

## NIRDESHANAM: TECHNIQUES FOR DIRECTION FROM ANCIENT INDIAN TREATISE

### INTRODUCTION

Nirdeshanam is a Sanskrit word which means showing the direction. In our day-to-day life, we are guided and suggested by several things by our teachers, mentors, parents, friends and many other people whose guidance is necessary for us to grow. In an organisation, one of the roles of a manager or a leader is to give the right direction to employees to work in an organisation to achieve the desired goals. There are informal and formal ways to give direction to employees in an organisation. The right kind of training, supervision and conferences are some of the formal ways and motivating, influencing, and guiding the employees are some of the informal ways to give the right direction to employees.

The aspect of direction gives an idea of influencing, guiding, motivating and supervising the employees to achieve the organisational goals. The efforts done by the management while planning and organising, are brought together in directing to achieve the goals. The ancient Indian knowledge texts, such as Bhagwad Geeta has given an understanding of the right direction to achieve the expected goals. Arjuna, during the battle, lacked the motivation to fight against his blood relatives and faced a conflict which ultimately led to the discourse of Bhagwad Geeta by Sri Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Sri Krishna helped Arjuna by giving him the right direction.

Similarly, the text of Arthashastra written by Kautilya also suggests some of the ways to give direction to people working in an organisation which positively affects the outcome of an organisation. Arthashastra suggests choosing the right people for the right job and training them efficiently can work in a versatile setting. Kautilya through Arthashastra talks about making the employees capable of working in different circumstances, different places and at different timings which can help the organisation grow. Delegating the work is considered the basic step for achieving the desired outcomes of an organisation in Arthashastra. Based on the delegation, employees are given the required direction to make themselves better at their work.

By taking Bhagawad Gita and Arthashastra as illustrations this article will focus on the two different yet versatile paradigms for giving the right direction to the employees in an organisation.

## **IMPORTANCE OF NIRDESHANAM: KRISHNA'S ROLE IN MAHABHARATA**

Directing is the managerial function that consists of those activities which are concerned directly with influencing, guiding or supervising the subordinates in their jobs.

Thus, directing is performance oriented and the initiating function of management that actuates plans and the organisation. If subordinates are not properly directed, nothing can be accomplished. Direction is another important element of management.

It is the sum total of managerial efforts which takes the organisation towards the predetermined goals. It is in fact part of every managerial action. The organisation does not start working till the manager gives direction which means guiding and supervising the subordinates. (Smrithi Chand, n.d.)

Importance of Directing is listed below:

1. Initiates Action 2. Integrates Employees' Efforts 3. Means of Motivation 4. Facilitates Changes 5. Provides Balance and Stability 6. Ensures Co-Ordination 7. Improves Efficiency 8. Assists Stability and Growth 9. Attempts to Get Maximum out of Individuals 10. Resolution of Conflict between the Goals 11. Improving Communication 12. Improving Human Relations 13. Effective Control 14. Effective Leadership 15. Improving Morale 16. Activation of Workers 17. Creates Flexibility 18. Aims to Achieve Organisational Objectives 19. Supplements other Managerial Functions and a Few Others. (Jayasmitha, n.d.)

Sri Krishna in Mahabharata used the principle of "Direction" as a tool to give direction for Dharma Samsthanapa. In modern organizations leaders and managers are expected to ensure that their employees are contributing towards the fulfilment of the goals set by the organization. Krishna's role in Mahabharata successfully explains the following questions on the role of direction in an organisation:

1. Do Pandavas know why they need to manifest Dharma? Do they know their ultimate goal?
2. Are Pandavas doing the job that is expected from them with their potential?
3. Would Pandavas without the direction of Sri Krishna (the unbiased and righteous attitude) behave appropriately?

#### **A. Dharmasansthapana as a goal:**

The generals of the group of Pandavas had individual goals, such as Bheema's goal to kill 100 Kaurava brothers, Nakul's goal to kill Shakuni mama and his children, and Arjuna's goal to defeat Karna, Shikhandi's goal to defeat Bheeshma. The individual goals of all the members of the Pandava group matched their universal goals. The universal goal was to manifest Dharma. Pandavas worked under the guidance and direction of Sri Krishna. He made sure that Pandavas should never get distracted from the goal that was set to establish Dharma. Sri Krishna directed Pandavas which helped them to fight with clarity, collective purpose, common understanding and great compatibility under the direction of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna made sure that Pandavas know the need to establish Dharma. By establishing the importance of the goal Sri Krishna made sure that Pandavas were aware of the reason behind the war which was to establish Dharma.

#### **B. Choosing Pandavas over Kauravas/ Winning over equals:**

Winning over equals is one of the most critical challenges that are often faced by competitive organisations. Successful strategy implementation requires compatibility and the right people. The two armies, the Pandavas and Kauravas were equally competitive. To manifest Dharma, Sri Krishna chose the side of Pandavas. The Pandavas never supported "Adharma". The reason behind Krishna and Arjuna as a pair together in the war suggested that Krishna had the quality of the right positioning and task implementation for those in the war (organisation). And Arjuna had a quality of focused action (goal oriented employee) which is needed in implementing the strategy. The strategy implementation is only possible if there is the right mission, a correct and mindful vision and focused action. The conditions of stress, tension and fierce actions needed quick decisions in less time. These actions need a high level of cooperation. Since Krishna and Arjuna showed good compatibility the strategies in the war were successfully implemented.

### **C. Motivating Arjuna through Bhagwad Geeta:**

Motivational problems occur when the objectives and goals of an individual do not match with their self-interest and even with the organisational objectives. Sri Krishna made sure that the members of the Pandavas group never lacked in their motivation to win the war. Arjuna fought the war with great focus and clarity since his charioteer and mentor was Sri Krishna who was continuously motivating and assisting him. In many situations, when Pandavas lacked the motivation to fight, Sri Krishna motivated them by showing them the ultimate goal: the manifestation of Dharma. Sri Krishna directed the Pandavas by aggravating the need for war.

### **D. Guiding Pandavas to walk through the right path to ensure Dharmo rakshati rakshitah:**

Another way to give direction to the members of Pandavas was to make the members know their potential their swadharma. Sri Krishna finely trained the Pandavas to outshine their limitations. Sri Krishna enhanced the abilities of Pandavas by making them equipped with hard work, penance, sacrifice, blessings and good wishes. Pandavas fought the war with only seven Akshouhini sena (1,530,900 warriors) and on the potential and abilities of Arjuna. On the other hand, Kauravas fought with eleven Akshouhini sena (2,405,700 warriors) with great warriors like Bheeshma, Dronacharya and Karna.

In this way, Sri Krishna showed the importance of giving the right direction through which organisations can understand the need for direction in successful strategy implementation. Sri Krishna directed the Pandavas with motivation, and correct direction and made them realise their potential.

Bhagwad Geeta through the discourse of Sri Krishna suggests that there are important individual values, behaviour and capabilities, and leadership qualities that are required to have a successful and running organisation. Many organisations around the world are looking for employee work-life balance, self-confidence, assertiveness, job satisfaction, loyalty, personality development, ethics and commitment as the basic need for running an organisation. Sri Krishna through Bhagwad Geeta answers and shows the direction to Arjuna while in the war of Mahabharata.

The word 'stakeholders' is used in the modern organisational system which states that while the organisation is in the trouble, certain members of the organisation will have control over the organisation. Just like how Lord Krishna promised to look after the well-being of the people, similarly current day organizations promise to look after the well-being of their stake holders. Hence, Krishna's strategy for "Yogakshemamvahamyaham" can be adopted by the modern organisations as well.

### **DIRECTION: ARTHASHASTRA: TRAINING THE ELEPHANTS**

Elephants were considered so important by Chanakya that he recommended that the King set aside 1.5 hours each day (the seventh part) to "superintend elephants, horses, chariots and infantry" (Kautilya, 1961, p.37). The King is also required to undertake good management of elephant forests, from which his stock of elephants can be replenished, and to extend such forests (Kautilya, 1961, p.48). He outlines in some detail methods for the training of elephants for war and those for riding (Kautilya, 1961, pp.153-155). He recommends that young elephants and those without tusks not be captured. He, in fact, suggests that elephants be 20 years of age before they are captured. In Arthashastra Chanakya has written a separate chapter on training the elephants. Kautilya was of the view that victory in war was likely to go to the side with the largest and best trained body of elephants. The elephant was, therefore, an extremely versatile animal in war. It could also operate in varied terrains; a wider range than for other branches of the army. Similarly if the elephants are compared to the employees of an organization and the war for which elephants are trained is compared to organization then every manager shall identify the potential of the candidate according to their nature and observe the pattern of circumstances which affect the performance of the workers. As suggested by Arthashastra and quoted, "In conformity with appearance, he should give exercise to gentle and the dull (elephants) and also to the animals with mixed characteristics in various types of work or in accordance with the season. (Pillai, 2015) which can be compared as providing training as per the needs of the employees and showing them direction to achieve the goals of the organization in a manner which is conducive to the employees.

Another way to give the right direction can be understood by Arthashastra through evaluating the people. In modern times organisations, CVs and resumes are considered to be the blueprint of the

person and their performance which is written in their resume can make us understand if the person is promising or not. As per Arthashastra, there is a difference between the promises that are verbally noted by the person and their actual action over those promises. It is necessary to observe and study each candidate who is approaching to be an employee in an organisation before offering them a job.

Arthashastra also suggests that it is necessary to evaluate if an employee can manage different kinds of situations at different times. It is necessary to study employees' way of doing the work and to notice if a change in place and kind of work is affecting the employee's performance. Everyone's output cannot be guaranteed forever. Different situations and circumstances can completely change a person's performance. Arthashastra suggests selecting and training those employees who can be versatile in their approach to working.

Similarly, Arthashastra focuses on the change in a person's output at different times. For example, many times employees can do well in the morning but not at the end of the day due to fatigue.. According to Chanakya, seasons find out the best productive times for the workers and allocating the work according to seasons is the best way to cope with the challenges related to employees' performance. May be that is the reason why western countries follow summer and winter time.

The delegation of work is one of the most essential parts of the organisation and hence it is necessary to be selective while offering the jobs and giving the appropriate training to the employees as mentioned above. The manager needs to think, plan, study and experiment as per the human psyche. (Pillai, 2015)

## CONCLUSION

The paper suggests that direction is one of the most important roles which is played by the manager or the leader in an organisation as organisations are considered to be working for the betterment of the people and mapping the required needs. An organisation which will have the right goal and the appropriate project leader can easily fulfil the needs of people. People in an organisation should be selected and trained rigorously by the existing group of people in an organisation which can help in achieving the desired outcome. Last but not least it is also necessary to help the individualism of an organisation grow with the direction provided by the mentors and leaders in an organisation. The organisation should keep individual growth as a priority to help the people work efficiently in an organisation.

## REFERENCES

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Thaker, K. B. (2010). Management Control and Strategy Implementation: Insights from Mahabharata. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1658331>

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## **Comprehensive overview of the literature that is referred and cited in the study:**

Book: Corporate Chanakya written by Pillai R.

**About the reference:** The author of the book simplifies the age-old formulae for success for today's leaders. Corporate Chanakya implies Chanakya's wisdom in the areas including business organisation, strategy making, decision making, finance, time management and responsibilities of a leader.

Project Management Insights from Bhagavad Gita

**About the reference:** A research article by Dr. Goparaju Purna Sudhakar. In this article, project management insights such as project management framework, project stakeholders, task characteristics, project execution, project leader characteristics and project team member characteristics and behavior are derived. It is applicable to project human resources management knowledge area. The concepts derived indicate the reliance of ancient scripts even in current day global business scenario.

Management control and strategy implementation linking mythology to modern thinking

**About the reference:** A research article by Dr Keyur Thaker. Effective management control or strategy implementation requires striking balance and managing tension across the organization (Simmons, 2000). Merchant (2002) classifies the cause of execution failures as imbalance on three different fronts, namely, Direction, Motivation (misalignments) and Ability or personal limitations. The victory of the Pandavas over the Kauravas in the Indian epic, Mahabharata, despite the inarguably superior ability of the latter, provides interesting insights on how those causes of execution were managed. The practices and preaching of Sri Krishna, the mentor in the epic, offer interesting lessons on how the causes of management control failure among the Kauravas led to the victory of the Pandavas. The Pandavas camps demonstrated balance on the direction-motivation-ability (DMA) framework identified here or say 'Karma Yoga' and thus created a winning organization. The Mind Body diagnosis framework (Sathe & Smart 1997), a powerful tool employed by "winning organizations" comes closest to this. The framework also compares well with the Krishna Arjuna framework a.k.a. KAF (Parashar 2006), that right visioning and focused action leads to victory amongst equal. It requires competent people and a compatible team.

The win- without-fightingstrategy (Hao Ma 2003) and need for common purpose and harmony (Fernandez, 2004) in Art of War by Sun Tzu as well demonstrates and compares with the DMA framework and the Mahabharata, along with modern literature and thinking on strategy implementation. We observe general consensus in thinking about key to the strategy implementation across modern and ancient literature. Moreover, the contribution ropes the use of mythology metaphors for management training and development on strategy and management control to drive effective implementation.

Winning over equals: insights from Bhagwad Geeta (Krishna–Arjuna framework)

**About the reference:** A research article was written by S.P. Parashar. Sun Tzu’s The Art of War, written in the 6th Century BC, is popularly considered the most classic treatise on strategy of winning. The Bhagwad Geeta, a book from India dated 5000 years ago, provides a simple but profound Krishna–Arjuna framework for winning. This paper explains the Krishna–Arjuna framework for winning over equal competitors and discusses its relevance for global businesses. This framework suggests that winning over equal competitors quintessentially requires ‘right positioning (visioning) and focused action’. The Mind–Body Diagnostic framework for building a winning organisation (Sathe and Smart, 1997) is quite close to the Krishna–Arjuna framework.