

MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM PANCHATANTRA NARRATIVES

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Abstract

Storytelling, a communication tool, is used unconsciously and consciously in routine life at different levels- personal and professional levels. The Panchatantra stories focus on the values and life skills that every learner and professional needs to learn to enhance the learning experience and make wise decisions in life and the world of work. The power of storytelling mirrors the timeless influence of the Panchatantra.

Keywords: Panchatantra, Narratives, Life skills, Professional Skills, Management

I. Introduction

In the fast-paced AI era, we are rapidly advancing, but we risk losing touch with our roots-culture, heritage, language, and values. While adjusting and adapting to change is essential, it shouldn't come at the cost of one's own identity, values, and belief systems. There must be harmony between tradition and modernity. This idea facilitates preparing young minds not only for different subjects like sciences, mathematics, business, and languages, but also to familiarize them with ancient wisdom from the Vedas and Scriptures. For this, disseminating indigenous knowledge by integrating it with the core subjects of learning is significant. Besides, it will enable learners to understand the underlying contemporary societal issues and address these issues through research. It will foster the growth and understanding of rich and diverse indigenous knowledge among various stakeholders and rejuvenate traditional ways of transmitting knowledge with the help of modern technology. By embracing our roots, we can

- Foster a sense of identity and belonging
- Appreciate the contributions of our motherland and its great saints
- Develop a holistic understanding of the world
- Address current and future challenges

- Prepare young leaders for a brighter and sustainable future

So, the stakeholders at all levels need to ensure that they have an understanding of our rich Indian heritage and then must take the initiative to share it with the younger generation.

The present paper focuses on lessons, especially management lessons that one can learn from Panchatantra stories.

II. Management Lessons from Panchatantra Stories

Blessed are the human beings as they can speak, think, and organize their experiences, intentions, and memories of life events. They convey and express their feelings, thoughts, work, and experiences through stories. Storytelling is the most common way people use to communicate with each other. We use this form of communication unconsciously to convey what is going on around us. We as parents tell the lessons of life through stories to our children, as teachers introduce classroom lessons through stories to the students, as actors engage the audience through our dialogues, as influencers hook people to our accomplishments, and so on. Similarly, companies use stories intentionally to communicate with their consumers about their products and services.

Just as modern brands frame stories to shape how consumers understand their products and services, the Panchatantra was designed to teach and persuade through narrative the lazy and unwise three sons of a King in ancient India. It is a collection of moral fables written in Sanskrit. These stories have been narrated in dialogue form using mainly the animal characters to make learning entertaining. The Panchatantra stories, more than 2000 years old that are attributed to Scholar Vishnu Sharma, are interesting and relevant even today. Every story conveys a thought-provoking and insightful message on *Nitishastra* (wise code of conduct). These stories focus on five tantras or strategies. These are

- *Mitra-bheda* (Conflict amongst friends): Most of the stories from Panchatantra fall into this section of Tantra. The basic theme story is of a lion and a bull. This tantra begins with a verse: “A great friendship had developed in the jungle, Between the lion and the bullock, But it was destroyed, By a very wicked and avaricious jackal” (Panchatantra, 2011, p.3). The story conveys that when the members of a team do not have faith in each other, it is vulnerable to external threats. Leaders need to promote unity and resolve internal conflicts to ensure that teams remain focused on shared objectives. A strong, united manpower is a company’s greatest asset against competition and disruption.
- *Mitra-lābha or Mitra-samprāpti* (Winning of friends): The basic theme story is the friendship among a dove, a crow, a mouse, a tortoise, and a deer. This highlights the relevance of having and retaining good friends. This tale teaches the role of leadership and teamwork. One of the

verses included in the story is “Small things united become strong: Even delicate threads of cotton, Woven together, Are very hard to break” (Panchtantra, 2011, p.89). The story conveys that the team either succeeds in the mission working together or lags due to poor leadership. Moreover, it encourages reflection on effective leadership and highlights team dynamics, delegation, and communication, which are essential for organizational success.

- *Kākolūkīyam* (Crows and owls): The basic theme story is about crows and owls. “Never trust a man, Who has always been your enemy, And suddenly turns friendly towards you. This was the mistake the owls made, And the crows burnt them all alive in their cave” Panchtantra, 2011, p.125) It talks about the situation of war and peace, and the strategies of handling enemies. The story teaches that implementing a planned strategy can defeat a powerful enemy. It tells that cooperation and unity are more powerful than conflict and division. At the same time, one needs to recognize the strengths of opponents for the greater good.
- *Labdhapraṇāśam* (The forfeit of profits): The basic story is about a monkey and a crocodile. It tells how foolishness can lead to the loss of what has been gained previously. The tantra opens with the verse “A man who does not lose his head, In the face of calamities, Shall overcome them, Just like the monkey in the midst of the sea” (Panchtantra, 2011, p.175). The story teaches the importance of swift thinking and smart decision-making under pressure. These skills are crucial in life and especially in business. Through the story, one learns values like honesty, loyalty, consequences of greed or deceit, decision-making strategies, ethics, and integrity in business. These values are significant for building a foundation in business ethics and encourage responsible entrepreneurship.
- *Aparīkṣitakāraṇam* (Action without due consideration): The basic theme story begins with the verse, “No wise man should follow the barber's example, Pursuing what he has neither accurately observed, Nor properly understood: Neither correctly heard, Nor sufficiently considered” (Panchtantra, 2011, p.211). The story explains that hasty deeds can lead us to permanent loss of things or people. It also focuses on making the efforts thoughtfully without imitating blind fully. Otherwise, the action may lead to harmful situation that at times may be fatal. It focuses on understanding the context of the situation before making any action. The strategies that are applicable in one situation may not be appropriate in another.

III. Conclusion

The Panchatantra is a garland of pearls, offering a rich treasure of wisdom resonating deeply with modern management principles. These stories highlight cooperation, collaboration, strategic thinking, flexibility, communication, and ethical leadership qualities that are essential in today's

dynamic business and corporate environment. By applying these timeless lessons, business persons, managers, and leaders can inspire their teams to work as a team, have trust and faith, make wise decisions, and create an environment that fosters growth, innovation, and success. Incorporating these ancient pearls of wisdom into contemporary practices not only bridges the gap between tradition and modernity but also adds a human touch to management strategies. These stories remind us that the essence of great leadership and its team lies in simplicity, wisdom, and values. Let these stories guide our professional journey in understanding people, making reliable and trustworthy friends, making wise decisions at times of difficulties, and living in peace and harmony in the face of hypocrisy.

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