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The chapter of prakritisampad: A power packed leadership manual in the arthashastra

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Abstract:

The Arthashastra of Chanakya is one of the most luminous symbols of Indian intellect and scholarly capabilities. For ages this comprehensive treatise has continued to represent all what is necessary for successful endeavors at every level and holds the same importance even today. Therefore it is no surprise that a concept like leadership which has received ever-increasing emphasis in every sphere of life today has deep intellectual ties with the knowledge tradition of Arthashastra. The Arthashastra in this aspect is a manual for anyone who wishes to enhance their leadership qualities or to understand the nuances of leadership; unrelated to any particular sphere or domain.

The particular focus of this article will be on the first *prakarana* (chapter) of the sixth *adhyakarna* (book) which is titled as *prakritisampad*: which mentions the qualities of all the seven elements of the body politic called *Saptanga* of Indian political theory. Through just a handful of sutras on the qualities of an ideal king, Chanakya has provided to us invaluable nuggets of leadership virtues which can prove to be a great determining factor in one's professional as well as personal life. The brief portion concerned with the qualities of a king is an absolute power-packed manual for aspiring leaders who can discover several mantras of success in this *prakarana*. Therefore, the discourse initiated by Chanakya in the chapter of *prakritisampad*: is relevant for every one of us and hence, analysis of the related four sutras (6.1.3-6.1.6) becomes pertinent here.

Even though the leadership qualities and ideas discussed by Chanakya in the sutras mentioned above will be analysed in a special perspective of the modern business and organizational settings, this analysis will be undertaken through the linguistic interpretation of the sutras as written in the primary text Arthashastra. The application of the nuances discovered through the text-oriented interpretation into business discourse will be, therefore, the primary concern of this paper.

Keyword: Arthashastra, leadership, business discourse, linguistic interpretation

Introduction

The Intellectual Leader

The ideal leader of Chanakya's vision is undoubtedly an intellectual one, with developed intellect and nuances of understanding. Merely being able to have a command over people and team is not satisfactory in the eyes of the great visionary; who believes that a leader ought to have refined intellectual capabilities if they want to achieve brilliance and become extraordinary. The significant emphasis which Chanakya gives to intellectual capabilities of a leader is reflected in the fact that he places this quality before every other virtue which he discusses in the following passages.

This idea of an 'intellectual leader' is not limited to a certain few facets but applies to every sphere where a leader has to work. This is reflected in the specifications drawn by Chanakya who says that a leader should be endowed with great intellect (Daiva-buddhi-satva-sampanna) ^[1] and should have powerful smriti (memory) and mati (intellect) ^[2]. A sharp intellect allows a leader to excel in every endeavor they make due to the accurate decision making, wise thinking process and application of knowledge in actions. A nuanced approach to various situations can enable us to find effective solutions for them and formulate plans and ideas capable of doing wonders. Chanakya is well aware of all these aspects which have caused his emphasis on this quality of a leader.

Chanakya does not limit this discussion with just mentioning how important it is for a leader to be of an intellectual bent, he even mentions the qualities of intellect under the garb of *Prajnagunas* which need to be acquired by an individual. These *Prajnagunas* in fact describe

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an entire methodological process through which one can ensure their intellectual development. This careful methodology crafted by Chanakya is extremely powerful for anyone wishing for growth in intellectual spheres. He lists these eight *Prajnagunas* as

- 1) Desire to learn
- 2) Listening
- 3) Learning
- 4) Retention
- 5) Thorough understanding
- 6) Reflecting
- 7) Rejecting (false views)
- 8) Intentness on truth [3].

These virtues designed by Chanakya are truly pragmatic devices for enhancing an intellectual sophisticated approach which can empower the thought process of an individual. Anyone who can succeed in the application of these gunas can actually become a leader and achieve greater heights through their intellectual prowess. Hence, this discourse on intellectual leadership initiated by Chanakya is of a huge importance.

Integrity

Kautilya mentions that a leader should be honest (Satyavaak) and true to their own words (Avisamvadaka) [4]. Which are essential parts of integrity. By being honest and compliant to assurances and promises, a leader fosters good faith and trust among people which in turn make him a respectable figure. Upholding integrity also means to stand up for what is righteous and oppose the wrongful which is certainly indicated by Kautilya through the use of the term '*Satyavaak*'. Through upholding 'satya' or truth, a person secures righteousness and keeps their ethical conduct intact and therefore, this quality includes the aspects of righteousness in its garb.

The importance of integrity is well accepted and understood in present day workspace. An article on the online magazine 'Babson Thoughts and Actions' run by a private business school known as Babson describes the vitality of integrity in the following words-

"Leaders who demonstrate integrity garner trust among their colleagues. They aren't afraid of the truth, and they stand up for what they believe in. This, in turn, leads to loyal customers, increased profits, and a better world for all [5]."

While the article talks about business ventures specifically, the importance of integrity as mentioned in it applies to every sphere undoubtedly. Therefore, the need for leaders with integrity was well-understood by Kautilya.

Aiming Big- Aiming High

There is a popular quote by Michelangelo, which says - "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark." The common understanding of this saying is that one must keep their objectives lofty, or else they won't be able to fulfill their potential. All great success stories are made possible by aspiring for big goals. The very story of how Chanakya was able to overthrow Nanda dynasty and unite India under one flag is the perfect reflection of why it is important to aim high.

The same idea is implied by Chanakya while he describes the qualities of an ideal king and says that he ought to be 'Sthoollaksha' [6] (the one with big aspirations). Only when a leader will be a Sthoollaksha, they will be able to think of

what others can't and do what is above and beyond what is thought of as feasible or possible. It is no secret that every major landmark achieved by humanity was made possible due to this approach of 'aiming big-aiming high' and the same approach is visible in the Arthashastra. According to an article published at Forbes titled as 'How Some Companies are Aiming High in Leadership Development', the corporate sector today understands the value of aiming high and is constantly doing the same through leadership development [7]. Another interpretation of the quality 'Sthoollaksha' can be done through understanding the word 'sthoola' as clearly visible and tangible. Hence, the quality of being a 'Sthoollaksha' also means that a leader should have well-defined objectives which aren't purely abstract in nature and can actually inspire people

Energetic Mindset

It is not surprising that we are attracted to individuals who have energetic personalities and enthusiastic behavior. According to Arthashastra, the same applies on a leader who needs to have not just an energetic personality but also an energetic mindset. A leader should be 'Mahotsaaha' [8] (the one with great enthusiasm and energy) in the views of Chanakya. Only with an energetic mindset, a leader can make their team devote their efforts into a project successfully. According to a leadership expert Jack de Leeuw, an energetic mindset sends positive energy to other people which inspire them to work for the same purpose [9]. This quality of energetic mindset is also linked with the idea of 'leading from the front' which is possible only when a leader displays energy in their words and actions and inspires people through them. Therefore, Chanakya is thoroughly justified in considering an energetic mindset a pre-requisite for successful leadership. The importance of this trait in the views of Chanakya can be seen in the special emphasis he lays on being energetic.

This idea of Chanakya is supported by an article on the website of Forbes titled 'Cultivating an Essential Ingredient in Leadership: Energy' refers to this review and accurately points out that-

"Zenger and Folkman, in the Harvard Business Review, share the results of a research project that examined 33 innovative leaders. Among the key findings were "excellent strategic vision" conveyed "vividly"; the ability to "inspire and motivate through action"; and a focus on "upward communication...projecting optimism, full of energy, and always receptive to new ideas"..... [10]

Kautilya does not only mention energy and enthusiasm as required quality for a leader, he goes on to list the virtues (gunas) of an energetic mindset and calls them 'Utsahgunas'. The Utsahgunas mentioned in the Arthashastra are as follows-

- 1) Valor
- 2) Resentment [towards any wrongdoing]
- 3) Quickness/mobility
- 4) Proficiency [11].

The energetic mindset of a leader should be well equipped with these qualities. A leader needs to have valor or strength for stepping into unknown territories. They should also stand against any wrong doing within the organization or even in the exterior arenas. Mobility which has been represented by the word '*Sheeghrata*' is the capability to advance in the direction of desired result in a quick rapid pace. This trait is important for converting the energetic environment into strong momentum. Also noteworthy is the fact that nothing

significant can be achieved if energy is applied without proper knowledge, expertise and proficiency.

A capable leader has a capable team

In a world where individual glory and achievements are too often highlighted, all the prominent leaders around the globe have emphasized time and again that no goal can be achieved without collective efforts of the team. Therefore, a leader needs a capable team to move ahead and lead the organization to greater heights. The most successful leaders are those who understand that results are achieved by the collective work of all and it is not just the person sitting on the helm who has the credit of the success^[12].

In the views of Chanakya, a leader should be 'Shakyasamant'^[13] (with capable team members). He clearly believes that the individual capability of the leader needs to be combined with the capability of the team without which, it is bound to fall short of the goal. By using this word, Chanakya highlights the importance of the process of team-building which should have special focus of the individuals who are in leadership roles. According to an article at Forbes, team building is the most important investment a leader has to make^[14], highlighting its necessity for a leader.

At the same time, Arthashastra propounds another important aspect through the word 'Shakyasamant', which relates with a consciousness choice-making regarding the people one interacts and works with. Chanakya expects a capable leader to consciously choose their team-members who are both suitable for the project undertaken and possess the desired skill-set and capabilities and he conveys the same through the usage of the word 'Shakya' (capable). The emphasis on this quality also means that one needs to thoroughly analyse the people present in their environment for being able to build a strong team for the organization. The proverb 'A Leader is as good as the Team' seems to be of a special value for Chanakya

The Willingness to Learn

The only way to expand one's capabilities and perspectives is to constantly learn in every facet of life and imbibing new skills, knowledge and perspectives. The same applies for individuals who desire to attain leadership or are in positions related with it. Willingness to learn signifies a growth mindset which inspires an individual to improve and make constant efforts for the same^[15]. After all, the saying 'Leaders are Learners' isn't considered true without solid reasons!

The leader of Chanakya's Arthashastra is an individual who does not remain content with the knowledge they possess no matter at what stage of success they are. In the views of Chanakya, an individual who is in a leading position should have the constant desire to learn and acquire knowledge and therefore, he believes that a leader should be 'Vinaykaama'^[16] i.e. desirous to learn and gain knowledge. The word 'vinaya' has been used in the sense of 'sciences' by Kautilya who specifies the four sciences of governance under this term^[17]. A leader by being 'Vinaykaama' need not limit themselves to only these sciences but should look forward to get familiar with new sciences and expand their knowledge. As reflected earlier too, the Arthashastra has laid down the idea of an 'intellectual leader', one who has sophisticated knowledge and refined intellect. Leadership qualities are incomplete without intellectual capabilities as per Chanakya. This aspect of desire of learning has implications on other leadership qualities mentioned by Chanakya which will be analysed later.

Eloquence

We are time and again told that how importance it is to be an efficient orator, and how good communication skills are an absolute necessity today. Eloquence does not cause only enthusiasm but also cause direct actions in the direction of the desired objective, which can be sufficed by these lines- "Eloquent and inspiring leaders are able to stir the hearts and minds of their followers, instilling within them hope and optimism, and compelling them to passionate and effective action^[18]."

Chanakya goes one step ahead and emphasises that a leader should be 'Vagmi'^[19], a term which signifies the meaning of both a good orator as well as of a good scholar. Therefore, a leader needs to be eloquent and at the same time, their oratory skills should be infused with in-depth knowledge of the subject-matter and wisdom of choosing the right thing to say at the right moment. If superlative eloquence is further strengthened by deep knowledge, a person can surely do wonders.

Boldness

A leader can't inspire people if they are unable to stand up for their vision and take actions for their ideas without being impeded by the questions and doubts which are raised on them. Boldness is not only reflected in communications but also in actions which bring forth a positive range. A person with bold leadership not only sees the idea, but they also act on it and lead towards it boldly and without hesitation^[20].

Kautilya uses the word 'Pragalbha'^[21] to denote this aspect of leadership and through its usage signifies the necessity of being bold, firm and assertive. A person who is 'Pragalbha' will not shy away from speaking what he or she consider as right but will also ensure that everyone's voice is being heard. The article on the website 'Bold Leadership' cited above resonates with this idea of Chanakya about bold leaders and says- "These great leaders boldly express the thoughts, ideas, and feelings of those who are not comfortable or are just not able to speak up, making sure their voices are heard^[22]."

As discussed above, a bold leader will continue to strive hard for their objectives without being deterred from obstacles. This aspect of being resolute is also included by Chanakya in his discourse over leadership and specifies it through the adjective 'Dridhbuddhi'^[23], signifying a resolute and firm mindset which constitutes an integral part of bold leadership. The boldness of a leader is truly tested in rough times where they need to display firmness. For Chanakya, mental firmness is the medium through which firm actions can be taken due to which he signifies the requirement of the trait of 'Dridhbuddhi'.

Disciplined Dynamism

The element of dynamism is becoming more and more essential in workplaces and important for leading the organization. A leader needs to continuously aspire for greater heights and betterment at every front. Similar ideas are projected by Chanakya who believes that a leader should be 'Udagra' (the one who goes higher and higher). The constant eagerness to advance and progress is signified through this adjective which is a significant component of leadership. The ideal leader according to Arthashastra is someone who aims for bringing opportunities and objectives for their team and organization and do not limit their efforts to one particular point. Dynamic leadership allows the team to strive for their goals- "Dynamic leaders work in tandem (not above) with their employees to create an operational process for the

business. Doing so allows the business and its employees to be prepared for every situation presented in order to press forward toward the company's ultimate goal [24]."

The eagerness to advance forward is not devoid of discipline and self-restraint according to Kautilya. If a leader requires dynamism and eagerness, he or she also needs to have a disciplined approach in their activities. This dynamic style of working cannot succeed without having a restraint over one's excitement. Therefore, Chanakya propounds the concept of a leader being 'Svavgraha' (self-restrained).

This quality mentioned in Arthashastra is indeed an important one because; a leader requires caution in their activities so that no irrational decision is taken in eagerness and desperation. Energy and enthusiasm can turn into negative forces if they aren't channelized through proper discipline. Hence, a Svavgraha leader will lead their dynamism and enthusiasm through rational decisions and steps, leading the team to progress and advancement.

Versatility

We often hear the term 'versatility' during the course of any professional discussion. The value which it continuously receives in the workplaces in not a secret either. It is understood that versatility makes a person distinct from others and allows them to seize advantage in multifarious manners. With the unprecedented surge in opportunities, arenas and work spheres, versatility is a trait which is sought after for every project or organization.

Now the question is, that how does Chanakya include versatility in his idea of leadership? Is versatility even that much significant to Arthashastra as significant it has become today? The sutras under our consideration here is enough to suffice on this.

The idea of versatility is found in the adjective 'Kritshilpa' [25] which literally means that a leader should be thoroughly trained in various arts. The vast scope indicated by the word 'shilpa' i.e. art(s) is in itself synonymous to versatility. Chanakya, who was writing this work for kings, would have expected them to be proficient in other arts and activities apart from what was prescribed for them. Similar is expected from a leader today who should have multi-dimensional capabilities to seize opportunities in as many directions as possible. Being proficient in 'shilpas' would open numerous doors for a person ensuring greater success, as clearly thought by Chanakya. This also relates with the idea of desire to learn discussed above as a leader can only increase their capabilities if they are desirous of learning in a sufficient manner.

Inspiring through Character

Throughout his discourse of Arthashastra, Chanakya has a strong emphasis on the personal character of a leader and that's why he asks them to resist their passions. He even goes on to say that this entire work i.e. Arthashastra is written for the purpose of wining over senses and passions [26]. A similar thought is reflected when he says that a leader should be 'Avyasana' [27] (free from vices [28] and bad practices). This emphasis is more than ethical and moral concerns and is truly pragmatic in nature because what the Arthashastra says is accepted by leaders today. It would be appropriate to quote an article from IVY Business Journal which notes how character is fundamental in the success of leadership-

"Leaders with character achieve results that transcend everyday organizational imperatives and outcomes. A study of world leaders over the past 150 years asserts that managers

who possess strong character will create a better world for everyone, while leadership generally is vital to the social, moral, economic, and political fabrics of society [29]."

Being capable and successful are not the only criterions for a true leader, they need to be equally strong in their characters. In times when the sanctity of character and conduct is seen as negligible in front of personal success and accolades, Chanakya's firm belief about the importance of being free from vices serves as a timely reminder for all of us.

The strategy of tit for tat

The phrase 'tit for tat' is often used as a popular reference although it is commonly associated with replicating the negative things done to an individual by another person. It is often considered as a 'practical' approach for dealing with people but for Chanakya, it is not only a practical but more than it, a leadership approach which needs to be adopted by a leader. He believes that a leader should know who how to replicate both the positive and negative actions undertaken towards them and hence, uses the term 'Upkaraparyordrishtprateekari' [30]. In this way, an individual is able to repay the positive actions in a positive manner which ensures long-lasting friendship and is also able to retaliate the negative actions which sends a strong message to everyone and secures one's own position. In fact, it is now believed that the strategy of tit for tat is helpful in building reputation and credibility in your workspace. According to in the article, this policy helps in building a credible reputation in the following manner- "The strategy of tit for tat has you reciprocate cooperation for cooperation and noncooperation for noncooperation. You adapt to others while offering predictable responses. Such moves build a credible reputation quickly. You become known as someone who is always ready to cooperate but will not be played for a sucker [31]."

Another aspect which should be included in Chanakya's policy of equal reciprocation is the importance of being grateful. He clearly believes that a leader should be 'Kritagya' [32] (grateful) towards every individual who has shown cooperation and rendered help for them. And hence, they should reciprocate in a grateful manner towards such people. This is a unique aspect in the idea of reciprocation which considers every help or favor as significant and noteworthy.

Decision making in turbulent times

Often our best of capabilities come in 'make or break' situations where we have our backs against the wall facing immense turbulence and pressure. Most of the people buckle down in such situations and make mistakes despite having potential to overcome them. Hence, strategies which can help in tackling stressful and turbulent situations are a constant need [33].

Chanakya notes that a leader is 'Aapatprakrityorviniyokta' [34] which means that he or she is able to take appropriate decision in both normal and turbulent times. They have to be imbibed with the capability of handling a difficult situation and should be capable of formulating strategies for the same. But at the same time, they should work with equal focus and proficiency in normal times too so that, difficulties can be avoided in the first place. Accurate judgment and decision making capabilities are required in not only stressful situations but also in the normal times, which constitute the mix of leadership skills in the views of Kautilya. Another implication of this idea is that the leader should be balanced and calm in difficult situations for overcoming them and should also not let the reigns get lose in normalcy and avoid

being complacent.

The one who sees long and far

It is often said that vision is the key to extraordinary actions and remarkable results. Every great leader in the world has raised to prominence on the basis of a unique vision he or she propounded and which was followed by a large number of people.

A unique and powerful vision can be only developed only when an individual has the capability to see long and far ahead and anticipate the coming times. Therefore, Chanakya specifies that a leader ought to be an individual with a vision long and far and uses the term 'Deerghadurdarshi' [35] for the same. The term includes two aspects- to be able to see the bigger picture and, to be able to envision the future and both of these are required to develop a unique vision. Only when a leader can see the larger picture, he or she can formulate new and powerful ideas which they can implement on the basis of their capability of seeing far ahead.

Far-sightedness of a leader is also important for them to convince the others about their own vision and present it as something which is worth all the time, energy and efforts. An article at Forbes rightly points at the power of this virtue- "Far-sightedness in a leader is the ability to envision and articulate a successful future in a compelling and inclusive way. It's one of the essential qualities we look for in a leader. If a leader can't tell us where he or she believes we can go, what we can accomplish together, we hesitate to follow him or her [36]."

All the planning and preparations cannot lead to fruition until and unless they are done in sync with a long term vision, which can be done by only a Deerghadurdarshi leader.

The art of timing

The achievement of an objective is realised not only by proper efforts and planning but, also by proper execution of those plans at the right moment through the right medium. This phenomenon of 'timing' our actions according to situations is an important element that makes the difference between success and failure. Modern business leaders and leadership experts stress the importance of taking right decision at the right time.

The same idea was understood by Chanakya 2000 years ago. He considers this aspect of 'timing' as an absolute necessity for a leader and therefore, believes that they should be 'Deshkalpurushkarkaryapradhan' [37] (the one who attaches prominence to undertakings at proper place and time with proper human endeavor). The term is an ideal encapsulation of the notion of art of timing.

Management experts consider two categories of time- Chronos time (clock time) and Kairos time (timing). Kairos is the concept of making the right decision at the right time [38]. This is exactly similar to the theory of Chanakya, who asks a leader to give due prominence to both place and time and goes even one step ahead and propounds that the 'right action' should also have the 'right endeavor' in it. Timing can be laid successful only when it has the necessary propelling power of efforts, which is made crystal clear by Chanakya and therefore, the element of right endeavor is a pre-requisite for perfecting the timing of an action because it includes the actual application and working in the direction of the objective for which timing is required.

The dimension of 'right time' also includes undelayed actions and decisions which is another important aspect of the 'Art of Timing' as per Kautilya. He considers that only when a leader

will be able to take actions without delay; all other things will fall into place. The adjective 'Adeerghasutra' [39] conveys this very meaning and is highly necessary for ensuring the proper timing of one's actions. Procrastination is considered as a negative power capable to destroy every planning and hence, is prohibited through this adjective.

The emphasis on sharp awareness about place and time also means that Arthashastra expects a leader to assess the direction of the sailing wind before anyone else and take actions in accordance with the dynamics of the situation. This helps them in analyzing what would be right and what would be wrong and taking decisions which can give them an edge in that particular situation.

The Power of Situational Awareness

Another concept which is linked with the aforementioned 'Art of Timing' is the capability to observe situations and act according to them in a discriminatory manner. Chanakya propounds the need for situational awareness for a leader who should be able to differentiate between treaty and offence [40] (can be interpreted as differentiation between advancement and retreat) and giving and withholding (can be interpreted as differentiation between cooperation and non-cooperation). According to Kautilya, a leader should have the wisdom to know the needs of situations and how to act in accordance with them. A strategy which can be efficient in one situation will prove to be incapable in a different scenario. In short, they need to have different solutions for different situations and be agile in every scenario. The great significance of situational awareness can be summed up in the following words- "Situational awareness requires outward focus, listening, observing, and consideration of the dynamics of the situation as well as an inward awareness to manage our strengths and struggles to be the most effective. SA is always crucial to the art of leadership, and the stakes can be high [41]."

The most important aspect in situational awareness in the views of Chanakya is the ability to identify the chinks in the armor of the enemy and to attack them at the moment of their weakness. A leader has to be Parchhidravibhagi [42] according to Kautilya so that they can exploit the weak points of their competitors and gain advantage by striking at the right point. This capability of analyzing situation in an apt manner and take decisions in accordance is very much relevant keeping in mind the fierce competitions and rivalries which one has to face today. Hence, quality of being Parchhidravibhagi mentioned in the Arthashastra becomes a pre-requisite for efficient leadership.

The dispassionate way of leading

The ideal leader of the Arthashastra is energetic, enthusiastic and full of ambitions but at the same time, he or she needs to be dispassionate and should also be able to control their emotions like anger (krodha), greed (lobha), stiffness (stambha), fickleness (chaapal), troublesomeness (Uptaapa) and acts of slander (paishunya) [43]. The idea of being a dispassionate leader is seen in a wider perspective by Chanakya through which he sees it as the process of disassociation off one's emotion from the desired result of an action. This disassociation is developed by controlling the various negative emotions mentioned above. Only when a person can curb the negative emotions such as those of anger or greed, they can truly separate their actions from the desire of result and keep their composure during every situation. One can draw parallels between this idea of Chanakya and the concept of *nishakama karma*.

The current leadership discourse considers the process of separation from result as very crucial for a leader and failure in doing so can lead to a failure in the project- “Finding a way to distance yourself from the outcome- whether in business or personal decisions- can lead to a much more optimal result. Too often businesses fail because the leaders can’t let go of the path they set off on, because they are so invested in one and only one outcome ^[44].”

Therefore, Chanakya’s mantra of a dispassionate approach is very much relevant for the present day professional as well as personal spheres of life.

Dignity

Leadership is not solely dependent upon caliber and potential. The dignified conduct of an individual plays an equally important role in their acceptance as leaders in their immediate surroundings and in workplace. The ideas of dignified behavior are projected by the Arthashastra according to which a leader needs to be courteous and dignified in their conduct; the term ‘Smitodagrabhibhashi’ ^[45] directly relates with polite and warm speech, but it does also refer to the dignified conduct which is automatically reflected in the words spoken by a leader. Therefore, Chanakya believes dignified behavior as significant for winning over people’s support. A leader needs to be decent in his speech and his actions which can give them a graceful personality capable of influencing others

Donna Hicks, a well known leadership expert notes the similar in regards with how dignified behavior is important for leaders- “Leaders play a crucial role in creating a culture that brings out the best in people. They need to know how to honor the dignity of their people as well as how to create policies that are sensitive to dignity issues. The leadership team needs to be on board with dignity awareness if it is to become part of workplace culture, both by modeling dignified behaviors and by creating an awareness of the effect leaders have on all employees ^[46].”

Respecting Elders

This is another idea which might seem more of an ethical discourse rather than one on leadership. On the contrary, respecting elders (senior colleagues and other leaders) can provide an individual with the knowledge which can be gained only through vast experience. An individual should respectfully listen to the elder members of their team irrespective of their position in the organization because their knowledge and wisdom can prove to be invaluable. One can learn how to solve the modern-day problems by knowing how senior members used to deal with problems in their times ^[47].

Chanakya seems to have understood this aspect in depth which is evident on the significance he attaches with the quality of respecting one’s elders. He specifies that a leader should be ‘Vridhdadarshi’ ^[48] (the one who meets and listens to elders) and also ‘Vridhdopadeshachar’ ^[49] (abiding by the advices of the elders). According to him, a leader should meet their seniors and elders on a regular basis for their advice and should also apply their advices in their decision making. In this manner, ego clashes which frequently occur due to generational gaps can be avoided and the senior members can be involved in a more productive way in the working of the organization.

A concluding note

The concept of leadership has always found a high pedestal throughout the history of human civilization. It has been

considered as a quality or as a virtue which is impeccable for achieving success and making giant leaps in life. The political-governance oriented as well as business-management oriented discourses on leadership time and again reflect the growing significance of leadership values and how they can make a great impact at various levels of institutions such as society and nation.

The approach which Chanakya undertakes to describe leadership ideas is a highly nuanced one- he opens the possibilities of application of these values and qualities in every sphere an individual wants to. The qualities mentioned by Kautilya should not be studied in the mere terminological sense. They signify cross-connected ideas and are the mediums of projection of Kautilya’s leadership theory. The very fact that these ideas propounded by Chanakya are being analysed and explained in the modern leadership literature shows the intellectual gravity of Chanakya’s manual and its relevance in the realm of leadership today.

Chanakya does not take pages or even paragraphs to analyse leadership skills. All he requires is the space of a few sentences in which he places his profound intellectual and powerful ideation. In a true sense, the chapter of *Prakritisampad* is a complete guidebook for anyone who wishes to enhance their leadership skills or even imbibe themselves with qualities which actually can empower them. Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise us if the management sector gives a special focus to this chapter and initiates a large-scale analysis on the same in the time to come. What Chanakya wrote about leadership two millennia ago needs to be applied and implemented today for the holistic development of individuals, society and our nation at large.

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