

DECIPHERING SCRIPTURES TO DECODE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract : Ancient India was called a Golden Sparrow because it was wealthy and prosperous. It would be interesting to take reference from that era and beyond, to learn from history as to how was skill discovered, nurtured and directed.

1) Concept of Svadharma (inherent nature) : Our scriptures advises us that our primary duty is to find our inherent nature. It also warns us that if one does Paradharm then one will be left anxious and desperate. So the key take away from this is that our schools should provide infrastructure and good opportunities to children to explore their inherent nature.

2) Leader-making approach of the Arthashastra: Kautilyas “Arthashastra” is a ready reference for a leader. Qualities of a leader, his daily routine, training program, study schedules etc. are elaborated. The need of the hour is to have good leaders who can draft and implement good policies to remove the unemployment gap. It would be great if we could take such texts to our younger generation

3) Developing the intellect: Skill development finally boils down to self-management. A person who has reined the mind with the intellect is the one who is capable of problem solving.

4) Entrepreneurship Development: We need visionaries so that we can generate jobs for our fast-growing population.

Skill development: Key to economic prosperity is an important topic specially, when Higher education in India is at crossroads. In this paper I tried to address the topic from a historical point of view giving importance to the era when India had a prosperous economy. This paper tries to highlight basic human skills, which should be nurtured, and given direction so that it becomes an asset for the country.

Keywords: Deciphering Scriptures , Decode Skill , Golden Sparrow , Nurtured .

1 INTRODUCTION

India was known as ‘the Golden Sparrow’ in ancient times as appropriately echoed by Mark Twain in his quote, “The birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legend, great-grandmother of traditions, whose yesterday’s bear date with the moderating antiquities for the rest of nations - the one sole country under the sun that is endowed with an imperishable interest for alien prince and alien peasant, for lettered and ignorant, wise and fool, rich and poor, bond and free, the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the world combined”. In addition to being wealthy and prosperous, India’s socio-economic progress was at its peak. According to economic historian Angus Maddison, in his book “Contours of the World Economy”, India had the world's largest economy during the years 1 AD and 1000 AD.

Deciphering Scriptures to Decode Skill Development

Reference to the history of the above era and beyond helps decode skill development.

WRITING THIS PAPER IMPASSIONED THE FOLLOWING CORE CONCEPTS:

- 1) Concept of Svadharma (one's own nature) as per one's guna (attributes) combination and preponderance of one guna over the other
- 2) Leader-making approach of the Arthashastra
- 3) Developing the intellect
- 4) Entrepreneurship development

The concept of gunas (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) being our material cause is extensively written in our scriptures (Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra etc.). It takes a philosophical bend when one ponders over it. For a layman it is important to know that Sattva in us helps us to know things (illuminating factor), Rajas in us helps to carry on our activity and Tamas is the holding factor. We all have a preponderance of one of these three gunas, which becomes our inherent nature. Bhagavad Gita, Vedanta and Arthashastra emphasize that our primary duty is to find this inherent nature. The Scriptures also warn us that if one does Paradharma (work opposite to or other than our inherent nature), it will retard progress.

1. Concept of Svadharma: Schooling in ancient India followed the Guru-Shishya Parampara (where teachers taught students in gurukul). "Gu" means darkness and "Ru" means light. So, "Guru" may be translated as one who leads from darkness to light. The Guru is a teacher who steers the student's life from ignorance to wisdom and shows the path to enlightenment. The conditioned mind is subject to distortion and blind spots...left to ourselves we often lean towards imbalance. The perspective of a teacher helps us to see our limiting patterns as well as our full potential. The teachers main duty is to give proper infrastructure for the svadharma to manifest. Our experience proves we need no motivation to do what we really like and hence when we take up jobs in accordance to our svadharma, we excel in it. The key take away therefore is that our schools should provide infrastructure and good opportunities to students to explore various dimensions of their personality and figure out their inherent nature.

Teachers should play a primary role to help them in their endeavour. Technology can be supplementary. To adhere to svadharma is a socio-economic task and once known it should be nurtured and given a direction. Micro level prosperity will then lead to macro level development. This inherent quality, when polished, is skill. Skill development should empower people to optimise their capacity, creativity, boost future innovation, lead to work satisfaction, increase in productivity, encourage investment, lower unemployment and under employment thereby reducing inequalities. Without skill development human resource can be a liability to a nation rather than being an asset. Today's education demands a unique mix of the ancient Indian school pattern alongwith the modern methodology of instruction complemented by a state of art infrastructure. Once the svadharma is identified, consistency and dedication to one's job will ensure excellence. The sutra or the formula for this excellence is elaborated in the Patanjali Yoga Sutras (1.14).

2) Leader-making approach of Arthashastra: Currently India is one of the largest populated countries in the world and our main natural resource is our people. Unfortunately, either their potential is greatly under-utilized or completely unutilized. Skill development is the key to unlock that untapped potential. Imperatively, the Indian education system has to emphasize the exploration of the rich Indian traditions in strategic thinking.

The Arthashastra is one such ancient text that is a rich treasure of strategic thinking. Written in Sanskrit by Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, around 321BC in Magadha, it deals with issues of state, society, economy, administration, law and justice, internal security, defence, diplomacy, foreign policy and warfare. Divided into 15 books, it has 6,000 sutras. The Arthashastra is a practical manual of instruction for kings. The duties of a king and the leadership qualities described in the Arthashastra are relevant even for today's leaders.

The Arthashastra helps understand Kautilya as a Kingmaker. He was credited for masterminding the defeat of Nanda dynasty and Alexander in India. He coined the concept of a Nation. Qualities of a leader, his daily routine, training program, study schedules etc are written very elaborately. The need of the hour is to have good leaders who can draft and implement suitable policies to eradicate unemployment.

Its important to take such texts to our younger generation as it accentuates Shraavan, Manan and Nidhidhyasan (study, reflect and practical application). By doing this, information is churned into knowledge which when applied becomes wisdom. Radhakrishnan Pillai authored Chanakya's 7 secrets of leadership, which seems a good adaptation of the Arthashastra, where a leadership model is explained in the modern day context. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Indian wisdom, the Chanakya Institute of

Public Leadership (CIPL) aspires to train future leaders.

3) Developing the intellect: Man has 3 tools: body, mind and intellect. The body is like a vehicle for action. Mind is the seat of impulses, feelings and emotions; and the intellect, that of discriminative knowledge, reasoning and analytical thinking. In most of the human beings the intellect is reined by the mind. Such a person oscillates in the range of likes and dislikes and hence is in a constant flux. But a person who has reined the mind with the intellect is the one who is capable of problem solving. People not caught in the holocaust of the mind are the necessity of the day. Skill development finally boils down to self-management as mentioned in the Vedanta. Linking education and skill development is very important. Extended schools can help gain various skills. Problem-solving approach has to be developed and logic and reasoning abilities enhanced rather than rote learning. Intellectual development should begin early in life. The education system should encourage curiosity in children, develop the art of thinking and reflecting on what is taught. Emotions and feelings though important should not influence and dictate over reason and logic. The Vedanta academy aspires to adopt a liberal approach to develop the intellect of the youth.

4) Entrepreneurship Development: Entrepreneurship is a vital economic activity today. We need visionaries so that we can generate jobs for our fast-growing population. Entrepreneurs should start “Skill development” programs to minimize unemployment. Many more platforms have to be created, as career ladders are not the same any more. Critical thinking skills are very important. Due to globalization and technological advancement, time and space is no more a limitation to find the right job, provided one is skilled. Collaborative research is picking up. Cultural differences, cultural competencies, ready to adjust and adapt are the order of the day. Character building is the need of the hour. Entrepreneurs should be good at SWOT Analysis that is spotting the strengths and weakness in the people and be foresighted about the future opportunities and prepare to face the threats. This will help anticipating and delivering new and different skills that will be needed in the future. The Swaraj University seeks to focus on self-designed learning programs to explore basic business skills.

It is of utmost importance today to motivate students to be entrepreneurs rather than employees. Holistic and integrated approach of skill development should be included to smoothen the transition from college to work stage.

The barriers demarcating different disciplines are breaking and hence open system, freedom to choose subjects, design courses etc. should be incorporated in our education policy. Higher education in India is at crossroads. Reforms in education have become urgent.

Thus, the four points elaborated above, sourced in our Scriptures, if recognized and implemented in sincere earnest will definitely lead to Skill Development and consequently to Economic Prosperity.

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