

## Globalizing Indian Thought: Is There an 'Indian Way of Management'?

*What does 'Globalizing Indian Thought' mean in the context of management research and practice?*

Is there a distinct management style as 'Indian way of management' in practice as there is Western style of management developed during the industrialization age and Japanese style of management, which received global attention during 1980s? Or, is there a possibility to develop a distinct management style rooted in Indian culture, traditions and values that can address the management challenges offered by a turbulent environment in an increasingly globalized world, as the Japanese style of management evolved?

These questions have begun to be raised by management researchers in the Indian context beginning in 1980s and more so in the last decade. Some answers or evidences are also beginning to emerge from management practice as well as research. In fact, call for such research to discover or develop a management style rooted in Indian culture has been made by several researchers (Chakraborty, 1993; Dayal, 1977; Sinha, 1980, 1990, 1992; Panda & Gupta, 2007). Some Indian companies have been able to compete in a globalizing world despite severe constraints in technology as well as capital (Kumar, 2009); the Tata group's globalization efforts being one such example among many others mentioned in the work. In their book, Munshi (2009) bring out 11 unique innovations in the Indian business context. India experienced annual growth of 1399 per cent in outward foreign directed investments during 2001–2008. Recent research work by Dupatti (2012) revealed that the firms acquired by Indian companies performed better after acquisition. Interviews with leaders of 100 large Indian companies offered evidence of the possibility of a distinct style of managing referred to as the 'India Way' by Cappelli et al. (2010).

During the scientific management era, engineering and economics played a dominant role and the major concerns were productivity and cost (Sharma, 2013). Hence, the associated tools and techniques were largely rooted in task focus and production focus. The Japanese style of management characterized by the total quality of management, or Just in Time Management emphasized on financial and non-financial objectives in order to secure long-term survival, independence and growth of an organization compared to the short-term financial objectives to increase shareholder value as observed in the Western style of management. We are living in the age of globalization fuelled by technological advancements and characterized by active, informed and connected customers. The turbulent changes in the environment is characterized as in the VUCA world—volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment—is posing fresh management and leadership challenges in an increasingly globalized world. Recent economic crises have challenged the applicability of Western or Japanese styles of management in a globalized scenario (Pudelko, 2009) and the management style of successful India-based organizations is drawing attention of the management world (Sinha, 2010). Though many of the large business groups in India are largely led by family promoters, they have recognized and are in the process of bringing in more professionalism in managing organizations. Many successful Indian business are characterized by greater employee engagement, an ability to innovatively improvise (often referred as *Jugaad*) and creatively deliver value to customers, and missions that extend beyond delivering shareholder value etc (Capelli et al., 2010). Indian managers often operate in volatile and complex environments with a constantly changing and evolving policy framework, relatively poor quality infrastructure, corruption, bureaucratic procedures that increase the transaction costs, compared to their counterparts elsewhere (Sinha, 2010). This could possibly work as an advantage for Indian managers to navigate organizations in turbulent business environment.

India has developed effective professional managers over the last 50 years and this is perhaps most aptly demonstrated by the graduates from the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), with a total number of IIM graduates in the industry running over 40,000. A study by Egon Zehnder, a global executive search firm, shows that in 2011, S&P 500 companies had more Indian CEOs than of any other nationality except American. Indian managers are known to have

capabilities such as pragmatism, flexibility, ability to work in a difficult operating environment, knowledge of English and democratic values, ability to work in mixed environments with promoters etc. The number of graduates are further expected to rise as six new IIMs are being set up in 2015 taking the total number of IIMs to 19. Apart from the supply of professionally trained management graduates to the industry the IIMs are also building intellectual infrastructure, which could fuel indigenous research in addressing management concerns. These are the important facets of Indian management.

India's role in global business is becoming significant due to its demographic advantages, cost competitiveness, domestic consumption-led economy etc., which also make her attractive as an investment destination. Over the past couple of decades, India underwent a process of greater integration with the outside world. These developments in Indian business context set the stage for exploring the possibilities of discovering or developing a new way of management rooted in Indian culture, traditions and values that could find relevance not just for managing Indian companies but for management at large. The Second PAN IIM World management conference conducted in IIM Kozhikode in November 2014 as well this special issue of IIM Kozhikode Society and Management Review on *Globalizing Indian Thought* is a step to explore such possibilities and give a fillip to such academic initiatives. This encompasses the influencing of international perspectives through insights found in Indian realities as well as enhancing Indian thought leadership through engagement with international best practices. The conference reflected on lessons from the past, critically analyzed the current imperatives and explored paths for the future of management theory, education and practice.

This special issue has considered the papers presented in the Second PAN IIM World Management Conference conducted at IIM Kozhikode for publication. Of the 460 manuscripts received for the conference, 138 papers were presented in the conference. Upon receiving consent of the authors of papers accepted for the conference, the papers have gone through a blind review process for publication in this special issue. In addition, papers were solicited from key note speakers of the conference to be included in this issue; the two perspective papers in this issue are contributed by the key note speakers.

This special issue on *Globalizing Indian Thought* has three parts—three research papers in the first part are followed by two perspective papers on the theme of *Globalizing Indian Thought*. There are also two book reviews: (i) soulful corporations: a value-based perspective on corporate social responsibility and (ii) greater good: how marketing makes for a better democracy, which is a regular feature of the journal.

The opening article of the issue 'Globalizing Indian Thought through Indian Management Knowledge Tree' by Subhash Sharma traces the evolutionary journey of the idea of Indian management from 1960s; the decade when the first two Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) were established in Ahmedabad and Kolkata. The author has identified four phases of development of Indian management thought which he refers to, quite aptly as, four branches of the Indian Knowledge Management tree representing the coexistence of multiple paradigms in research as well as practice. The four phases of development or the four branches of the Indian Knowledge Management tree are described as (i) adopting scientific approach based on concepts developed in the Western context (1960–1980), (ii) recognizing influence of cultural approach through indigenous theories and concepts (1980–2000), (iii) movement towards Indian ideas in management through influences of new consciousness in a 'new age of modernity' (2000–2010) and (iv) the fourth phase (2010–), wherein *Globalizing Indian Thought* is gathering momentum. The author concludes with the observation that the development over the last 60 years of Indian management is leading us towards the development of a new body of original knowledge that could become a basis for *Globalizing Indian Thought* and Indian ideas in management. This paper makes an earnest attempt to capture the development of indigenous management thinking in India.

Ancient wisdom from Indian traditions has been a source of inspiration as well as innovative ideas in promoting indigenous management thinking. The paper on 'role of self-managing leadership in crisis management...' draws on the ancient self-management technique called *Rajayoga* and proceeds with empirically evaluating the effectiveness of the ancient technique in crisis management. Although much of the ancient wisdom are intuitively appealing and may also work in different situations there is a lack of empirical study to scientifically establish their validity and usefulness. This branch of the management knowledge tree also requires systematic research and the paper is a step in this direction.

The third research paper on the issue of workplace bullying presents a comprehensive review of workplace bullying literature over the past 25 years gives insight into the directions for future research. Although academic interest on workplace bullying got initiated with the pioneering studies of Heinz Leymann (Leymann, 1990), studies in the Asian/Indian context are few and early studies are only a decade old. This is an area where research could benefit drawing from multiple indigenous perspectives on workplace bullying.

Debashis Chatterjee, in his perspective paper on *Globalizing Indian Thought*, argues that Indian population being a significant part of the global population, Indian economy among the top three economies and being very heterogeneous,

solution to problems of India could itself be solutions to world's perennial problems of poverty, inequality and corruption. According to the author, the three elements of Indian thought which are especially important in a globalizing world are Satyam, Nityam and Purnam. Satyam refers to relentless pursuit for the truth/reality, Nityam to sustainability and continuity and Purnam to wholeness. The author further elaborates IIM Kozhikode's contribution to the cause of *Globalizing Indian Thought* by enabling symbolic manifestation of rich and proud Indian heritage in different ways in the campus including establishment of the Indian Business History Museum. The institute has also made pioneering initiatives in designing distinct content in postgraduate programmes by including social, environmental and ethical aspects in management, and enhancing gender diversity. The institute is also known for its sustainability initiatives for preserving its natural environment as well as water resources management.

The perspective paper from Guillaume Sicard, *Indian Thought: A Global Platform*, reminds that globalization is a two-way process which involves 'give and take'. Similar thought is expressed in the opening quotes in the paper by Subhash Sharma from *Rigveda* 'Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions' as well as his book *the Quantum Rope*—'Let noble thoughts go from us in all directions.' As Nissan brings global knowledge, practices and products to India, the knowledge, culture, ideas and resources in India lead to a different level of innovation and improvisation through synthesis of technology and cultures. Sicard further adds that multinational organizations are coming here not just to bring products but to also take back a whole new mindset.

Each management style irrespective of its origin or nature—whether labeled as Western or Japanese—has demonstrated its own value in certain contexts. The root of any activity can be easily traced to a thought and management decision making is no exception. The quality of actions depends on the quality of thought behind it. Although certain context could foster certain kind of thinking labeled as philosophy, paradigm or approach to understanding phenomena or problem solving, thoughts by its very nature knows no geographical boundaries. In today's globalized environment characterized by the VUCA world, innovative ways of management needs to be further explored and nurtured which might offer appropriate solutions in an environment characterized by turbulence. The theme *Globalizing Indian Thought*, we think, sets an inspirational agenda for both researchers as well as practitioners immersed in Indian socio-cultural context to discover or develop indigenous management thinking, relevant in addressing contemporary challenges in management.

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