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14. Vidura Niti: The foundation of planning

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ABSTRACT

The values that are taught in the ancient texts are timeless. But, in the contemporary times, it has become a 'received knowledge' that the ancient people were superstitious and were unskilful. This paper attempts to look beyond this myth set in motion and explore the contributions of one of the ancient texts – Vidura Niti, which has led to the progress of the humanity. Vidura Niti, an ancient Indian scripture, is a rich source of ethical philosophy, which happened in the form of a conversation between the Mahamantri Vidura and the King Dhritarashtra in Mahabharata's Udyog parva.

Vidura is one of the main characters in the Mahabharata. He was the Minister of the Hastinapur kingdom. He was a virtuous and righteous person. Vidura Niti is considered as the fundamental of planning and it contains personal, managerial and leadership insights. Following are some of the guidelines for effective planning, as described in Vidura Niti:

- 1. Plans should be flexible and attainable.*
- 2. Plans should be considerate – Like a bee gathers honey from the flowers, yet not destroying them.*
- 3. Plans should not be made impetuously – Juice of the fruit is obtained, only when it is plucked in the proper season.*
- 4. Plans should not be the end in itself. It is an orientation of an action and not the checklist.*
- 5. Plans should not be made known to others beforehand, but only after they are carried out.*



6. *Plans should not be influenced by emotion. – Vidura advises the King Dhritarashtra to be unbiased.*

From the study undertaken, it can be concluded that Vidura Niti holds practical relevance till date. This paper gives an understanding of the importance of ancient texts, particularly Vidura Niti, in the evolution of the Indian Knowledge System.

KEYWORDS:

Planning in advance, Systematic approach, Strategy, Forecasting, Pervasive, Age-old concept.

1. INTRODUCTION

Planning is the foremost function of management. Planning is pervasive in nature and it is a continuous process. It is an age-old concept. Planning is being witnessed in all spheres of life. Planning is an intellectual activity, as all plans arise in the mind at the first stage. Planning bridges the gap between where we are and where we want to go. All the stars and the planets move according to a systematic plan. Great personalities like the King Asoka, King Sivaji, King Chandragupta Maurya etc., and the scholars lived in the ancient period would have planned for their glorious tasks and executed them meticulously. Hence, planning holds enduring importance. (Management Mantras book, 2010, p. 151)

Mahamantri Vidura – The Paragon of virtue:

Vidura never compromised on his ethics and virtues. He was an epitome of moral virtue. He was truthful and duty-bound. Vidura was so well versed in the knowledge of dharma that he was given the honorific 'Mahatma'. He always stood for the right. He played a fundamental role in the Hindu epic Mahabharata. He was a great planner and administrator.

Vidura Niti – The substratum of planning:

Vidura Niti, the rich discourse on polity and dharma Shastra is called as Vidura's statecraft (Figure 1 - Craftwork). Vidura Niti outlines the principles of administration. These principles delineate what wise people and leaders should do and the things they should not. Scholars regard Vidura Niti as the 'science of administration'. This treatise on virtue can be best described as the guide book of management. These are considered as the best practices in managing worldly affairs. Vidura Niti is the compilation of administrative thoughts that find significant relevance even today.



Figure 1 Mahamantri Vidura explaining about the essentials of planning to the King Dhritarashtra.

2. LITERATURE ANALYSIS:

Vidura Niti says: (Vidura Niti (Mahabharata Udyoga Parva), 2016)

निश्चित्य यः प्रक्रमते नान्तर्वसति कर्मणः।

अवस्यकालो पश्यात्मा स वै पण्डित उच्यते॥ -I.31

“A wise man undertakes the tasks after due consideration and planning. Having taken up, he does not stop his endeavors in the middle and never wastes his time”.

Hence, it is evident that Vidura Niti is a compendium of management mantras i.e. planning.

Plans should be flexible and attainable:

Vidura Niti expounds that a plan should be attainable. Planners cannot accurately predict the future. Hence, whenever any change occurs in the course of time, suitable adjustments must be made to it. More importantly, it should be realistic and realizable. It should be neither too easy nor impossible to achieve. Plans must be framed in such a way that it is achievable. This holds relevance in present day management which is surrounded by external unpredictable environment.

Plans should be considerate:

The plans of an administrator should be so designed as to derive benefits without causing much strain to the employees. It should not harm people. The planner's heart should be full of warmth. A plan should be made taking into account the well-being of the people working on it. The present day plans which are very harsh on the employees should be dropped and a plan must be drafted from employees' perspective.

It is clearly expounded as:(Management Mantras book, 2010, p. 161)

यथा मधु समादत्ते रक्षन् पुष्पाणि षट्पदः।

तद्वर्थान् मनुष्येभ्य आदद्यादविहिंसया।।

“As the bee gathers honey from the flowers yet protecting them (not destroying) so also should a king collect taxes from the subjects without doing any harm to them”

This is depicted in figure 2 (craftwork)



Figure 2 Bee gathers honey from flowers

Plans should not be made impetuously: (Management Mantras book, 2010, p. 161)

“Look before you leap” and “think before you act” are the golden principles relating to planning. A plan should never be made in a haste as “HASTE MAKES WASTE”. A plan should be carefully drafted by analyzing the outcomes. Carelessness and forgetfulness are the two enemies of planning. Care and attention is vital for planning. Thus rightly said as intellectual or cognitive activity. Taking the present day example: If a manager has a casual attitude and lacks foresight, he cannot succeed.

Vidura Niti rightly explains this:

यस्तु पक्वमुपादत्ते काले परिणतं फलम्।

फलाद्रसं स लभते बीजाच्चैव फलं पुनः।। -II.16

“He who plucks the ripe fruit duly grown in the proper season, obtains the juice from that fruit and also the seeds (which when sown and grown render fruits again)”

Plans should not be the end in itself: (Management Mantras book, 2010, pp. 159,160)

“Plan is not a checklist but an orientation for an action” which means it is an overview of the activity and not the end in itself. It should be accompanied by coordination and control to realize the plan into action. One should not become passive after drafting a plan. Execution must be done



properly. Likewise, one should not be overconfidence on succeeding just by laying out a plan. He should work upon the plan without boasting about it.

Vidura Niti says:

यस्य कृत्यं न जानन्ति मन्त्रं वा मन्त्रिते परे।
कृतमेवास्य जानन्ति स वै पण्डित उच्यते॥ -1.30

“A wise man’s plans, action, policy or resolution are not made known to others beforehand but only after they are carried out”

Plans should not be made known to others beforehand:

All the plans must be kept secretly and it must be implemented in an effective way. Mere planning should not bring complacent attitude. The members have to start working on it and it should be held like a strategy. Key policies and plans are not to be explicitly stated and it is not to be disclosed unnecessarily.

Plans should not be influenced by emotions:

All our actions are influenced by our surrounding. Hence it is necessary to be surrounded by good companions to have a clear and correct view. Having a clear mind helps us to generate good ideas thereby formulating productive plans. Hence unperturbed mind is important while framing the plan. In Vidura Niti, Mahamantri advises the King Dhritarashtra to have good company and be unbiased while framing a plan. It is inevitable for an administrator to have clear, unbiased thoughts.

Planning is an intellectual activity:

Planning is all about the process of thinking before an action. It is a conscious determination of courses of action, involving foresight and vision based on fact and experience. It involves evaluating strengths and weakness and identification of ways to attain the goals. Hence the planner should be of unperturbed mind while framing a plan. If he is affected by anger, joy, arrogance, and other emotions, his plan may not reap fruits.

3. DISCUSSION:

Planning as demonstrated in Vidura Niti and its relevance today:

Relevance in organization:(Management Mantras book, 2010, pp. 156,157)

An organization has to do a lot of planning to attain its goals. Once the goals are set, all the departments in the organization make a plan to reach the goal. Changes may take place in the realm of technology, strategies of the competitors, preference of the customers, etc., planning has to be done to meet all such contingencies.



Planning is a continuous process. It is the foundation of management. Drawing up a plan alone is not enough. A manager has to appraise the stage of progress at specified time of interval. Planning is all pervasive and it is required at every stage. Corporates have different types of plans drafted for different situations, namely

- a. Formal plans – routine and regular plans documented in a systematic fashion
- b. Informal plans – plans not documented but is conceived in the mind of a planner
- c. Operational plans– plans devised for a particular issue and are for short term.
- d. Strategic plans – long range plans evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of competitors and forecasting the future development.

Relevance in construction projects and infrastructure development:

Generally, all the organization prepare a plan to execute a work. But construction industries revolve around plans, drawings and sketches by architects. Construction projects are complex and time bound. Systematic scheduling of tasks to optimize efficiency and minimize the downtime can be done with a plan. Without proper planning, it is difficult to know what the stage of construction is and the expenses may not be tracked leading to loss. Having a thorough construction plan can save them time and money. Quality can be ensured by proper planning, as there is a necessity to comply with the Building codes and regulations. Thus, planning plays a crucial role in the success of construction industries.

Planning for uncertainties:(Principles of Management, 2022)

With the help of forecasting tools, a contingency plan can be drawn. This will help the management to respond to emergencies and potential threats. Contingency planning is important for organizations to maintain stability and resilience. By the virtue of a contingency plan, the enterprise can perform well in the times of adversities.

Contingency plan is also referred to as ‘backup plan’. Contingency plan comes under the ‘Risk management’.

Thus planning gives organization clarity and a structure, which is impossible in case of absence of planning.

Relevance in educational institutions:

Planning in educational institutions is very important as the curriculum should meet the educational needs of the students and the society. It involves planning for resources needed to

ensure students receive the best education possible. A strategic approach ensures maximum impact on learning outcomes. Educators and students can benefit from careful planning by utilizing planning tools.



4. FINDINGS:

Influence of mother in planning:

Planning has become part and parcel of our lives. Planning is necessary in our daily life. All the mothers can be rightly regarded as 'THE GREAT PLANNER' as they handle all the hectic situations with a plan in their hand. Mothers are responsible for the households apart from bringing up their children. With so much work entrusted to them, they are able to perform their tasks to their fullest. This is possible with the help of a plan. Mothers are tuned to run the family even in the case of short of money. In most of the families, mothers are the ones who prepare the monthly budgets and meet all the expenses within the budgeted amount.

Nowadays, women are multitaskers, performing house chores and the office works. Without a right plan, it cannot be possible.

Children, whom she grooms, takes her as an example and start preparing plans starting from their homework, choosing their career etc. and they in turn positively impact their children's life and this continues as a cycle.

Nowadays, every action demands a plan. In a dynamic and ever changing environment, planning has become the necessity. As elucidated before, it helps in unforeseen situations and other contingencies.

How a planner should be?

A planner can be compared to a tree. People resort to such trees that bear fruits. Some trees may not bear fruits; yet they may be attractive because of their flowers. The fruits should be hanging in high branches (if they are in low branches, others will pick them and the owner of the tree will be left with none.) Though actually unripe, they should appear to be ripe.

Likewise, a planner whose plans are working out well, will be approached by all the team members. Even if his/her plans are not tangible, if he/she speaks politely, people will approach him/her. Though not much skillful, he/she should appear to be knowledgeable so that he/she can command respect. On the other hand, if he/she exposes his/her weaknesses, he/she will be discarded by everybody like a barren tree.

Many organizations conduct conferences and meetings, which are to be planned months ago, as they have to provide good facilities to the audience, to be organized and not to rush in the last minute. If they are unable to provide the facilities and other necessary amenities, then it will create a bad image. This, in turn, will take an impact on the profitability of the business.

The planner cannot have a casual attitude by thinking "Let us cross the bridge when we come to it". He/she has to assess the situation and formulate a course of action that will be beneficial to the company in the long run.

Why should we plan?

A question may be raised to the readers. In spite of careful planning, we come across unexpected problems, resulting in a total collapse of the plan. Such being the case, why should we spend our



energy and time in planning? It must be understood that planning is not meant to eradicate crisis. Let us take an example of a natural calamity. Nobody can stop a natural calamity, but one should be prepared for it, so that its ill effects could be minimized. Planning lays foundation for disciplined thinking and helps in avoiding hasty decisions and haphazard actions. Planning attempts to achieve a consistent and coordinated structure of operation, focused on desired ends. Without plans, there will be chaos.

This outlines the need for planning in day to day life. Planning is a function of management and management involves carrying out the tasks systematically. As the management is concerned about the day to day activities as well, planning becomes an indispensable part in our lives.

What is necessary for devising a plan?

Intellect is the basis of planning. A plan is to be guided by intellect. A man blinded by prejudice may fail to see the intricacies of the plan. He may not be able to foresee the future or anticipate possible impediments or find solutions for the problem. But the intellect must never cause strain to others and he should possess the gift of speech.

The most important quality for devising a plan is to be courageous. Mere planning is useless. One must have the courage and boldness to implement it. Otherwise, it will result in heavy expenditure and loss.

Moreover, plans are very important when it comes to deadlines. The work must be properly planned in order to complete it within the due date. Hence plans become integral part of all the jobs as all the jobs have deadlines.

Planning is an age-old concept

It can be rightly said that planning activity is an age-old concept. Many are aware of the importance of planning from the Hindu epic Ramayana, where at every stage, Lord Rama had a plan to proceed with. Vidura Niti is taken up for the study in order to educate about the significance of this work.

This study emphasizes the fact that Vidura Niti acts as a guide book, exclusively for the management personnel and administrators in the view of planning as it was held that, with good planning and forecasting, the Kuru clan and the entire Hastinapur could have been a role model for other clans.

Planning brings about a positive change:

Planning brings about a behavioral change in the attitude of employees. When a plan is devised, the members, whom it may concern have to be informed about it for the proper implementation. The opinion of them must be sought for the success of the programme envisaged. This brings about a healthy atmosphere in the organization and the employees will feel valued when they are involved for the planning process. This will in turn have a result in the performance of the employees and



they will not feel demotivated. Participation of the employees who are tend to be affected by the plan is vital.

5. CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion and findings, we can infer that planning is vitalat all spheres of life. The most significant finding is that it is an age old conceptand to conclude, Vidura Nitiis considered as the foundation of planning. It is Vidura Niti, that forms the basis of today's management. There are many insights such as planning in advance, effective contingency plan etc., from Vidura Niti that are being adopted by the present day management. MahamantriVidura necessitates planning, in order to avoid hasty actions. The wisdom from Vidura Niti offers a framework for enhancing our lives through thoughtful actions. On diligent observation, it is obvious that the modern management philosophies can be traced back to Vidura Niti.

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