**Spiritual Model of Good Governance and Sustainable Administration in *Mahabharata***

A spiritual touch is essential for good and sustainable governance, as it gives a holistic approach that widens the scope of thinking. Money, time and human resources are scarce and can never be replenished. But effective use of these resources should be with a final objective of contributing towards the best interests of the society. Sustainable development includes the four interconnected domains of ecology, economics, politics and culture. Governance is "the process of decision-making and the process by which the decisions are implemented”.

For smooth functioning of the corporate there is an innate need for spirituality. We could definitely turn back to pages of history where we have found tried and trusted methods of successful governance which has contributed for sustainable development. *Mahabharata* is one such resource where, time and again, we have found out many answers to the perennial requirement of managerial skills. Governance in Indian scriptures is called *Rajadharma* i.e. righteous duty of the king. Thus, as defined above, the conduct of those involved in governance requires adhering to righteousness which calls for exhibiting the highest standards of morality and ethical behaviour. The Hindu scriptures suggest that as kings have been bestowed divine authority they are duty bound to rule only under God’s command and by providing clean and ethical administration. Moreover, a king is obligated to do justice to the public by treating them as if they were his own children, and punish any corrupt behaviour in the society. Unethical conduct, therefore, amounts to doing disservice to God, because the king acts only as His viceroy or a deputy. In a nutshell, the Indian
philosophy lays emphasis on the premise that inner spirituality and character must govern the
conduct and behaviour of the leaders in the society.

According to the *Mahabharata* there are a few important elements of a successful model for governance. They are Spirituality, goal setting, planning based on potential, persistence, competency mapping, rationality, value system or ethics, consolidating the strengths, reward system and most important of all, the coordination between various functions in the organization coupled with transparency and accountability in workplace. These are proven and specific elements which have similar prominence even in the administration of today’s corporate houses where the elements and priorities have taken a paradigm shift into commercialization, lack of values etc.

Vidura Neeti and Shanti Parva are two parts of *Mahabharata* that have good and substantial material for managerial skills, leadership skills, skills requires for running high level administrative and government mechanisms. Apart from that the Book II of *Mahabharata*, otherwise known as “The Book of the Assembly Hall”, also contains necessary instructions for carrying out a good governance where Narada came there to meet Pandavas affectionately and to witness the divine consecration ceremony of King Yudhistira.

**Principles of Good Governance as Propounded by Narada**

Yudhishthira, accompanied by his brothers honoured Narada and pleased him. Narada felt very happy and asked Dharmaraja about matters regarding *Dharma, Artha and Kama*. He enquired him whether he had divided his time judiciously and following Dharma, Artha and Kama accordingly; whether, after considering his and foe’s relative strengths, he was taking proper care of the fourteen possessions (such as country, forts, cars, elephants, cavalry, foot-soldiers. etc.) with the help of the six royal attributes (viz, cleverness of speech, readiness in providing means, intelligence in dealing with the foe, memory, and acquaintance with morals and politics), and the seven means (viz., sowing dissensions, chastisement, conciliation, gifts, incantations, medicine and magic); whether he was employing a singly learned man by giving in exchange thousand fools. He advised that if rations and salary are delayed, the troops become angry which causes great misfortune. He asked whether the king was taking care of the families of those who died or faced great dangers for his sake; whether every day his accountants put before him in the forenoon the income and expenditure statement; whether the farmers in his kingdom were satisfied; whether he slept only in the first two quarters of

night, and got up in the third quarter to reflect on Dharma and Artha. On hearing the words of Narada, Yudhishthira bowed to him and promised that he would act on his word only. His wise counsel had indeed enlightened him. He then followed the words of Narada and his kingdom spread up to the ocean. Thus this section of *Mahabharata* presents the principles of polity.

**Importance of king as ruler & Role of citizens**

In the “Shanti Parva”, Book XII of *Mahabharata*, Yudhishtira asked Bhishma: Please tell me what is main duty that the country (meaning citizens) must do? Bhishma explained: Main duty of citizens is to enthrone a worthy person as king, because, a country without a king becomes weak. Such a country will be regularly troubled by wicked elements like thieves and robbers. In a country without king dharma will not be sustainable. People will be trying to ‘swallow’ each other. Therefore, condemnation to a country without a king!. There is a shruti-vakya that when a nation chooses a king, they choose Indra himself. Therefore a citizen who desires good of all should worship the king. I do not like to live in a country without a king. Even *agni* does not carry *havya* to devatas in such a country.

**What should the citizens do if another powerful king attempts to take over?**

In case a powerful king desirous of expanding attacks a country which either does not have a king or has a weak king, it is better for the citizens to come forward and welcome him. This is the best suggestion that can be given to citizens who do not have an efficient king, because, there is no sin greater than having a sinful anarchy. There is another advantage of welcoming a powerful king where there is none. It is possible that the attacking king will be pleased by the welcome and honour of the people and may look upon them with affection. Then the whole kingdom will enjoy happiness. In case these people were to oppose him and anger him, then that king being mighty and angry may destroy the kingdom. Therefore welcoming him is a better *neeti*.

**Risks of Anarchy**

Therefore a nation which desires progress should enthrone a capable king; this will be their main duty. There is no use of money or wife in a kingdom without a king, because, in a country with anarchy neither can be protected. In a country with anarchy, the sinners will happily keep snatching the properties/assets of others. But if other mightier wicked persons snatch his assets, he will also desire the existence of a powerful king. Therefore in a country with anarchy there is no safety to sinners also. In a anarchic country even those who are free will be made slaves. Women will be snatched away by force. It is for this reason that *devatas* created king to govern & protect people. If there were no king with powers to punish, the mighty would have swallowed the weak just as bigger fish eat up the smaller ones.

If a king is defeated by the enemies it is not merely a defeat of the king. It is the defeat of citizens of the kingdom. Therefore the citizens should do everything to increase the might of the king. A king who is thus strengthened by the citizens becomes difficult to defeat and becomes efficient in governing them (*Shanti parva*; *Rajadharmanushasana*; 67).

**Conclusion:**

It is evident that Dhritharashtra failed in giving good and clean governance to his citizens of Hastinapur despite suggestions by his minister Vidura. On the other hand, Yudhishtira was effective as a king and an able administrator as he took inputs both from Vidura and Bhishma, on the duties of a king (administrator). The quality of administration and the legal system during the period of Yudhishtira was one of the best in the history. When we compare the current governance in many corporates with the governance of Yudhishtira, we find that there is lack of value system and less coordination between various elements causing friction and low productivity. The current models of governance fail to identify the human touch that is required to handle employees, colleagues and competition alike to succeed and sustain in the industry for long term benefits. A close observation of the contemporary models of governance indicates a biased or one sided approach where success is momentary. We see the concentration on either the shareholders’ wealth maximization or the accountability of the directors discussed by such models. But businesses are in pursuit of a sustainable model for governance that can come only through a holistic approach where the interests of all stakeholders are taken care of. There is an innate need for a multi-dimensional model that considers variety of factors empowering the management for a powerful tool of comprehensive and transparent governance.