A Comparative Study on Maslow's Theory and Indian Ashrama System

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Abstract: This paper aims to take a comparative view about the Indian Ashram System and Maslow's study. It in no way tries to prove that which one is better or wrong but it gives a holistic universal approach to the studies conducted by Maslow and its relevance practiced by Indian Vedic culture. It is important to note that the parallels drawn between the two social theories not only make the two theories understand better but also gives a deep understanding of technique of motivation that are stable and enduring. Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs was published in 1943 in a journal psychological Review. Already there are numerous critical studies done on this topic. And many have differed with this study and its relevance in today's world by diversifying it into cultures, individual needs and so on. Yet the basic structure of the theory should be understood and there should be a deeper understanding of his works as this proves to be a basis of most of the managerial thoughts today. The theory talks about the basic human tendencies and behavioural patterns and more studies should be conducted to inculcate its references in today's world. Some of the critics criticize it as not being relevant in today's world but the relevance could be found out in some of the managerial practices even today. which would be later discussed in this article.

Index Terms: Maslow's Theory, Perspective, Indian Ashrama System.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Maslow's Theory the upward movement of the of persons behavioural aspects defines his aspirations. Maslow has divided the need of a person into five basic simple steps.

A. Primordial Needs or Physiological Needs

The basis of first step is primordial functions and needs of human beings such as air that we breath in, water which is needed for the survival of the human being, food that we need to live and shelter that can accommodate us.

If we compare the above basic aspects with the basics given in Ashram system in India we can clearly see that the first ashrama described in the Vedic society was that of the *Brahmacharya ashram* which says that at this stage the basic

needs of humanities should be fulfilled. This is also the learning stage of human beings where a child learns to utilise the basic needs and shelter himself for the unwanted or harmful. Most of the aspects thus discussed in the Maslow's theory are relevant with this ashram and are most basic needs of the human behaviour.

B. Significance Economic:

In today's world most of the population in underdeveloped countries are starving to fulfil their basic needs. Good food, Potable drinking water, Pollution free Air, and safe shelter are some of the basic necessities which are scarce in most of the countries either by natural calamities famine, drought or manmade such as war, invasions.

These countries by and large are stuck into their own vicious cycle of poverty and survival.

C. Significance Social:

We as human beings start discovering the basic needs by getting educated through our parents, friends, schooling and college. Our basic needs are taken care by our parents. Once we become older we ourselves start survival and the dependency goes on decreasing with the age. In a normal society we get educated and start surviving ourselves thus the first stage of the Maslow's hierarchy is passed. But some societies due to above mentioned reasons cannot support the basic needs and the entire society is stuck in the dilemma of survival.

D. Significance Individual:

Individually a child starts utilising the air when he takes first breath and takes water and food through its mother further he is sheltered through his parents and his basic needs are taken care of by his parents or guardians as the case may be. He goes out in society and gets educated according to his/her likes and capacity decided by the society. Here his primordial needs are partly completed but when he himself starts earning his his individual needs or basic needs get fulfilled and there is completion of one cycle of Maslow's hierarchy. As we see the individualistic significance to these needs is nothing but the definition of Brahmacharya Ashram which teaches the basic survival techniques in a normal society.

E. Safety, Love and Belonging:

The second and third need when combined can tell us about the *Grihastha Ashram*. After the Physiological needs are fulfilled love belongings and safety needs arise the *Grihastha Ashram* in Vedic literature which significantly tells us the fulfilment of the desires in a right way, it deals with the duties of an individual who owns a dignified life.

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The Grihasta Ashram is considered as the most significant of the all ashrams as it is based on the Karma of human being. Similarly while classifying the hierarchy although Maslow have divided the two categories as safety, love and belonging they can be treated as one. The individualistic approach tells us that age group of this category is between 20 to 50/60. The two categories when combined talks about the building upon the foundation for the stability of an individual which one thinks of and thus builds basis for the other two upper classes of motivation.

F. Esteem

Once these two aspects are achieved a person can think about the paying back stage to the society which is defined in the *Vanaprastha Ashram*. Some may disagree with the above statement as vanaprastha ashram means letting off your duties and handing off the positions to next generation. But by handing off the status does not mean walking off from duties of the life. In earlier days the Vanaprastha ashram meant a laboratory to experiment with self and write the experiences of life. For this purpose individuals needed penance and calmness which would be only possible by accepting to stay in van or forest with little comforts. Thus we can see that many literary articles and social experiments were performed by the people who lived a penance life in van for their future generations to come. This was equivalent with the esteem needs as described by the Maslow in the fourth state of classification.

G. Self Actualization:

Maslow states that the ultimate need is the self actualization need which is achieved by very few people. These people in the Vedic culture were the sanyasis who accepted the facts did not have any prejudices, which guided the society. If we see the life of sanyasis and their contribution in Vedic Culture the same attributes are reflected back in self actualisation needs of motivation. Thus the sanyas ashram or the fourth ashram draws an analogy between the Maslow's self actualization need. Not only this is the ultimate aim stated by Maslow but also that this has been considered as the ultimate goal of life by many religions and sub sects of Vedic Religion like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

II. MASLOW'S THEORY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN CURRENT SITUATION:

Although this theory is a psychological theory which could be used in Human Resource Management as it has been used in many organisations and a lot of research has been carried out for its use. The best usage of this theory would be in the subjects of marketing. Today's world of marketing is focusing from Bulk approach to more individualisation approach with the introduction of smart-technology. The products are just not products but are backed by the services and value additional functions. The example of this would be an Hardware computer would be useless without a good software, a smart phone would not remain smart without good apps in it. Thus if we follow the trend it would be difficult for a product to stabilize in market for a longer duration as it used to be unless it focused on the subjective needs of an individual. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs gives us the precise product position and where it could be absolute and stopped. Let us see how we can re-distribute the product categories according to Maslow's Classification. Fig. 1. shows Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy.

The products such as food products, mineral water, stationary items, books etc. can be targeted to the individuals who fall into the first category. While the needs which are related to safety such as insurance products, Housing and housing loans, software related to Job could be targeted to the second category achievers. The third category is of achievers who have achieved and are middle aged people so the products which give them fame and confidence and respect can be targeted to them e.g. High end Cars, watches, High end Cosmetic products etc. The last category of person is very difficult to target by a marketer as he is a sanyasi and would rather not Like any materialistic product that would be useful to him but still their is a way. The religion has played an important role in development of society what it is today, so has it derived products which in materialistic world are products but not in religious world. The examples could be many like a website dedicated to the holy literature, philanthropic literature, Religious pilgrimages etc.
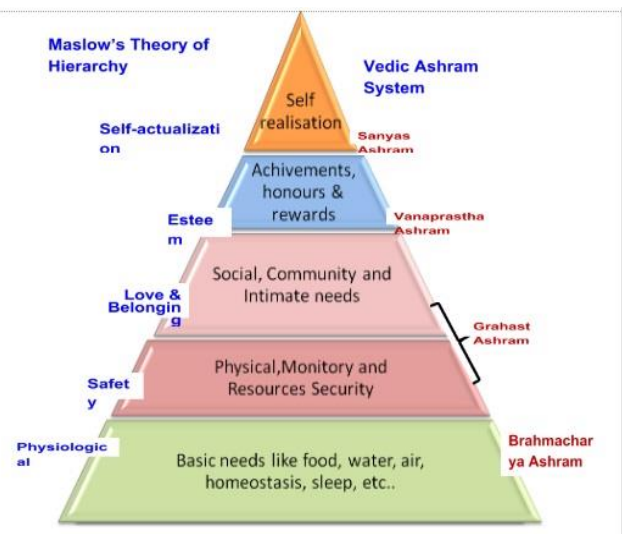

Fig. 1. Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy.

III. CONCLUSION

The study of Maslow's theory of needs if studied in different prospective which is also the need of hour could be helpful not only for the well-being of human being but can be practically implemented in today's modern technological era.

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