

BOOK REVIEW

# Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives by Ashish Pandey, Pawan

Budhwar, and Dharm Bhawuk, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 581 pp, INR 14,826 (hardcover), ISBN 9783030879075.

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Indigenous Indian Management is a resource that offers insights into the distinctive philosophies and practices in the field of management and organisational psychology as derived from the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage. It attempts to explore traditional Indian management knowledge systems and blend the wisdom contained within those frameworks with modern management philosophies by drawing on a multitude of disciplines spanning philosophy, history, religious scriptures, management, and education to provide a holistic overview of management as grounded within the Indian context across a total of 16 chapters. Furthermore, the book also provides practical applications of these conceptualisations by analysing social settings, cultural landscapes, and business environments in India. It offers a fresh perspective on how these interconnected entities could influence the way we can leverage core cultural ideals of the Indian traditionalist management philosophies and the distinctive nature of the uniquely diverse socio-economic arenas thriving in the country, thereby portraying the potential of these two characteristics in shaping the behavioural manifestations of Indian management.

The premise of the book is novel as it strives to present a holistic overview of the several indigenous concepts, ethos, and ideas that lie tangentially to the topic of management having originally evolved from distinct fields. The volume is an impressive effort in drawing out the underlying frameworks to demonstrate how these ostensibly disparate concepts are in fact interlinked and can be viewed

through a unifying lens to provide the foundation for a synthesised knowledge system of Indian management. This unique conceptualisation of the book makes it a valuable and enjoyable read for practitioners of management and organisational psychology, especially those with a deep interest in the intersection of management practices, cultural studies, and the integration of traditional wisdom with modern theories. The key themes covered in the book address the core concepts and issues within contemporary management literature albeit from the perspective of ancient texts, thus, enabling the application of indigenous Indian management principles to organisational settings in the current times. Some themes explored include culturally relevant management philosophies, sustainable and holistic management practices, leadership, ethics, and social responsibility to name a few. Such an eclectic perspective offers a little something for the reader who is interested in the idea of trying an innovative approach to management in the contemporary organisation.

The book is structured such that the first chapter provides the context and need for developing a theoretical framework focussed on Indian management primarily based on the indigenous literature and philosophies. Chapters 2–6 present the various concepts and ideals of management derived from several fields in the indigenous literature and propose an ontological framework for integration of these concepts into a knowledge system on Indian management. Chapters 7–15 present the evidence for how these indigenous management concepts and philosophies apply to Indian economic and business systems, and underscore implications for policy and practice as well as provide directions for future research on the topic. Finally, chapter 16 reviews the key insights from the previous chapters and discusses the opportunities for the emergence of Indian management as a discipline. This structure allows the reader to gain an overview of several themes as noted previously that draw out the timeless nature of management principles as rooted in traditional Indian texts thus enabling a broad discussion around the adaptation of these principles to address current challenges of the modern Indian business world.

Given that the emphasis of the volume lies on the premise of the fusion of traditional Indian philosophies and values with contemporary management strategies and practices, several of the concepts reviewed are from ancient

texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Arthashastra*. There is a strong focus on ethical leadership as the book advocates for a value-based leadership style that emphasises integrity and social responsibility in the context of corporate governance. Relatedly, the book delves into concepts like *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* and *Sarvodaya* such that practitioners are encouraged to actively adopt a more inclusive and equitable approach such that business systems can contribute to community well-being and social welfare. In doing so, the authors also reflect on values such as balance, harmony, and sustainability, thus urging readers to prioritise holistic management practices that cater to global concerns around the negative impact of conducting business on the environment. The resource shuns the idea of a management framework that emphasises a one-size-fits-all approach, and promotes ideas around designing management principles and strategies that are aligned with the prevalent cultural and social contexts and underscores the importance of adopting culturally sensitive practices. Another bold proposition in the book is the appeal to integrate spirituality with management processes to enhance well-being and culture for the achievement of greater meaning, purpose, and fulfilment at both the individual and organisational levels. Furthermore, the volume highlights the importance of diversifying content in management education which the authors propose can be done by incorporating teachings from indigenous texts and designing pedagogical initiatives that aim to amalgamate traditional philosophies and modern strategies in the space of management.

Across the aforementioned themes the book explores, it offers a fresh approach to management based on cultural context and proposes a range of practical applications. The reader stands to gain a deeper understanding of Indian culture especially in the business context. The book introduces alternative approaches to management while challenging the reader to critically think about why organisations manage the way they do. However, there are also a few points that the volume may fall short on. Since it relies heavily on ancient texts, some of the ideas are not thoroughly supported by robust scientific approaches backed by data-driven analysis. This particularly becomes a cause of concern for practitioners since the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts remains largely subjective precluding empirical research that can ultimately lead to a consistent body of knowledge. Furthermore, the book is rather content heavy

with high narrative complexity in terms of the indigenous concepts and ideals it reviews. While this may encourage and further discussions around traditional versus modern management philosophies and theories, it fails to be readily applicable to organisational settings. The lack of actionable strategies, insights, and tools that can help practitioners better integrate traditional concepts with modern practices also speaks to the limited scope of application of the takeaways from the book. Furthermore, while the thrust of the volume is on traditional Indian management philosophies, the book tends to overemphasise concepts that it borrows heavily from the holy texts of one religion. This has the effect of underrepresenting the teachings from the myriad sub-cultures that have originated and evolved in the country over several centuries. In doing so, a real risk that the volume runs is that of excessive romanticisation and idealisation of some cultural ideals and concepts. Thus, a lot is left to be desired in the context of a more objective critique of these traditional philosophies and a critical examination of their limitations in applicability to the contemporary business world.

Perhaps the most important area that the book fails to deliver on is its insufficient focus on the application of the traditional concepts, ethos, and ideals it extols to modern management. There is little real estate within the volume that addresses challenges of today's business environment ranging from evolving organisational structures to the rampant advancement of technology. Rising geopolitical tensions and their subsequent impact on economies and trade networks worldwide, the modern-day trends that impact the future of work - hybrid work models, four-day work weeks, the rapidly booming start-up culture in the country, the growth and adoption of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, the ever-increasing threats from the country's immediate neighbourhood are all very real challenges to the economic landscape and business organisations in the country. These factors have several ramifications for management as well. The volume fails to adequately discuss how the indigenous concepts of management in the Indian culture can be leveraged to address and potentially resolve these complex challenges. Lastly, while the resource offers directions for research and enquiry into several of these traditional concepts, an in-depth discussion on the potential research methodologies that can be explored from an epistemological stand-point would have been much appreciated.

On the whole, *Indigenous Indian Management* is a good read for someone interested in learning about Indian culture and how the ethos and ideals therein apply to the world of management. One may even gain a broad understanding of how those traditionalist ideals align with modern management philosophies and principles. However, hoping to takeaway actionable strategies to implement an integrated management approach rooted in tradition to tackle your modern day organisational challenges may be expecting too much from the book.

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