

Management Fundamentals in Kautilya's Arthashastra – II



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The Topic of Training

When we study the lives of great businessmen and some of the most productive managers, we note that very few of them have had a formal education in management. Both Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, and Warren Buffett, the second richest man in the world have had no formal management education. Many others like Walt Disney or Akio Morita, the creator of Sony, too never went to business schools. How is it they could manage such huge business empires? When and how did they achieve these great managerial skills?

Even though formal education is very important, it is not everything in management. The

'knack' of effective management that consists of quick decisions, strategic movements, a quick insight into the crux of any problem is not just acquired by a formal management training.

Management is a 'Mindset'

As we study the lives of these great leaders of society, we observe that they have developed an 'intuitive' insight into situations that demand their attention. Today our generation has started considering management as a subject that is learnt in various colleges and institutions. However, management is not just a subject, but a 'mindset'. This mindset can be developed by anyone with basic education and a long period of trial and error methods, continuous learning and years of experience.

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The good news is that these great leaders can transfer their managerial skills and years of experience to the next generation through a process of systematic training.

Training deals with selecting the right candidates, mentorship, management of the senses and continuous learning. Most importantly, it requires a lot of patience. Training is not a quick-fix solution. It is a long-term gain. It is looking at the larger picture in spite of short term loss or failure. Today many companies are focusing on this training aspect in a big manner. Large groups like Tatas, Infosys, Wipro, Mahindra and Mahindra etc. have their own full-time training centres.

All great leaders of history have emerged from a long process of training. Mahatma Gandhi took 21 years in South Africa before he returned to India to fight for our freedom. Shivaji was trained right from his childhood before he formed his own army to defeat the Mughals. Pujya Gurudev himself spent ten long years with Swami Tapovan Maharaj before he came down to the plains to build the worldwide Chinmaya Mission. Even in the case of

Kautilya, who wrote the *Arthashastra*, it took him years to train Chandragupta Maurya to conquer the cruel Nanda King.

Just like the 'Law of the Farm', in training too, we have to go through the whole natural process. Selecting the right seed, sowing it, watering it, waiting for it to sprout, providing it the right amount of sunlight, letting it grow in the right environment – none of the stages can be avoided. Only in the right season and right time do we enjoy the harvest.

Training deals with imparting an understanding of some of the deeper secrets of the human mind. Most importantly, training is a matter of disciplining the mind. We will examine a few verses that deal with the topic of training, in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

Selection of Trainees

In one of his lectures to MBA students, Sri Rajesh Kamath, the Deputy General Manager (H.R. Department) of the Mahindra and Mahindra Group, said, "If I have to fire someone for non-performance, it is due to my mistake, not his. I have to be careful during the selection pro-

cess." Selection of trainees is the key to any effective training programme. Otherwise we end up frustrated, with huge loss of time, energy and money.

Kautilya, in his *Arthashastra*, deals with the aspect of training in a detailed manner. The first book of *Arthashastra* itself is titled *Vinayadhikarikam* meaning 'Concerning the Topic of Training'.

Kautilya says that selection of the right candidate to be trained is very important. During those days in the fourth century B.C., when the caste system was prevalent, Kautilya selected Chandragupta Maurya, who was not a *kshatriya*, to become the next emperor and take over the Nanda dynasty. This shows that the choice of a right candidate for management or leadership training should not be limited to birth, caste, colour, creed, religion or country.

In the following verse, he defines the qualities that we need to look for in a person, before taking him as a trainee. This verse is very important for the H R departments who have to continuously keep recruiting management trainees.

The training disciple is the one whose intellect has the qualities

of desire to learn, listening, retention, thorough understanding, reflection, rejection of false views and intentness on truth and not on any other person.

(1.5.5)*

Thus a 'trainable' person is the one who has the following qualities:

1. Desire to learn
2. Effective listening ability
3. Ability to reflect (think from all angles)
4. Ability to reject false views
5. Focus on truth, not on any person.

1. Desire to learn – The trainee should be keen to acquire more knowledge. His focus should not be on immediate monetary or material gains. He should keep himself surrounded by and learn from experienced people under whom he can learn more.

2. Effective listening ability – Listening is 'hearing plus thinking'. At a higher stage of listening, the mind itself calms down. It is a total receptive state. The trainee should focus on listening more and try to get

*(1.5.5) - Book 1, Chapter 5, Verse 5. This same method will be followed throughout, while referring to the verses in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

a deeper insight into the words of his teacher. He should not get into arguments trying to prove his point.

3. Ability to reflect (think from all angles) – After listening to the viewpoints of various people, he should be able to sit back and reflect on his own. He should consider all angles before coming to a conclusion. Both logical thinking and creative thinking are qualities of the mind that are required.

4. Ability to reject false views – Rejecting false views does not mean being rigid. He should come to his own conclusion, after correct thinking and analysis. He should be able to reach his own decisions with intellectual conviction.

5. Focus on truth, not on any person – A trainee should not just get carried away by the viewpoints of different people. He should be able to arrive at the truth after careful analysis. He should look at the situation objectively. He should be able to see the problem as separate from the person.

The selection of the right trainee is the first step. This is like checking the quality of the seed before we sow it.

Mentorship

Once the right trainee is selected, he has to be nurtured with the help of a senior who is experienced in that particular skill. This system of mentorship has taken strong roots in today's corporate training structure. Even experienced people have now started calling themselves mentors more than leaders. Narayana Murthy is now officially designated the Chief Mentor of the Infosys Group. A mentor is more like a catalyst who guides the process without taking part in the reaction.

Training and discipline are acquired by accepting the authoritativeness of the teachers in the respective fields.

(1.5.6)

We need to have an attitude of surrender to our mentor, our Guru. This will lead to discipline. We should be able to accept that our mentor understands the subject better than we do. Even though at certain times we find it difficult to accept certain decisions of his, we still need to follow his orders. The full picture will become clearer to us in due course of time.

Swami Tejomayanandaji once said, "At times I used to wonder why Swamiji (Gurudev

Swami Chinmayananda) used to take certain tough decisions. However, in spite of not totally agreeing with him, I never lost faith in him. Today when I am in his position (leading the worldwide Chinmaya Mission), I understand why he did so.”

Management of the senses

Without managing the senses, no leader can progress. As you keep going up the ladder of success, temptations keep coming your way. Often, the downfall of great leaders happens when their senses take over. Sex scandals, shattering decisions taken in a fit of anger, over-indulgence in power, etc. are due to handing over the reins to the senses.

Control over the senses, which is motivated by training, should be secured by giving up lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance and over-excitement.

(1.6.1)

Control over the senses is initially motivated externally by proper training. It is a process of disciplining of the mind. However, no external pressure can help one to maintain this discipline for long. Initially it may be out of fear imposed by seniors, but slowly it has to be-

come a self-discipline. The mind has to be trained through regular practice. One should be able to handle lust, anger, greed, arrogance of knowledge and power and should not get over-excited due to sudden gain or dejected due to unforeseen loss.

A king, behaving in a contrary manner and having no control over his senses quickly perishes, be he the ruler right up to the four ends of the earth.”

(1.6.4)

Lack of sense-control will surely ruin a leader in the long run. Greed for power and position comes out of lack of sense-control. We have seen so many children from wealthy homes and big business empires ruining the hard-earned wealth of their forefathers, due to lack of sense-control. Though one may possess great wealth and power, it will all be slowly lost if one does not handle the senses well.

Continuous Learning

Learning is a continuous process. You have to keep yourself updated with the latest happenings around. The most important part of continuous learning is to associate yourself with

persons who are more experienced and knowledgeable than you.

He should have constant association with elders in learning, for the sake of improving his training, since training has a root in that.

(1.5.11)

The root of training lies in associating oneself with seniors. It is by being around with them that we come to know the way our seniors look at certain situations with a deeper insight than we can obtain on the surface. Once, a person who was climbing the corporate ladder fast was asked, "How do you keep getting promotions so fast?" "I keep observing what my boss does and learn to acquire his skills," came the reply.

From continuous study ensues a trained intellect, from the intellect comes practical application, and from practical application, self-possession.

(1.5.16)

Kautilya, in this verse, gives us the three steps of acquiring expertise in any field.

1. Continuous study
2. Practical application
3. Self possession

Continuous study – Study is

not just gathering more and more information. As Swami Vivekananda said, "If knowledge was available in books, all the libraries in the world would have been sages!" Information collection is just the first step. Nowadays information is readily available through the internet, television and various other sources, thanks to the technological revolution. However, information gathered has to be converted into knowledge by a process of thinking, analysis and reflection.

Even knowledge is not the final step. Knowledge has to evolve into wisdom. A wise man is greater than a knowledgeable man. He can look into the crux of any problem within a split second.

Practical application – Our knowledge has to have some usefulness. Hence, Kautilya says its practical application is very necessary. Otherwise it just remains a mere theory, with no usefulness either to the person or to the society around. This application has to be for the good of others. It has to be useful to take the society to a productive state and to a higher level of consciousness.

Self possession - By applying in the practical world the

concepts a person has developed by thinking, he comes to have a higher level of confidence in himself. The success of his theory in the practical world also crowns him with many other worldly benefits like appreciation, money, honour, etc. He thus becomes an expert in the very area or field he has been working on for so long.

Self possession is a 'state of being'. He has become one with his subject. He has perfected the art. From this point onwards his work is just a sport for him. He develops an intuitive wisdom.

Pass It On To Others

Management training is a continuous process. One learns and teaches. One does not have to wait to become an expert to teach others. There are seniors who know more than you; at the same time there are juniors who know less than you. Keep learning from the seniors, and with your own experience, keep teaching the juniors. Thus the circle of life will get completed. Many people wait for a golden moment to start training their

juniors. That golden moment never comes. You have to start it here and now.

When I was in CIF (Chinmaya International Foundation), studying the *Arthashastra*, I asked Swami Advayanandaji, the *Acharya* in charge of CIF, "Swamiji, in our Chinmaya Mission the various *Acharyas* get transferred every now and then. When do you decide when to start training the others to take over, while you may have to go to some other centre?"

Swamiji's reply gave the gist of training in the most beautiful manner –

"Training your juniors starts the moment you join. It is being ready to leave the position at any given point of time. The system has to run by itself."

Training is working in a detached manner and yet giving your best to it. It's an understanding that no one is indispensable. You realise that you are not the owner but just a part of the whole. Like the *Guru-Shishya Paramapara*, the wisdom has to flow from one generation to the other.