

Editorial

Indigenous Management: Theories & Practices

George Thadathil is the Principal of Salesian College Sonada and Siliguri. He is the author of *Vision from the Margin* (2007) and has edited and co-edited number of books besides contributing to a number of journals and edited volumes on Philosophy, Literature and Social Science. He is the founder Director of Salesian Publications, Salesian Research Institute and Salesian Translation Centre.

We could develop an argument that the propensity for innovative management begins from a context specific thinking. One of the premises for such an argument would be that we do not know our context fully until we place it against or compare with another: the rural with the urban, the town with the city; the city with the metropolis, India with Europe or America, Brazil or Chile, not to speak of Russia and China, which in fact we do a lot as their goods flood our markets. The Indian Mars Mission and oil explorations in Middle East are examples of home grown entrepreneurship that has propelled itself on new found opportunities for surging ahead. Of course two questions will naturally arise: firstly, from the leftist heritage of critical thinking we have inherited - as to whether this is the model of progress that we need to encourage or really dream about? Secondly, can we expect everyone to have this context-compared experience or knowledge as a starter in order to become an effective innovative manager? We have individuals up in the hills beyond we see who have not made it to the city called Siliguri and do not feel they miss anything given the view of the glorious mountains, which we occasionally glimpse from here; similarly we do need to nurture an alternative mode of development than the routine imitations of the best and bold - as they are being marketed; and precisely that is what we intended with this exercise of the seminar itself of exposing younger minds to the possibilities of innovations given the kind of constraints of economics we grapple with - with rumours of the economy not fully picking up as expected or projected even a year ago.

Thinking about and studying other contexts does not necessarily have to be the result of a visit or actual physical experience, which once had is indeed an eye opener to many an insight. One could think of many an example: one, for instance, is a young travel agent who books ticket for international travel, finding out so much about the destinations of his client just from the net and being so definitive about his knowledge thanks to Google maps and rome2rio websites; the other is another young chap who came to promote his book on campus - he has never been to the country where his story is based and succeeded to capture the culture of the country and the people from the few contacts and face book friends he has over there. The number of innovators is always small, and we are attempting how that small group of creative individuals addressing context specific problems can be increased so that the exponential growth that the country needs - as one young politician of our country has written about in Seminar recently - can be achieved.

An Idea of innovation that churned in mind on having had this context comparing opportunity while recently being in Brazil and travelling from Sao Paulo to Lorena, a city two and half hours by drive at the speed of 90 miles an hour (except for the bottle necks that getting out of the city and passing through smaller ones in between occasionally caused, something that

all cities are being prone to), was ignited from seeing traces of Railway tracks and once even sighting a train. On inquiring about train timings for travel I was told that only the goods trains run the tracks. Given the diversity of peoples and the disparity in income levels among peoples there would be many who would like to have a cheaper mode of travel, and would travel to city and back given the opportunity, for not all have cars and the buses are the only popular mode of travel for the masses. Could the Indian expertise and experience of train services that knits a country together be of any gain to a country like Brazil? Could someone not negotiate and create a business out of this opportunity given the global networking despite the distance?

What has so far been referred to are the more pragmatic and application oriented aspects of the argument on 'contextual management arising out of contextual thinking'. If we are to proceed into the theoretical dimensions, we need to begin by asking the question as to what could make the Indian brand of management practices and styles stand out, get them promoted and projected? In addressing the deeper ideological aspect of this argument we need to look at how our society as we find it today has been shaped. As in all societies there is a pre-modern strata of influences still shaping us and there is the modern layer with its assumptions attempting to take over, probably for the better, as it has succeeded in city states like Hong Kong and Singapore, besides many an Asian country. Now the attempt is to see how we can re-channel the forces of modernity in order to innovate new indigenous management styles that will happily integrate or amalgamate the pre-modern and modern. Both aspirations seem to be legitimate: One, having clean and neat roads and lanes; and the other, having traditional ways of family celebrations - be it birth, death, marriage or anniversaries. How do we bridge these desires and aspirations? How do we take note of the upcoming generation and the way they respond to the pre-modern? How do we address the stress that the older generation encounters in the onslaught of the modern?

In order to probe further into this issue an attempt could be made to look at the Beliefs out of which the Behaviours and Businesses have emerged. Can we replace the belief system so that the accepted and universally validated behaviours and businesses can flow even out of a different belief system? In other words, can the western business practices and behaviours that have an underlying belief system rooted in the Greek, Roman and Christian worldviews be appropriated and adapted as to be equally successful in the Indian context? Devdutt Patnaik, makes the case that as of now our prevailing management practices are probably subservient to alien beliefs and that the pre-modern belief systems are worth a relook in order to accomplish greater context specific innovations so as to generate local problem-solving oriented entrepreneurship.

If so, the questions arise as to how we can steamroll and redeploy the educational processes or means to creative thinking based on context specific problem solving. How do we redesign the curriculum towards this goal? We focus on education, because we know too well that Management is an expression of the mind and we could, as Devdutt argues,¹ draw on the mythology of the East which provides an alternative map for the mind. In this new perspective we are invited to realise that 'fear stops people from expanding their mind, including other people's beliefs. We need to expand our mind rather than control people around us'. Therefore can we while searching for innovative management and economics, attempt this innovation at its

¹ Devdutt Patnaik, *Business Sutra: A Very Indian Approach to Management*, New Delhi, Aleph Book Company, 2013, p.2: "As is belief, so is behaviour, so is business."

very root - by remapping our minds and teaching the younger generations to look for resources in contexts other than what the text books - most of them as of now - prescribe? The articles contained in this twin-issue of the Platinum Jubilee Volume of Salesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences are an attempt to move in this direction.

The first article by Shuvendu Dey and Anal Jyoti Basu discusses understanding of eco-tourism among urban Indians. We observe the obstacles due to lack of knowledge affecting sustainability of eco-tourism. The study shows the need to educate the urban masses about eco-tourism for protection and conservation of the environment. Sustainable tourism has been again discussed in our second article by Pamela Deb and Rameswar Mukherjee. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries with a huge potential for income generation. However, tourism has also played a major role in environmental degradation. Therefore, again we conclude that sustainable tourism is the key to the growth of tourism industry in India and is a key driver of socio-economic progress. Our third article by Rashmita Barua also deals with both the positive and negative impact of tourism despite its contribution to the economy. She shows how Sikkim, an Indian state, has succeeded in carrying out sustainable practices in the development of tourism and how such practices could be adopted for development of sustainable tourism for the future of our country. Therefore, we can see how sustainable eco-tourism can be the future of tourism in India with the added potential of socio-economic growth.

We now come to the articles which focus on culture and its influence on management as also the various practices adopted in the globalised business world. The fourth article by Amit Kumar Dutta deals with understanding cultural background and management practices. Every individual comes from a different cultural background and as managers and working personnel they influence management practices and functions. Society plays a vital role in developing management practices. The author has tried to elaborate how Marwari culture has influenced business and management practices (especially in their business concerns) in Siliguri and North Bengal. In this very line we have our fifth article by Moumita Dey Sarkar and Archita Banerjee dealing with cultural diversity and its effect in the workplace. Every nation has its own work culture which is further influenced by individuals coming from different cultures. There are difficulties when one works in a diversified working environment due to working habits, policies and national culture. Some remedies or suggestions have been derived for coping with such cultural differences. Surajit Das and Snigdha Basu continue the discussion in the next article on cultural difference and marketing strategy in the Indian context. Cultural difference with respect to marketing strategies of MNCs as well as domestic firms has been discussed in the article. The failure and success of these organisations with respect to various marketing strategies has been elaborately discussed. Understanding a culture before launching a product and its success thereafter with various hurdles and remedies have been the key focus of this article. The seventh article by Debansu Chatterjee and Arindam De speaks of cultural difference with respect to management. The effects of globalisation in management with cross cultural differences and alleviation of such differences is the main focus of this article. The challenges faced by international businesses due to global expansion of companies have been dealt with in this article with reference to culture and its influence on management. Advertisement has a strong effect on our culture and this is the focus of our next article by Kasturi Ghosh. The idea of marketing is communicated to the society through advertisement. Its primary aim is to

create wants though with a touch of social responsibility. Empowerment of the marginalised and the weak by means of communication through advertisement also forms a part of social responsibility.

The article by Shomik Saha and Sandeep Singh discusses ethics in accounting and the professional world. It highlights the criticism of the corporate world with respect to frauds and unethical practices. Importance of ethics in the professional world parallel to the challenges of maintaining work place confidentiality and integrity is the focus of this article. Abhrangshu Sarkar and Patrick Johnson's article on indigenous innovation by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises in the modern competitive world for employment creation with eco friendliness along with cost effectiveness keeping sustainability in mind has been aptly dealt with in the article. Our eleventh article by Pawan Prasad and Sandeep Singh discusses the management pattern of MSMEs in Siliguri area. Despite their contribution to the society they face innumerable difficulties. There is a lack of proper training and willingness to bring them fully into the expanding business arena. The authors have stated the potential these small enterprises hold for growth and as to how they can contribute even more to the economic development of the local society.

The last article by Bikash Gogoi traces a very different field from the rest of the above discussed. He speaks of marketing by higher educational institutions to attract talented students. Don Bosco Institute of Management and its place in the modern educational system, in the opinion of the author, are interesting in its details for educational administrators and scholars alike. He speaks of value learning for creation of better managers which seems relevant enough when compared with the issues raised in the earlier article on ethics and management.

All of these are a continuation of the search into the indigenous and contextual management systems, its theories and practices operative in India, an outcome of the UGC sponsored national seminar on the same theme that drew much interest from across the country. This issue of the Platinum Jubilee special Volume brings together attempts by academically oriented teaching faculty from different institutions who have taken a critical look at the prospects for indigenous management. As an institution of higher education located in the eastern Himalayas, this has been our pleasant task of putting together these creative pieces of contextual thinking.