

ON DISCOVERING RELEVANT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

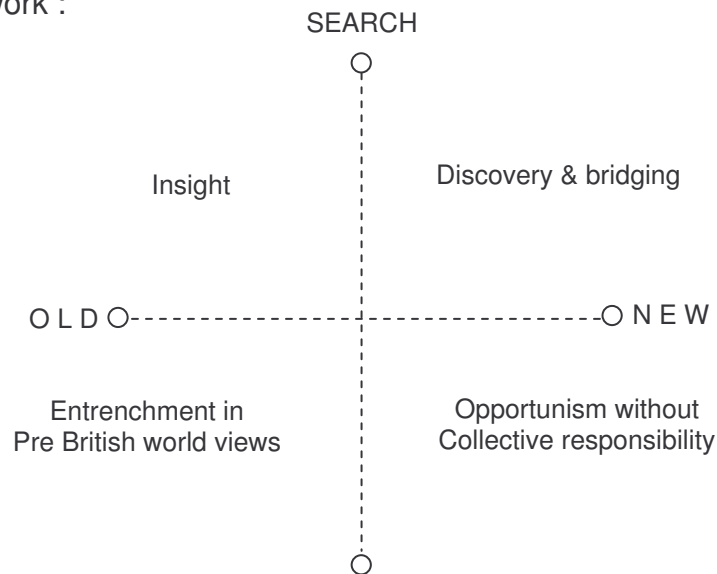
A summary of the paper :

1. The inner processes of large collectivities and individuals in India is caught with a deep struggle of coming to terms with technology and organisation.
2. This struggle can be understood through the following frame work.

Assumptions of the frame work :

- a. Change is continuous but is registered clearly across historic events.
- b. Across such an event the words 'old' and 'new' take symbolic meaning and reinforce myths and fantasy about the 'old' and 'new'.
- c. Old becomes synonymous with backward, regressive, oppressive, native, superstitious, unscientific, undesirable, etc. New becomes synonymous with modern, scientific, progressive, respectable, reasonable, desirable, equitable, etc.
- d. Individual development has two aspects - search i.e. discovery and acceptance of a discovery through processes of change in ways of living, metaphors of thought, language etc. And secondly, conformity to symbols i.e. Change that is widely accepted becomes an internalised symbol. These symbols then become the basis of norms and conditions belief.
- e. Use of symbols without enquiry and real understanding leads to human waste, entrenchments in old frames or naked opportunism.

The framework :



3. Development in India has come to mean a pressure to move from quadrant 3 to 4. Modern organisations spearhead this movement, but end up with a limited ability to cope with new technology and imitate alien management methods. They have not found the ability to be creative and innovative in the management of technological organisations.
4. Older 'Indian' organisations stay insulated and isolated preserving old traditions within old technologies (this is examined through 3 case studies).
5. Can we design institutions where we can develop a management style uniquely relevant to the Indian organisation and capable of creative use of technology?
6. The paper sets out the framework in details and resents 3 case studies as appendices.

On discovering relevant management practice

Our Nation stands today like the Swarga of Trishanku. We welcomed our independence 5 decades ago with great hopes and dreams of becoming a great nation. We created a new path of peaceful struggle in overthrowing an oppression. Yet, we are caught today in mid stride. We have neither made great progress in the modern fields of technology and science, nor have we created a context where our genius can discover creative ways of meeting our problems.

As individuals, this struggle reflects in the way most of us live. We continue to put faith into industrialisation and educate ourselves to fit into industrial organisations, but our practices at home, our background and cultural moorings remain anchored in the older forms. Even in pockets where the orthodoxy has been broken we have not replaced it with a powerful new inner conviction. This see-saw between 'Indian ways' of being and 'alien ways' of becoming is the ground of most of our collective endeavours. Most of the reading among executives in organisations is of management practices current in the West or in Japan, while all the people who are being managed and often the entrepreneurs who have set up the industry are Indians! Thus the conflict is kept alive and enough effort is not put into resolving it. It is obviously impossible to suddenly change the minds and hearts of people into Japanese minds and hearts or any other "perfect" form.

"For better or for worse-till death do this alter" we are integral with out back ground and our culture, i.e. we are Indian whether we like it or not! In India we do respond to and alter our careers for the sake of family imperatives : we believe in and wish for ways of going about our work based human feelings; we wish to belong to organisations; we wish that our children to learn the right values and so on. It is therefore of vital importance that we study, struggle with and discover ways of managing our collectivities (industrial or otherwise) in ways that can tap and release our inherent potentials.

The following paper advances a framework through which a perspective of the macro processes of our land can be looked at. It looks back with hindsight at the unintended consequences and erosion of the country as a result of fragmented perspectives and action. A forward thrust that was over-focused on the dream of a technological future without an investment in preparing the human ground for the thrust. The paper is followed by 3 case studies of indigenous organisations and collective endeavours. Contrasting these cases with our experience in modern organisations will bring forth with clarity the chase that separates our "Indian being" from the "alien becoming" and that we must find ways for bridging the two; the inner strength and rootedness of the former and the progressiveness and developmental imperatives of the latter.

A MACRO PERSPECTIVE OF PROCESS IN THE COLLECTIVITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL DILEMMA :

In the entire history of the world there is only one occasion when an oppressed people obtained freedom through peaceful means. This unique distinction was the Mahatma's gift to our Nation. Yet, barely four decades since this extraordinary event. India has lost its claims to being a peaceful nation, it is only in the last two hundred years or so that we have become a poor nation. Technology, Science and Mathematics, Metaphysics and Medicine were all flourishing here. Yet, today we can lay no claims to being in the fore-front of any of these. We are at best a middling nation neither advance nor totally backward.

This brings into focus a whole question, a vitally important threshold. Have we nourished and cared for the gift that we have received from the father of our nation? What is the India we are going to build and bequeath to our children?

The euphoria of gaining Independence and embarking upon the efforts of nation building has ended. The difficult task of creating a meaningful future stares us on our face. The Independence was won through the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and independent India was led by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. These two leaders addressed the challenges in front of them in strikingly different ways.

Mahatma Gandhi took the movement sparked off by Lokmanya Tilak and converted it into a mighty wave.. His method of fighting for Independence was powerful and new. It was rooted in deep inner conviction i.e., freeing oneself internally of all forms of domination and fragmentation, it drew its power from faith and purity. Both Tilak and Gandhi studied the ancient texts, drew inspiration from them and redefined their meaning in the context of their struggle, both personal and national. They re-anchored their insight in the institutions that were deeply rooted in the Indian psyche. Dharana or peaceful protest against misuse of authority is an ancient institution in India. This mode of protest and assertion was given new vibrancy and life.

Pundit Nehru believed in industrial progress. He advocated a direction for nation building that was founded upon Scientific and Technological advancement. While

believing in peace he did not blind himself to military realities his actions are best illustrated by his choice of bringing Le Corbusier to build a from older traditions. He wished for a design that would inspire the nation.

Gandhiji and Nehru created two very different contexts for India's growth. One that called for a profound search into its own tradition and a development born of its own genius; the other called for a discontinuity, a sought to import the latest scientific knowledge and race ahead into a vision of modernisation.

The Macro Processes

We must try and understand the processes, forces and movements that have all but wiped out the intensely human way of developmental action native to India and replaced it with violence and untruth. I would like to advance the thesis that the overthrow of the Gandhian path is centered around two dilemmas. Firstly, the dilemma enshrined in the idea of the old and the new; and secondly, the dilemma of the pull of the obvious and the tangible contrasted with faith in inner conviction, i.e. the symbol and the search.

Macro movements and historic forces create the context of the times each one of us lives through. We do not always understand them, but we struggle with contrary pulls and pushes in our lives. We often leave our dilemmas unresolved in our selves and seek their resolution through heroic personalities who symbolise this conflict within. The symbols of the unresolved issues of our times are Mahatma Gandhi and Pundit Nehru.

Mahatma Gandhi in spite of his western education and contemporary background symbolised the awakening of the Indian masses. The 'half naked fakir' mobilised the hopes and the energies of the masses of our country. Every village reverberated with the gentle clicking of the chakra. Leaders who responded to the call of the Mahatma arose spontaneously in all corners of the country. They questioned old norms, championed the emancipation of women and the ending of untouchability. The Congress as an organised body drew its moral and institutional strength from Gandhiji's message. All the prominent leaders in the congress relied on Gandhiji's charisma. Perhaps because of his very revolutionary ways in the wisdom of the ancients. Gandhi came to symbolise the old. His insistence on Swadeshi was seen as a step backward into village India. His vision for India was considered impractical. As Swaraj became a reality, the organisation of the Congress party turned its back on the more fundamental principles enunciated by the Mahatma.

Pundit Nehru on the other hand was the cultivated anglicised Indian who came to "Discover India", the modern day Columbus. His understanding of India was derived from study of historical movements. He was the archetype of the educated elite of the country. Educated entirely in England, he represented the supreme sacrifice of the person who had acquired a very viable westernisation giving up the opportunity to exploit his learning.

He symbolised the new, the secret desire of the Indian to be accepted as equal by the coloniser; the need for the Indian to be confirmed and appreciated from the western point of view. The compulsive need of the victim to be dignified and loved by the oppressor found its champion in Pundit Nehru.

Prof. Pulin Garg calls them "the Hero and the Counter Hero of today's India". That Nehru was a protege of Gandhi does not diminish the differences between the two as persons and as leaders. The fragmentation between the old and the new, and the contrary pulls of the search and the symbol are personified by them.

What is the nature of this fragmentation? What energies do they mobilise? What processes do they unleash?

The Old and the New

Every action choice that man makes goes hand in hand with creating opportunities to develop some aspects of himself and society while suppressing and submerging others. When choices of social organisation and cultural norms get established, this pattern of opportunity and suppression become a living condition. The individual processes find reflection in the societal processes. Some groups end up with privileges and others become under-privileged, just as each individual finds legitimacy for contempt. Changes in such conditions could come from within or from the outside. Such changes are often heralded by extraordinary individuals who rise above the given reality and have deep insights into the negatives of the contemporary conditions. In India such resolution and renewal have always come from saints and sages. People who have risen above the norms and traditions of the time but deeply rooted in an inner spiritual human quest. From the times of the Buddha and Mahavira, the Upanishadic Sages through to the Bhakti saints and Suri Mystics, this has been India's path. Gandhi walked the path of this tradition. But, the political condition of the time gave his action an added dimension. Social change was superimposed by the obvious struggle for power and freedom.

At the threshold of a change, the words old and new take on very powerful emotive meanings. The old represents all the dark, unenlightened, dead conformities, unquestioned norms, unexamined beliefs and the like that oppress man. The old is the past that must be left behind.

The new represents bright, intelligent, progressive, free and inviting spaces, fresh beginnings that give hope to man. The new is the future destiny that beckons each person and he must embrace it with both arms.

The language of the leaders of such times get heavily laced with the vocabulary, imagery and mythology of this fragmentation. The energy that the 'new' can mobilise is directly related to and dependent upon the oppression experienced through the "old". When the vision of the new is founded upon a deeply human,

compassionate and spiritual base, it takes the form of a self propelling wave. It sweeps millions of people and spans vast times. The Buddhas words still ring fresh in our ears. But, when the call for the new is superficial, when it relates only to externals and is based on intellectual forecasts it can only mobilise opportunism, escape and a scramble to acquire the material benefits arising out of the change. Without the deep inward energy of truth and compassion, it will not move man. The act of gaining independence created a very powerful context in which the "old and the new" became the operative metaphor. Unfortunately, it also represents a discontinuity between the direction created by Gandhiji and the direction chosen by Nehru. A deep inward search gave way to a superficial vision.

The struggle for Swatantra and Swadeshi decayed into a superficial change; an opening up of opportunities for a changed order of power and wealth. The evidence for this lies in the fact that except for the colour and nationality of the rulers having changed, there is very little change in the process of governing our Nation. The laws follow the colonisers precedent. The government bureaucracy has not changed in structure in its mission, or its norms and culture. The Educational patterns remains largely unaltered, even the books and the rendering of the History of the nation remain the same. Industrial Organisations operate with imported knowledge and alien management philosophies. They are becoming the leading edge of a mind colonisation. But, access to political and economic power has opened up, the societal balances between castes has changed. Thus the more opportunistic and violent have grabbed the new instruments of power. Some of the earlier struggles for political and economic power were played out within the bounds of values and dignity. Today the forces welling up to grab a piece of the cake, act from a named lust for power. The frustration caused by a belied hope in the emergence of a truly developmental context adds fuel to the fire.

The call for building a new scientific India that Nehru voiced has become a wave for consumerist industrialisation and economic and technological opportunism. Gandhi is associated with village industry which is looked at as a pious responsibility. Apart from keeping alive Kadhi Gramudyog Bhavans and Co-operative textiles, his idea of development has been forgotten.

The metaphor of the old and the new is not only false in the sense that it fragments the reality of the here and now, it is false also because it creates a context for action that is hollow and unsubstantial. It evokes mirages, superficial non enduring action and short term gains. It takes ones attention away from the real issues of the here and the now. The metaphor of Gandhiji was based on confronting the truth, introspection, self purification and assertion without aggression or violence. Satyagraha compelled one to stay with the burning human issues, delve deeply into an exploration of the condition of the present, in the now, and discover ones response to it and act powerfully but peacefully. The new in his vision, is an unfolding and flowering of this quest.

The individual's dilemma : The Search and the Symbol

Let us take a closer look at these processes that compel an individual to respond to rapid change. Change in the technology of living, in political, economic and social order place enormous strain on people. A culture of transience sets in and the imperatives of transitions to new ways of living unleashes deep anxieties and fears. This outburst of feelings is a powerful force. When this force cathects to a movement that is a deep search into ones tradition and history it leads a wave of meaningful and peaceful change. In the absence of such an institutional space, this force becomes cathartic and violent. It clings to symbols of past glory and stability. The movement is superficial but it provides safety in membership. The following and leaders of this movement are terrified of abandoning the external anchors that seem to provide security belonging and identity.

A movement from a past into the future challenges beliefs and cultural traditions very deeply. Through the ages, through successive invasions into India, the indigenous culture has been through many shocks. But, we have always found ways of assimilating the new people who came in and their philosophy. Their identities were never threatened while space was given for a new social balance. The beautiful story of how the Parsees found a new home in India illustrates this strength of our people. The external norms and practices were never the source of conflict. The ability to act from deep faith, humanness and dignity for the self and others was the central issue. A Dharmic existence and code was the demand. The institutions of search were vibrant.

The relationship between the processes of the collectivity and the individual dilemma

The processes in the realm of the psyche closely parallel the processes that led to change in political and economic power. Gandhi was a deeply religious man. Nehru was a modern intellectual. Gandhi evoked the faith and trust of a people. Nehru spoke eloquently of a vision of new Indian that touched the dreams of the elite.

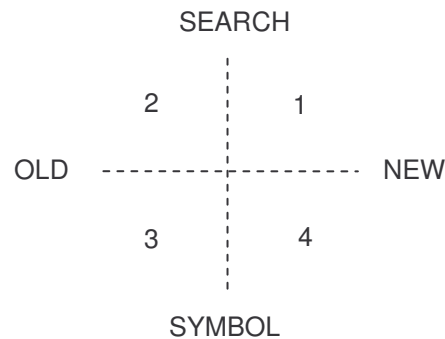
The old and the universe of faith have much in common. They are experienced in ones feelings and are seldom given form. Articulating them and defining them are almost impossible. They are a quiet background upon which one acts out the drama of ones life; their strengths are implicit and taken for granted while their negatives are explicit and call for attention. Ones being is soaked in them while ones thoughts and dreams roam free. One awakens to them only when they are lost and one feels empty within.

The political and religious dramas that have burst upon us in the recent past must surely touch each one of us. While neither of them are desirable both of them reflect our own inner processes. They seem superficial and external in their expression but reveal an erosion of human values in general and the cultural positives of our country in particular. The corruption and violence that we see in

the political arena reflects our own compromises for economic gains and our belief in being aggressive in a competitive world. The dogmatism and fundamentalism in the religious spheres reflects our own erosion of faith, our very superficial attitudes to human values. Our desperate search for external symbols to balance inner insecurity. Yet we won our independence on the power of a different belief and we placed faith in ahimsa and satyagraha only a few years ago.

Advancing a conceptual map : A Gist of the Discussions

To understand the thesis put forth here let us look at a conceptual map of the processes discussed. One axis of the map is the myth of the old and the new. The other axis is the nature of the action that people find security / meaning in. i.e. the search and the symbol.



Transition from one technological mode of survival and social/political organisation to another creates an extraordinary amount of anxiety and insecurity. In traditional agrarian societies like India which have experienced centuries of stability and prosperity the metaphors, meanings and symbols of the tradition get deeply entrenched in the minds of the people. A passive acceptance of the givens sets in. Negative experiences and feelings generated by the socio-psychological context i.e., feelings of reactivity / anger and helplessness at the given conditions get contained in conformity and conservativeness. The vibrant, alive body of people end up holding on to empty norms and forms, this is where we find India in the 19th and early 20th century (quadrant 3 in the map).

In order to regenerate and develop, the spark and the seed have to come from within the body politic. Institutional spaces that evoke a sharing of pathos and encourage an exploration into ones living context provide the ground from which the seeds can develop grow and transform a society. Such institutions are like a compost pit where the decaying part can nourish an emerging future. They are the places of intense introspection and search of the community where empty forms and encrusted over crystallized, dead symbols are examined and the living sparks and seminal wisdom indigenous to the community is discovered. A living transition where the future is not a dream or a vision but an unfolding and a flowering of introspection and assertion. This institutional space covers quadrant

one and two of the map. The sheer genius, wisdom and compassion of the attempt of Gandhiji to mobilise our nation through this method defy description.

In the absence of such an institution the call for the new must rely on evoking dreams, and hopes and be fueled by euphoria. Nehru became the symbol of this movement and force. The context for his leadership was set by the totally alien political canvas that the constitution of India created. A political manifesto having no link with the struggle and institutional processes symbolised by Gandhiji. The context of his action was constrained by the continuance of colonial organisation and law. The vision of the new did not touch the hearts of the Indian people the way Gandhiji's call had. It provided opportunities for new forms of power, new economic order and enterprise. The ferment created by the struggle for independence was left orphaned. Its more fanciful aspects were given space. The feelings that would have nourished the seeds sown by Gandhiji were left without leadership. The more self-serving interests found space and opportunity for acquisition. Thus we find many of the political and economic initiatives taken in the 50s given way to more violent, profiteering leadership and entrepreneurship in the late 60's. The philosophy of action is not national growth. It is power, money and violences. Today they are visible in brutal starkness. The Quadrant 4 represents this pull.

Application of the framework in understanding organisation

Three case studies of organisations designed and run completely on traditional lines is given in the appendices. The first one talks about the organisation of a Nagarathar Nattukkotai Chattiram being run in Varanasi. The second is about the Vishwakarma and their organisation and the third is about Yoga and Ayurveda schools. All 3 fall into the 3rd quadrant of our framework. These are examples of "good organisations" that are perfectly viable and infact are pre-eminent within the context of the old. Their usefulness and impact is also confined to this context. When any person approaches these organisations for a service, they realise the implicit demand put forth by them. These organisation are approached with "traditional attitudes". A senior executive in a large industry with vastly greater "power" in economic and commercial terms will approach the 'gurus' and 'masters' of these organisations with deference. Most modern industrial organisation would fall into the 4th quadrant of the framework. These organisations are a legacy of the British or multi nationals or organisations set up in collaboration with the first world nation. We as a people have not been able to integrate the obvious strengths, the human excellence value processes and collective cohesion so patently visible in the older Indian organisations with the modern organisations we create.

Inevitably a Japanese Example

Let us for a moment look at the Japanese experience. The entire thrust to mordernising of Japan was based on a master plan drawn up in 1884 by a team led by Maeda Masana. The voluminous suggestions put forth by him are

prefaced by a profoundly insightful statement. Echoes of his perspective can be seen in the HRD philosophy of most Japanese Companies to this day. Today, Japan is a world leader in technology while being distinctly Japanese.

Discussing the various constituents which were required to make such a plan for the industrialisation of Japan to be successful the plan started : "Which requirements should be considered as most important in the present efforts of the Government in building Japanese Industry? It can be neither capital nor laws and regulation because both are dead things in themselves and totally ineffective. The spirit / willingness (of the people) sets both capital and regulations in motion. If we assign weights to these three factors with respect to their effectiveness, spirit / willingness should be assigned 5 parts, laws and regulation 4 and capital no more than 1 part".

Elmer Sperry, an eminent American inventor and engineer visited Japan in 1922. 40 years after the launching of this plan. Sperry was very impressed with the strides in technology taken by Japan. He was especially impressed with 2 large dockyards one of which he judged to be 4 times larger than any in America. He admired the systematic layout and operation of the yard, where they take in Swedish pig iron at one end of the place and put out a 33000 ton battleship at the other end. He also saw superior machine tools, which were the essence of precision manufacture and represented capital investment. He also remarked about the construction of electrical transmission networks of better construction than he had seen in America. The Japanese were no longer dependent on the import of complex materials and machines. Thus what we see as Japanese Industry today is the consequence of adherence to the principles put forth by Maeda Masana for more than hundred years.

Lack of investment in the spirit of our people

In India very little work has been done in creating organisations Indian in spirit. Neither has enough investments been put in to discover relevant ways of 'shining the spirit' of the Indian people.

The words "laws and regulations" and "spirit / willingness of the people" (of Maeda Masana) read together is synonymous with the word dharma. Action that cultivates and sustains the dharma appropriate to a collectivity is its institutional base. While the goals and purpose of the group might change from time to time, the dharma and the institutions that sustain the way in which the group actualises the purpose does not change. Institutions are the mechanisms that mobilise the collective energy towards the chosen purpose.

What investments do we make to study and discover the "laws and regulation, and the spirit" appropriate to us in our context? What institutional action do we initiate and nurture in order to awaken and mobilise our potentials and creativity?

Raghu Ananthanarayanan

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The basic foundations of this paper are drawn from discussions, oral instructions and dialogues with some important teachers of Indian tradition. All the ideas on Yoga, Sankhya and other Indian Text referred to in the paper are from the oral teachings of Yogacharya T.Krishnamacharya. The understanding of the Vishwakarma tradition is from a close study of a group of shilpis building a temple and subsequent talks with Shri. Ganapati Sthapati and his group. Lecturers and group process work sessions of Shri Pulin K.Garg and his colleagues in ISISD provides the basis for the organisational aspects and insights. Dialogues and discussions with Shri Dharmpal form the background of the understanding of the Indian Social History. Some of these are quoted explicitly others have been impossible to separate from my own understanding and insights.

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