/ she serves. Unfortunately, management studies in India by and large still remains West-centric both in terms of theory and practice. This paper is a humble endeavour towards bringing to light the concept and nature of human management as envisaged in the Indian perspective, principally on the lines of Swami Vivekananda's ideals of śraddhā, love, compassion, renunciation of power, tolerance, positive thinking and swahridayta. In doing so, the author has attempted to string together the views of Swami Vivekananda on the various aspects related to the subject of management as available from different sources and outline a broad framework for efficient organization management in the Indian perspective by connecting the concerned links. The author concludes with the observation that due importance needs to be given to the incorporation of Swami Vivekananda's ideas in the academic syllabi of management studies as well as practical management matters in contemporary India.

*Key words:* Swami Vivekananda, Organization, Management and Leadership

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Human beings are perhaps the most gifted creatures on this earth. While all living creatures have been gifted by God with certain unique abilities that sharply distinguish themselves from the others, human beings can consider themselves to be privileged indeed to have been blessed with a particular ability that places them way above the other creatures. This ability pertains to the power of reasoning and rationality guided by values. While it can be argued that all living creatures have the power of reasoning and rationality, it is generally felt that most creatures are driven primarily by instincts owing to need-fulfilment. Human beings, on the other hand, are blessed with the ability to strike a balance between instincts and values. Thus, Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest' cannot be said to be completely in sync with the evolution of the human order. As Swami

Vivekananda says, "In the West, they are trying to solve the problem how much a man can possess, and we are trying here to solve the problem on how little a man can live. This struggle and this difference will still go on for some centuries. But if history has any truth in it and if prognostications ever prove true, it must be that those who train themselves to live on the least and control themselves well will in the end gain the battle, and that those who run after enjoyment and luxury, however vigorous they may seem for the moment, will have to die and become annihilated" (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.03, p.156). Thus, control over desires and not blind pursuit of wish-fulfilment ought to be our food for thought in the days to come and that ought to be our guiding star towards approaching human management in the days to come.

What makes the formulation of any distinct approach towards human management difficult is the fact that the cause and effect relationship in human beings is established in parlance of human attributes that go beyond the dynamics of mere instincts driven by human needs. Thus, it would only be judicious to approach management in a humanistic perspective. While the western ideas of human management are largely based on the tenet of maximum profit attainment, the Indian idea of human management has traditionally focused on the upbringing of both the individual and the organisation that he/ she serves. Unfortunately, India today faces the danger of being a prey to mindless aping of the West. There is an growing inclination towards Western theories of management which is essentially accompanied by an indifference towards India's own indigenous knowledge. However, it has to be borne in mind that the Western theories of management are in line with their socio-political-cultural ethos and aspirations which in all fairness are markedly different from that of India. Thus, there is a strong need to look for alternative approaches to management in the Indian perspective. This particular paper is a humble endeavour towards addressing those concerns in light of the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda. In doing so, the author shall attempt to string together the views of Swami Vivekananda on the various aspects related to the subject of management as available from different sources and outline a broad framework for efficient organization management in the Indian perspective by connecting the concerned links.

### **The Concept of 'Śraddhā'**

The first and foremost ideal given by Swami Vivekananda that needs to be embraced in the management perspective is his concept of 'Śraddhā'. 'Śraddhā', roughly translated in English, means self-belief, the belief in one's abilities, the belief that a person is good enough to

do something to the best of his abilities. As Swamiji says, "We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care of what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live, they travel far" (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.07, p. 17). Thus, while positive thoughts encourage us to venture further and immerse ourselves in our work, negative thoughts prevent us from concentrating on our vision and pursuing the same effectively. Thus, there is a need to inculcate 'Śraddhā' within ourselves and strive forward with the conviction that our efforts will surely yield desirable<sup>1</sup> results. As Swamiji's says, "If the room is dark, the constant feeling and repeating of darkness will not take it away, but bring in the light. Let us know that all that is negative, all that is destructive, all that is mere criticism, is bound to pass away; it is the positive, the affirmative, the constructive that is immortal, that will remain for ever. Let us say, "We are" and "God is" and "We are God", "Shivoham, Shivoham", and march on, not matter but spirit. All that has name and form is subject to all that has none. This is the eternal truth the Shrutis preach. Bring in the light; the darkness will vanish of itself. Let the lion of Vedanta roar; the foxes will fly to their holes. Throw the ideas broadcast, and let the result take care of itself. Let us put the chemicals together; the crystallization will take its own course. Bring forth the power of the spirit, and pour it over the length and breadth of India; and all that is necessary will come by itself (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.04, p.287-288).

However, 'Śraddhā' does not mean self-belief only. It also means respect for one's fellow beings. No amount of effort shall be of any avail unless all the stake-holders of an institution/ organization stand united and that calls for harbouring mutual respect towards one another. Mutual help and not criticism ought to be the way forward. While pointing out mistakes is one thing, criticising someone is a different thing altogether. That is the basic difference between fact-finding and fault-finding. In a letter to Swami

Brahmananda, Swami Vivekananda writes, “You must not throw cold water on anybody’s project. Give up criticism altogether. Help all as long as you find they are doing all right, and in cases where they seem to be going wrong, show them their mistakes gently. It is criticising each other that is at the root of all mischief. That is the chief factor in breaking down organizations” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.06, p.346).

### **Efficient Organizational Structure**

Secondly, we need to embrace Swamiji’s vision of the formation of an efficient organizational structure. We need to have a mechanism in order to identify and groom the right individuals for being prepared to take up any responsibility in the event of any eventuality. That truly shall be in line with the concept of leadership in the management perspective. As Swami Vivekananda says, “The faculty of organization is entirely absent in our nature, but this has to be infused. The great secret is, - absence of jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brethren, and try always to conciliate. Why is it that organisations are so powerful? Why is it, to take a case in point, that forty millions of Englishmen rule three hundred millions of people here? What is the psychological explanation? These forty millions put their wills together and that means infinite power, and you three hundred millions have a will separate from each other. Therefore to make a great future of India, the whole secret lies in organisation, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills” (Nirvedananda, 1946, p.80).

It may be mentioned here that by formation of an efficient organizational structure is meant the formation of such an order that would address the concerns of today as well as remain prepared for any eventuality in the future. Unfortunately, we, in India, are often found lacking in far-sightedness. We are so engrossed with our present situation that we seem ill-

prepared for any sort of crisis management whatsoever. In a letter to Swami Brahmananda, Swami Vivekananda wrote, “Give a responsible position to everyone alternately, but keep a watchful eye so that you can control when necessary; thus only can men be trained for the work. Set up such a machine as will go on automatically, no matter who dies or lives. We Indians suffer from a great defect, viz we cannot make a permanent organisation — and the reason is that we never like to share power with others and never think of what will come after we are gone” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.08, p.409).

### **Leadership and renunciation of power**

The third ideal given by Swami Vivekananda that needs to be embraced in the management perspective is his idea of leadership and renunciation of power. Leadership occupies a significant position in deciding the fortunes of any organization. Generally speaking, leaders have been seen as power-hungry people guided solely by the love of power. As Swamiji poignantly pointed out, “...we all want to be leaders without making the necessary sacrifice. And the result is zero — nobody listens to us!” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.07, p.161). Swami Vivekananda strongly condemned this love of power in human beings as he felt that the love of power is the root cause of the miserable condition of the poor and the downtrodden masses of India. According to him, the love of power ought to be replaced by the power of love. Going through the complete works of Swami Vivekananda, we find that he emphasized greatly upon the following qualities in a leader:

***Spirit of selfless service:*** According to Swamiji, a leader is one who is willing to serve the masses selflessly. In Swamiji’s own words, “[I]t is a very difficult task to take on the role of a leader. — One must be दासस्य दासः -a servant of servants, and must

accommodate a thousand minds. There must not be a shade of jealousy or selfishness, then you are a leader” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.06, p.299).

**Love, Appreciation and Sympathy for others:** A leader must have the ability to connect with the masses and communicate his/ her love and appreciation and sympathy for others. In Swamiji’s own words, “The best leader, however, is one who “leads like the baby”. The baby, though apparently depending on everyone, is the king of the household. At least, to my thinking, that is the secret.... Many feel, but only a few can express. It is the power of expressing one’s love and appreciation and sympathy for others that enables one person to succeed better in spreading the idea than others....” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.08, p.375).

**Unbiased affection for all:** While a leader must harbour love and appreciation and sympathy towards all, he/ she must be careful enough to avoid being biased towards one or few individuals. Rather, he must adopt an approach of equal affection for all. As Swamiji says, “He never becomes a leader in whose love there is a consideration of high or low. He whose love knows no end, and never stops to consider high or low, has the whole world lying at his feet.” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.07, p.300).

**Affectionate yet impersonal:** While a leader must be affectionate and show love and appreciation and sympathy for others, he must also be able to remain impersonal while taking decisions in the best interests of all. In Swamiji’s own words, “A leader must be impersonal. I am sure you understand this. I do not mean that one should be a brute, making use of the devotion of others for his own ends, and laughing in his sleeve meanwhile. What I mean is what I am, intensely personal in my love, but having the power to pluck out my own heart with my own hand, if it becomes

necessary, “for the good of many, for the welfare of many”, as Buddha said. Madness of love, and yet in it no bondage” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.08, p.375).

**Renunciation of power:** Emphasizing on the importance of renunciation of power in efficient leadership, Swamiji said, “Nobody will come to help you if you put yourself forward as a leader. Kill self first if you want to succeed. Do not try to lead your brethren but serve them. The brutal mania of leading has sunk many a great ship in the waters of life. Take care specially of that. Never attempt to guide or rule others, or, as the Yankees say, "boss" others. Be the servant of all. Do not try to be a ruler. He is the best ruler who can serve well”(Nirvedananda, 1946, pp. 84-85).

Unfortunately, India today faces the grave problem of the lack of connectivity between the administrators and the administrated, both in the case of public and private sectors. It has become customary for the ‘bosses’ to assert their position upon their subordinates. These subordinates extend the same courtesy to their subordinates and so on. No wonder then, this practice has led to the concept of ‘Yes-Man ship’ which is the poison of any organizational structure. Such an approach only cultivates men whose sole interest lies in the appeasement of their bosses instead of focussing on the development of the organization. For sure, people who cannot speak their mind, contribute to the downfall of organization but the bigger culprits are those who force others to keep their mouths shut owing to their assertion of power and bossism. Thus, for an efficient organizational structure, leaders must stop this practice of power assertion. As Swami Vivekananda says, “Give up the idea that by ruling over others you can do any good to them. But you can do just as much as you can in the case of the plant; you can supply the growing seed with the materials for the making up of its body, bringing to it the earth, the water, the air, that it wants. It will take all that it wants by its



own nature. It will assimilate and grow by its own nature” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.03, p.207).

### **Infinite Love and Compassion**

Fourthly, we need to embrace Swami Vivekananda's ideal of infinite love and compassion. India has always been a nation that preached the message of love for humanity to the whole world. However, this aspect of Indian civilization has also undergone considerable decay in the modern times. There seems to have been a distinct wane in love and bonhomie for our fellow-men. However, love and compassion among co-workers is of paramount importance in an organizational set-up. As Swami Vivekananda says, “No man, no nation can hate others and live. India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word ‘*mlechchha*’ and stopped from communion with others. Love never fails; to-day or to-morrow or ages after, truth will conquer. Love shall win the victory” (Nirvedananda, 1946, p.81). Today, Indians are increasingly becoming an impatient lot with little time and concern for their fellow-beings. This is a matter of grave concern indeed. In this regard, citizens need to inculcate and practise infinite love and compassion among themselves for united we stand and divided we fall.

### **Business Integrity**

Last but not the least, business integrity forms an important aspect of organization management. Business integrity stems from business principles and plays a decisive role in determining the prospects of any organization's fortunes. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, “All combined

efforts in India sink under the weight of one iniquity — we have not yet developed strict business principles. Business is business, in the highest sense, and no friendship — or as the Hindu proverb says “eye-shame” — should be there. One should keep the clearest account of everything in one's charge — and never, never apply the funds intended for one thing to any other use whatsoever — even if one starves the next moment. This is business integrity.” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.05, p.144).

### **SWAHRIDAYTA AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT**

Perhaps the most important component of human management is the sense of unity. Once that is achieved, the other concerns such as lack of organization, leadership issues and so on can be addressed. However, this sense of unity has to be inculcated over a period of time. In this regard, we need to work towards achieving unity by instilling a commonness of vision among the participants<sup>ii</sup> involved. As Swami Vivekananda says, “[I]f a man's interest in a thing is not roused, he will not work whole-heartedly; all should be made to understand that everyone has a share in the work and property, and a voice in the management” (Vivekananda, n.d., CW, Vol.08, p.409). This is perfectly in consonance with the Ṛig Vedic ideal of the condition, of a commonness of the mind and the heart, ideas and efforts, purpose and the ultimate aim, that leads to a state where people may live and thrive together as emphasized in the following hymns known as the *Sama-Jñāna Sukta* (Rig Veda, 10/191/2-4):

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## ॥ संज्ञान सूक्तम् ॥

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् । *Sam Gacchadhvam Sam Vadadhvam Sam Vo Manamsi Janatam.*  
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥ *Deva Bhagam Yatha Purve Samjanana Upasatey.*

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी *Samano Mantrah; Samitih Samani*  
समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् । *Samanam Manah; Saha Chittamesham.*  
समानं मन्त्रमभिमन्त्रये वः *Samanam Mantramabhimantraye Vah.*  
समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥ *Samanena Vo Harisha Juhomi.*

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः । *Samani Va Akutih Samana Hridayani Vah,*  
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ *Samanamastu Vo Mano Yatha Vah Susahasati.*

May you all progress together, express your thoughts in consensus; may your minds (*antahkaranam*) be in agreement; May you act like the ancient gods who duly accepted their share of ritualistic offerings in mutual agreement. May your prayers be common; may you all live together as one; May your decision-making faculties be similar and your thoughts alike. May you all be guided by a common guiding motto; May you all make similar offerings to the revered ones. May your senses work alike and your hearts be in agreement; May your mental faculties (*antahkaranam*) be common; thus, may you all live happily together (LohoChoudhury & Bhattacharyya, 2014, p.69).

This sense of commonness among the participants involved in any relationship is known as *swahridayta*<sup>iii</sup>. The word *swahridayta* is a combination of two words, 'swah' meaning 'with' and 'hridaya' meaning 'heart'. Thus, *swahridayta* refers to the commonness of identity and endeavour between the communicators and the communicatee<sup>iv</sup> through wilful bonding between them with all heart. No communication endeavour can be successful if the participants are not on the same page because dissimilar views can lead to disbelief and mistrust. Since management is primarily a communication function, the condition

of *swahridayta* remains indispensable to the cause of management. Once *swahridayta* is established between the communicator and communicatee, they come to know precisely of the capabilities and aspirations of each other respectively and complement each other accordingly. The essence of *swahridayta* lies in achieving a commonness of perspectives and objectives through dialogue, bearing in mind the needs, aspirations and inhibitions of all the participants involved in the communication process (Bhattacharyya, 2013, p.73). This commonness of vision is the driving force of all efficient organizations.

### CONCLUSION

Each nation has some characteristic features that need to be borne in mind while approaching its policy-making framework. This, in turn, fundamentally requires a sound and practical theoretical grounding that is in sync with the socio-politico-cultural ethos of the nation concerned. This is true of India as well. Thus, the need to look for a management approach in the Indian perspective is only obvious. But then again, unless theories can be put to useful implementation to the cause of the nation's service, they are of little actual relevance. As is evident from the observations made so far, the

thoughts and views of Swami Vivekananda in the management perspective retain both theoretical appeal and practical utility even in the modern age of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). It is only fair then that due importance is given to the incorporation of his ideas in the academic syllabi of management studies as well as practical management matters in contemporary India.

To conclude, while we often hear people drawing examples from Swamiji's life to explain discourses on management and leadership, perhaps a better way of practically understanding and experiencing effective management skills would be striving to become 'vivekanandas' ourselves. While any mention of the word 'Vivekananda' does refer to that one great individual who graced the world's stage and showed the world the way forward, it also symbolizes a distinct way of living. The word, 'vivekananda' is a combination of two words: 'viveka' meaning 'the knowledge of being able to realize and differentiate between the real and the unreal' and 'ananda' meaning 'the bliss of living'. Thus, Vivekananda is anyone who enjoys the bliss of living having reached the desired level of knowledge.

It is worth mentioning here that the concepts of 'viveka' and 'ananda' are inter-related to each other. Only he who has acquired the desired knowledge and can actively utilize the same for the welfare of the world can truly enjoy the bliss of living. On the other hand, only he who enjoys the bliss of living can contribute desirably to the cause of the society, the organization and the nation at large. Thus, we need more and more of 'vivekanandas'. Only then can we strive organizational excellence at all levels of human interactions. Thus, while He, the Almighty Lord bestows upon us the gift of rationality, reasoning and moral judgement, let us come together and join hands for a better, brighter and stronger India for the Lord only helps those who help

themselves. Let us come one and come all. Let us all strive towards becoming men of character and integrity. Let us be motivated and driven by one common aspiration. Let us become *swahridayas*. Let us all strive to become 'vivekanandas'. Once we become so ourselves, the other things will fall into place accordingly.

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<sup>i</sup> The words, 'desired' and 'desirable' have distinctly different connotations. While 'desired' (चाहित) expresses an individual's wish to be able to make a choice keeping in line with his/ her individual preferences, the word 'desirable' (चाहनीय) takes into account the will and determination towards respecting collective consciousness even in seeking one's individual choice.

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<sup>ii</sup> The word 'participants' may preferably be used in place of 'workers' because workers are important stake-holders of any organizational structure and hence their whole-hearted participation is mandatory for the success of any organisation.

<sup>iii</sup> The concept *sahridayata* comes from the word *sahridaya*... According to Misra (2008, p.97), the word *sahridaya* has two components: *saman* (same, equal, harmony, being) and *hridaya* (heart, becoming) (cited in Adhikary, 2010, p.150). The present author prefers the term '*swahridaya*' over '*sahridaya*' in accordance with the original Sanskrit word as given in the Gajendra-Moksha Stotram in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana: *ātmāma-jāpta-grha-vitta-janeṣu saktair; duṣprāpaṇāya guṇa-saṅga-vivarjitāya; muktātmabhiḥ sva-hṛdaye paribhāvitāya; jñānātmane bhagavate nama īśvarāya (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 8/3/18)*. The word '*swahridaya*' is a combination of two words, '*sva/ swa*' meaning 'with' and '*hridaya*' meaning 'heart'. *Swahridaya* refers to a person who has reached a state of mental acumen where he can experience the same mental state as experienced by his audience/ others within his own heart and which stays with his heart forever, thereby, enabling him to communicate accordingly with his fellow-beings (Bhattacharyya, 2013, p.73).

<sup>iv</sup> The word 'communicatee' to the authors' understanding may be ably used in relation to the word 'communicator' in the English lexicon as is the case with the words, 'addresser' and 'addressee'. Thus, 'communicator' refers to 'anyone who communicates' while 'communicatee' refers to 'anyone to whom something is communicated' (LohoChoudhury & Bhattacharyya, 2014, p.72).