



Dubrovnik (Ilviva Yudkin)

Timeless Concepts of Leadership & Management

Two great thought leaders, though separated by two millenia, teach the same time-tested principles.

by Prafulla Pande

CORE VALUES, PURPOSE, mission, vision, and commitment form the foundation of every organization. Great organizations are built by great leaders and strong teams who work relentlessly to strengthen and preserve this foundation. For this to happen, executives must demonstrate strong leadership skills.

Experience is the best teacher, and history is full of experience from which we can learn. Our country has seen many great leaders in all walks of life, including politics, business, social work, education, religion, and others. Their experiences teach us valuable lessons. Beyond U.S. borders, we will find

more great leaders with whom we may not be familiar. One of these great leaders lived 2,400 years ago and 10,000 miles away. He was responsible for the creation of one of the most successful empires in the history of India, and the principles he taught continue to resonate today.

Chanakya a.k.a. Kautilya (c. 350 - 283 B.C.) authored a management book called *Arthashastra*. It is one of the oldest management books available to the world and covers a wide range of topics, including statecraft, politics, military warfare, strategy, selection and training of employees, leadership skills, legal systems, accounting systems, taxation, fiscal policies, civil rules, domestic and foreign trade, and more.

Through the centuries, scholars have repeatedly described Chanakya as a rare mastermind who was an expert in so many varied and specialized fields. Chanakya applied the principles and techniques of *Arthashastra* to help create India's Mauryan Empire, which spanned over one hundred years and is considered to be one of the brightest periods of Indian history.

Today, Jim Collins is recognized as a leading business thought leader. His books, *Good to Great* and *Built to Last*, have been national best-sellers, and his research findings are consulted by businesses around the world.

Separated by time and culture, Chanakya and Collins espouse astonishingly similar management philosophies. Chanakya helped build a great empire, and Collins helps build great organizations, but their principles know no boundaries of time, geography, or discipline.

Modern-day management begins with a leadership team committed to the organization's core values, purpose, mission, and vision. The same was true 2,400 years ago when Chanakya proceeded to help build an empire. He put vision, mission, and motivation ahead of everything else. He then identified the need to focus on leadership requirements, organizational strategies, and human dimensions.

According to Chanakya, the essence of leadership lies in justice and ethics. According to Collins, it lies in Level 5 leadership where leaders channel their energies away from their own egos and focus on the good of their organizations. Both exhort leaders to concern themselves less with power, rewards, and recognition and more on serving the needs of the people they lead.

Chanakya placed great emphasis on human resource development. He identified the basic non-technical qualities required for every effective executive: character, ability to concentrate, ability to think, ability to communicate, and ability to observe. He insisted that the king surround himself with people who possess these skills. Similarly, Collins emphasizes having the "right people on the bus" as the top priority for any executive. He summarizes the non-technical qualities required for leadership as attitude, knowledge, and skill.

The similarities between Chanakya and Collins continue in four key areas:

Leadership

Chanakya saw self-discipline, integrity, courage, decisiveness, sensitivity towards others, humility, and selflessness in great leaders. He said that great leaders are sensitive to the needs, feelings, and motivation of the people they lead. Today, we call

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this servant leadership. "Intense will and humility are the most important characteristics of leaders in the 21st century," writes Collins; "[Level 5 leaders] strive to "build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will." He says that until today's leaders make the transition to develop intense will and humility, their ethic deficiencies will negatively affect the performance and sustainability of their organizations.

Planning

Chanakya stressed the need for planning, saying that a failure to plan is a plan to fail. He also said that people should be firm about the goal but flexible with the process of achieving it. Likewise, Collins claims organizations are in desperate need of greater discipline: disciplined planning, disciplined people, disciplined governance, and disciplined allocation of resources. "Preserve the core, but stimulate progress," he writes.

Knowledge

Chanakya taught that knowledge is important and cumulative, and that small differences in ability can lead to enormous differences in results. Therefore, he encouraged people to focus on acquiring knowledge in their pursuit of superior results. Similarly, Collins claims the barrier to growth is not ignorance, but the illusion of knowledge. Level 5 leaders have the humility to admit what they don't know, and they do something about it. Recognizing the need for and diligently pursuing knowledge is supreme.

Results & Success

Chanakya says that success is no accident; it results from well thought actions aligned with focused vision. To sustain success, he says, organizations must implement a reliable system to collect real feedback and put corrective actions into place. Likewise, Collins writes that success comes through focus on the "Hedgehog Concept", the intersection of each organization's unique passion, best-in-the-world ability, and economic engine. Organizations that know their Hedgehog and operate within it are far more successful than those that don't.

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Two great thought leaders, separated by 2,400 years and 10,000 miles, teach virtually the same management methodologies, even though their platforms are also quite different. What does this mean? It means these principles are timeless and universal. They apply to all organizations, regardless of industry, geographic location, or any other distinction.

Finally, leadership is impotent without followers. Many of today's followers belong to Generation Y (born between 1982 and 2001), which is very different from previous generations. To lead these people, one must earn respect and loyalty, not demand it. If today's workers don't see "intense will and humility" in their leaders, the best will leave the organization.



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