

Environmentally Responsible Business; lessons from Indian Mythology



Tripti Sahu, Nitin Ranjan

Abstract: *The phenomenal speed of corporate development in modern era demands a universal call for action. The role of corporate sustainable practices should be designed to generate value for all stakeholders', in a manner to ensure positive ethical, social, cultural, economic and most importantly environmental impact. Evolving world order engendered a greater concern for ecology whereas in the race of materialism, sustainable development has just become an illusion. Sympathizing sustainability issues necessitates human to think and appreciate the extended chains of cause and effect relationship of human doings on his future, these doings can be intentional or otherwise. The agenda of corporate sustainable development cannot be fulfilled until the greedy creatures realize the importance of living in harmony with nature.*

The most ancient known literature in the world had already suggested the sustainable solutions way back in about 1500 and 1000 BCE [3]. Indian mythology since ages is preaching and practicing sustainability in all traits of life for the establishment of a better society. The present paper is an attempt to draw corporate sustainability lessons from Indian mythology literature that projects natural resources as God and also device ways to please the almighty. This paper is an attempt to suggest corporate world to learn sustainability lessons hidden in Indian mythological preaching through rigorous literature content analysis. The ancient Indian literature (Vedas) encompasses several principles of sustainable development. Principles relating to the unavoidability of facing consequences of one's actions, the interconnectedness of all living beings, the linkage between present and future, the integrity of the human family, the necessity of harmony between humanity and the natural order and many others are equally apt and can guide sustainable corporate growth. The lesson sums up in "Vasudev kutumbakam" (all belongs to one family) that needs to be engrossed in the corporate strategies for a better tomorrow.

Keyword: Business lessons, Corporate, Environment, Mythology, Sustainable.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian Vedas are the most ancient literature known in the world. These Vedas teach us the ways of life. In Hindu religion, there are mainly four Vedas which are the unprecedented laws needs to be followed by each individual. These are Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharved.

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There are 18 Upanishads which are the smaller version of Vedas and contains preaching of Vedas in more understandable and easy formats. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada [1] said in his book "Laws of nature" said that there are various facts in life some can be tested through experimentations but some are there which we should accept as they are written because it is beyond once capacity to experiment. Vedas have already experimented facts, and if we try to examine it we will come to the same conclusions. Thus, in Indian mythology, Vedas are following blindly assuming that it represents facts.

ॐ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥१॥

Everything living or non-living that is there in the universe is controlled and belongs to the Lord. One should, therefore, accept only those things necessary for oneself, which are set aside as his quota, and one must not accept other's things, knowing well to whom they belong. Therefore, human beings are not the authority to rule the planet moreover they are no one to decide the relative importance of other beings. The power of being oneness is referred to as "Divine Being" in Yajurveda. The concept of being contended is beautifully explained in the Vedas.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Some of the fundamental principles of ecology-the interrelationship and interdependence of all life-were conceptualized in the Indian ethos and reflected in the ancient scriptural text, the Ishopanishad, over 2000 years ago. In Hinduism environment is not outside, it is very integral and inseparable part of human existence the five elements (Panch Mahabhutas) created a web of life. The Upanishads explain that from the creator of the world "Bramha" originated space, from space air, took its origin from air, fire was born and fire gave birth to water and earth is made from water (As major portion of earth is water) these all super elements are interrelated and interdependent. Indian mythology also suggest that Human's all five senses relates to these five elements i.e. eyes (seeing) represents fire, ears (hearing) represents space, Tongue (taste) represents water, Skin (touch) represents air and nose (smell) represents the earth. A human body functions suitably because of these five senses which belongs to five super elements of nature. Any disturbance in the balance of these five elements invariably disturbs an individual's functional balance which ultimately results in his own loss.

Indian Mythology has always advocated the importance of nature and striking the right balance between human doings and ecology. The five Tattvas (elements) of human existence i.e. Agni (Fire), Jal (Water), Vayu (Air), Bhumi (Land) and Akash (Sky).



The five elements have been abundantly reflected in a variety of traditional practices, religious beliefs, rituals, folklore, arts and crafts, and in the daily lives of the Indian people from time immemorial. The present-day global concerns for sustainable development and conservation of natural resources spanning the two decades between the Stockholm Conference of Environment in 1992 and the United Nations Conference on Human Environment and Development (Earth Summit) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 are of recent origin in comparison to the long tradition and cultural ethos of nature conservation in India. G Vallabh and G Dadhich [13] says that the growth of a business is the function of how well it manages its profit and can reduce external negativity or losses.

$Fx = \max f(\text{profit}) + \min f(\text{negative externality})$

Present-day business world's sole motto of earning profit for the organization is challenged by Indian mythology. Goddess Laxmi, who is the Goddess of wealth is worshipped in India on the important occasion of the annual festival. Hindu mythology refrains from chasing money rather it preaches one to become so attractive to money that money fetches you. One needs to become worthy of Goddess's blessings so there will be no dearth of wealth. Practicing good business to attract profit rather than fetching it. It is further explained in the Indian Mythology, that God Indra who is the supreme of all Gods is consumed by his hunger; he is always in scarcity even when he has the best of the world. On the other hand, Vishnu is bothered about other's needs and requirements. Vishnu is aware that human desire for wealth, power and knowledge and act in a way to satisfy everyone's requirements. Thus Vishnu needs to be respected more and worshipped. The simple mechanism as suggested in the Scriptures is to satisfy other's requirements and in return, your requirements automatically will get satisfied. This is because Hindus believe in cyclical processes. One who took birth will take rebirth and will again join the cycle on life. So as the businesses once you give away something in the form of Corporate Environmental Responsibility it will come back to you sooner or later in different forms. There is no end to anything in this world. The law of Karma (doings) suggests that one's deeds come back in some or the other forms. Good deeds will result in good returns and vice versa.

III. METHODOLOGY:

The research is based on the descriptive study and is analytical in nature. Environmentally responsible business practices are derived from Indian Mythology which is mostly drawn from the available literature. Present research primarily used secondary sources for the purpose of data collection. The data was collected from the internet from research papers published in journals and magazines. To derive environmental lessons, from Indian Mythology, various Indian Mythology books, scriptures and pieces of literature were referred and appropriately cited. Qualitative analysis is conducted to dig out the deep rooted environmental inclination of Indian Mythology and attempts are made to relate these lessons to present-day organizational setup.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

The focal reason of the failure of many sustainable business practices is mainly because these organisations fail to practice ethics at the time of making rational business decisions. Morality is something that is missing in business strategies. Manu Smriti in its hymn mentioned that most of the human decisions are driven by "Lobh" (the greed for more). The subprime crises or corporate scams in corporate America was the result of the faulty decision-making process. The decisions were not rational keeping the customer trust at stake was the great act of misconduct. Indian mythology preaches to practice ethics in every walk of life. It teaches that good deeds result in good returns.

As per Hindu Mythology, the growth of a business is the function of its Karma (doings). Karma is the sum total of one's action in its previous state of existence and it is this Karma that decides the destiny of beings. As per Hindu believe one has to face his/her karma sooner or later[3].

Thus :

$Fx = \max f(\text{good karma}) + \min f(\text{bad karma})$

Business growth is the function of good and bad karma to increase profit and to grow business, the organisations needs to take a two-way process of reducing on bad karma at the same time increasing the kitty of good karma.

The success and growth of the business depend largely on its social image, its positive gestures towards the social and environmental betterment. No doubt, business need to compete but healthy competition can pave the way for the win-win game. The shift of corporate behavioural approach forms self-centric to society centric is the product of perceived understanding of principal of VasudevKutumbakam given in Maha Upanishad (Indian scripture)

After all, everyone belongs to the same big family "VasudevKutumbakam"

V. CONCLUSIONS:

Present-day business objectives are to achieve financial targets set and performed as a set of tasks. But more importantly businesses should be viewed as a group of people who are not come together to generate money to satisfy the hunger of all stakeholders and the stakeholders are not an only human being but the natural and animal world. Indian mythology is full of teachings of ethical code of conduct. It has a framework of living in harmony with the natural environment to ensure long term business sustainability. Ancient Hindu Scriptures like four Vedas, Upanishads, Manu Smriti and Ramayana and BhagvatGeeta not only teaches spirituality but a discipline of life which is equally applicable to the organisation's life also. The framework designed by these sculptures essentially pressurise on nurturing a free environment in which each member of the system can trust the other members.

The complete harmony of elements should present in the system.



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