Dharma to Arthashastra – Ancient Indian Philosophies for Strategic and Ethical Decision Making

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Abstract:

The Decision-making models emanating from ancient philosophies of India offers highly valuable understanding of ethics, strategic thinking, logic and self-awareness. All Indian classical texts such as Bhagvat Geeta, Nyaya Sutras, Arthashastra and Upanishads, have these concepts deeply embedded in them. This conceptual understanding provides a structured framework in today's dynamic world, where leadership, governance and management is utmost important. Ethical leadership is emphasized in the Dharma Model. Strategic Thinking is advocated in the Arthashastra Model, in the meantime Nyaya Model focuses on critical thinking and decision making. Yoga and Sankhya Model sheds light on self-awareness and alsoserves as a guide to detachment from worldly wants. Mimamsa model serves to enhance rule-based governance and Vedantic model serves as a tool to promote holistic, value-based leadership. Contemporary decision-makers can enhance clarity in ethics, improve their strategic foresight and place themselves as mindful leaders by integrating these diverse perspectives in their business. This paper explores these multivariate philosophical models available in the classical text of India and highlights their importance in developing and implementing relevant business strategies, public policies and self-development. it will also explore case studies, where ancient philosophies of India have been used constantly by business. Thus, this study will act as a guide to businesses, constantly wanting to implement strategic, sustainable and ethical solutions in their day-to-day working.

Keywords: decision-making, Indian philosophy, Dharma, Arthashastra, Nyaya, Vedanta, leadership, ethics

Introduction:

Rich and diverse philosophies of the Indian knowledge system, fosters deep insights into the process of decision making which were not only applicable in the past but also are considered relevant in the contemporary times. The literatures written by profound sages and intellectuals of those era, such as Kautaliya, Akshada Gautama, high visionaries and sages finds its meaning in

today's modern world. This study aims to explore decision making models derived from four of the ancient and revered literatures: The Bhagavad Gita, Nyaya Sutras, Arthashastra and Upanishads. Every literature has its own unique perspectives on decision making. These perspectives range from dharma (righteous duty) to Nyaya (justice) to Niti (strategy) enveloping modern society and thus giving a logical, strategic and holistic approach in decision making. The study aims to understand the timeless principles defined by learned men of those era. It aims to enhance the management practices, thus contributing towards a moresustainable and ethical decision-making process.

Objective of the study:

To study the decision-making model from Bhagvat Geeta

To study the decision making model from Nyaya Sutras

To study the decision making model from Arthashastra

To study the decision making model from Upanishadas

Literature Review:

Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). Modern Management Through Ancient Indian Wisdom: Towards a More Sustainable Paradigm. This paper explores how ancient Indian philosophies can provide a sustainable management paradigm to address decision-making failures. The author proposes a 6-fold path of "Jnan" (knowledge) derived from ancient Indian scriptures to help manage at individual, institutional, and global levels, contributing to world peace and economic order.

Mukherjee, S. (2011). Indian Management Philosophy. The study examines how classical Indian texts like the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita offer insights into holistic learning, leadership development, and decision-making, which can be useful for modern management.

Gupta, S. (2010). A Multidimensional Ethics Scale for Indian Managers' Moral Decision Making. This paper analyzes the role of traditional Indian moral philosophies in managers' ethical decision-making using the multidimensional ethics scale (MES). It identifies justice, relativism, contractualism, utilitarianism, and egoism as key factors in Indian managers' ethical decisions.

Sivakumar, N., & Others. (2010). An Integrated Framework for Values-Based Management – Eternal Guidelines from Indian Ethos. This paper proposes an integrated framework for values-based management grounded in ancient Indian philosophies, including corporate vision, leadership, culture, and stakeholder policies.

Pandey, J., & Others. (2016). A Mixed Method Approach to Operationalize Sankhya Philosophy. The study develops a measure of the Sankhya philosophy's manas-buddhi-ahamkaar model to operationalize its influence on managerial decision-making.

Nandram, S., & Others. (2022). Spirituality Led Ethical Decision Making with Yogic Yamas and Niyamas. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion. This paper explores how

yogic Yamas and Niyamas can enrich ethical decision-making by providing a spirituality-led ethical foundation.

Gohel, R. (2024). Integrating Ancient Indian Wisdom into Modern Strategies: Addressing International Challenges. International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research. The study integrates ancient Indian philosophies like the Arthashastra, Bhagavad Gita, and Vedas with modern strategies to address international challenges in diplomacy, conflict resolution, sustainability, economics, cyber security, education, and governance.

Kaipa, P. (2014). Making Wise Decisions: Leadership Lessons from Mahabharata.This paper discusses how the concept of "viveka" (discernment) from the Mahabharata can help leaders make wise decisions in complex scenarios.

Mohapatra, B. D. (2020). Polish Up the Today Corporate Management Escort by Vedic Guidelines.The study proposes a framework for corporate leadership and decision-making based on insights from ancient Indian Vedic philosophies.

Muniapan, B., & Others. (2008). Corporate Social Responsibility: A Philosophical Approach from an Ancient Indian Perspective. This paper explores the philosophy of corporate social responsibility (CSR) from the perspective of Kautilya's Arthashastra, emphasizing an "inside-out" approach focused on developing the leader's conscience.

Laxmi, V. K., & Others. (2024). History of the Indian Knowledge System. EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research. The paper analyzes the history and philosophy of the ancient Indian knowledge system and its relevance to human welfare.

Kaushal, N. (2022). Relevance of Evidence-Based Decision Making: Cases in Ancient and Current Scenarios. Management Dynamics. This paper discusses the relevance of evidence-based decision making (EBDM) in both ancient Indian and current organizational contexts, proposing a framework for EBDM.

Chattopadhyay, C. (2012). Indian Philosophy and Business Ethics: A Review: The study explores the relevance of Indian philosophical thought, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Arthashastra, to modern business ethics and corporate governance.

Data and Methodology:

One of the most revered sources of knowledge around the world in the modern times is Indian Knowledge system. The various aspects of Indian Knowledge System is currently accepted by the people around the globe. It is considered as a pool of highly valuable knowledge which serves as an aid to not only people but also for corporations. With this objective, this study is an attempt to find various decision-making models through Bhagvat Geeta, Nyaya Sutras, Arthashastras, and Upanishads. This study is descriptive in nature and the secondary data, which has been already

published is used.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Decision making model from Indian Knowledge System-

5.1. Dharma based Decision (Bhagvat Geeta) – in Bhagvat Geeta, during the Kurukshetra war lord Sri Krishna advises the warrior prince Arjun to follow kshatriya dharma (warrior duty), despite of all his personal worries and dilemmas. Highlighting the importance of duty- and ethical decisions. The decision making should be based on dharma (righteous duty), which may also involve personal losses. Like Arjun, on the battlefield, when he is fully armed for the war against the kauravas (archrivals), he suddenly realises that he is supposed to raise his bow and arrow and aim not at his rivals but at his cousins, family and gurus. He is sad and helpless; that's the timewherelord Sri Krishna reminds Arjun about his dharma (righteous duty). A warrior is supposed to follow his righteous duty, and he must do his karma. Though he is fighting against his family, he has to sacrifice his love for his family to follow his dharma.An Ethical leadership should follow Dharma model, which is used in modern day corporations, where ethical decisions and responsibilities are to be taken, foregoing personal gains. This principle is also used in corporate governance around the world.

5.2. Logical and Rational decision making (Nyaya Sutras) - Nyaya sutra an ancient literature in Sanskrit composed by Akshada Gautama, focuses on taking logical and rational decisions. This is based on multiple empiricalevidence and perspectives. The word Nyaya in Sanskrit means Justice and equality for all. For understanding and ensuring that the decisions are fully logial and rational to ensure Nyaya, one is required to think and ponder, to get into a conclusion. There are 529 sutras (rules in Sanskrit) in 5 chapters. The system follows a step-by-step process (called Pramana) which includes inferencing, perceiving, comparing and arriving at a conclusion. This process fosters a structured process for making decisions and uplifts critical thinking. In the modern world, this process of decision making is used in legal systems around the world and in research. Even the modern AI-based decision making is based on the same model.

5.3. Strategic Decision Making (Arthashashtra) - Arthashashtra was written by Kautilya (Chanakya) the father of Indian Politics was the chief advisor of both emperor Chandragupta Maurya and his son Bindusara of one of the most successful dynasties of India i.e. 'The Maurya Dynasty'. He advised the emperors to make policies based on Raj Dharma (statecraft) and Diplomacy. He also advised that one should take risks, however they should be calculated, one should be fully aware of the contingencies and limitations associated with that specific decision. The word Arthashastara means Science of Politics and Economics. Kautaliya mentioned seven components or seven pillars of a state which is very important Swami (King), Amatya (Minister), Janapada (Territory), Durga (Fort

or Capital), Kosha (Treasury), Danda (Justice) and Mitra (Ally). This very well aligns with modern corporate dynasty, the components or pillars can be deciphered as the leader, the manager, the market, the head office, the treasury, the decisions and the team. In the absence of coordination among these pillars, the entire state can fall and so would be the situation for the corporates as well. In the current era of globalisation, business strategies, geopolitics and negotiations are of utmost importance, without which survival is not possible.

5.4. Value based and Holistic Decision making (Upanishads) - Upanishads are considered as the foundation of Vedic philosophy. Upanishads are recorded conversations between the guru (teacher) and the shishya (student). The word itself means sitting near the teacher, Upa means 'by the' Nisad to 'sit down' referring to knowledge transfer. There are in all 108 Upanishads.These Upanishads cannot be traced back to just one author. It'srather written by students or sages after they listen to their gurus or teachers. The concept of Sarva Bhuta Hita (welfare of all beings) is upheld. According to this concept, ethical, spiritual, and philosophical thoughts need to be integrated while making decisions. Since decisions should be made in such a manner that it will consider a holistic vision and would be for long term thus impacting the welfare of all beings. This decision-making model can be related to utilitarianism concept in ethics, which saychoose those actions, which produce the greater good for all.It argues that the morally right actions are those that produce greater happiness for the greater number of people in the society. In contemporary society, social entrepreneurship upholds the same ideologies. It can be also seen in sustainability initiatives taken by corporates and governments. Corporate Social Responsibility can be closely aligned with value based and holistic decision making.

Conclusion:

This exploration of various decision-making models proves that the enormous wealth of wisdom available in revered literatures of Bhagavad Gita, Nyaya Sutras, Arthashastra, and Upanishads are prolific and remains highly relevant even in this contemporary world. Bhagwad Gita's dharma-baseddecision-making highlights the role of leader to follow his duties and to be ethical, In the meantime the Nyaya Sutras argue and yearns the leaders to be more logical and to be more rational while making decisions. Arthashastra proves its vigor in statecraft, diplomacy and policy making and the Upanishads propose value- based and holistic decision making. Once this ancient pool of intelligence is integrated into modern practices, the results can be more ethical and effective. In the meantime, the decision would be considering sustainable benefitting the individuals, the corporations, the government and the society. This study overall underscores the everlasting value of ancient Indian knowledge and wisdom, which can easily address the modern challenges faced by the society and thus enhancing the decision-makingprocess.

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