

Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on Business and Management

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ABSTRACT

Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda with the philosophical insights, offer profound and transformative dimensions on business and management, rooted in ethics, self-realization and service to humanity. His ideas emphasize the integration of spiritual values with professional excellence, advocating for leadership that is driven by character, vision and social responsibility. Unlike traditional management theories that often prioritize profit maximization and mechanistic efficiency, Vivekananda's approach underlines the importance of willpower, moral integrity and holistic development of individuals within organizations. A comparative analysis shows that while conventional management models focus on external control, hierarchy and transactional relationships where Vivekananda's thoughts promote self-mastery, empowerment and a participative ethos. His vision harmonizes with contemporary patterns such as servant leadership and transformational management. The development of a copulative curriculum based on Vivekananda's principles can revolutionize management education. Such a curriculum would unite ethical leadership, mindfulness and social entrepreneurship that foster managers who are not only competent but also compassionate and visionary. The curriculum would bridge the gap between personal growth and professional success, encouraging students to view business as a means of societal upliftment rather than mere economic gain. This article is grounded in qualitative research through document analysis, examining primary texts, speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. The study reveals recurring themes of duty, fearlessness and unity, which can be recontextualized to address modern managerial challenges. By analyzing these documents, the research highlights the relevance of Vivekananda's thoughts in shaping a value-based management framework that is both timeless and timely.

Key Words: Business, Management, Vivekananda Way, Servant Leadership

A. INTRODUCTION

The great man, who was born on 12th January 1863 at 6:33 a.m., was welcomed by the conch sound on the occasion of *Makar Sankranti*. He is the soul of India, who brought together East and West. He advanced India's thought by several centuries. Many thinkers like the great freedom fighter of India, Subhas Chandra Bose or Yogi Aurobindo Ghosh were inspired by

him and worked for the nation. Inspired by his philosophy, countless people and organizations are working for the benefit of people, the nation and the world. We know that Columbus discovered America; Americans say that Swami Vivekananda discovered the soul of America. Swami Vivekananda, who was a multi-talented person; there is almost nothing that he has left out of his discussion. In his short life span, he imparted many thoughts, theories and techniques that are equally applicable to today's business and management. His words are pure.

When the terms 'management' or 'human resource' were not used or conceptualized in the eighteenth-century economies and business discussions, Swami Vivekananda coined the terms- management, 'human capital', etc. with his far-sighted wisdom. He identified the importance of improvement in the social sector and human capital development of our country. Now, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also started publishing the annual Human Development Index (HDI) every year. This index shows the relationship between the economic status and economic progress of a country. When the business world is blinded by the lust for profit, he said that the only goal of profit is to look at the scoreboard and not at the ball in tennis. Perhaps he is talking about the wealth maximization strategy.

In this study, this will be explored how standards of business and management can be further enhanced. In management, there are some schools of management thought, such as the thought of F.W. Taylor, Henry Fayol, Mary Parker Follett, etc. contributed a lot. In this study, it will be analyzed how the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda are relevant for management. This study is trying to find the universal message of Swami Vivekananda at all levels of business and management through this article. This study shows how there is enough scope for updating various areas and processes of management based on the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda, by making the process of management more humane, which can not only be applicable universally, but is also very relevant to modern scenarios.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

The study is based on the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, the multifaceted personality, who enlightened India and the whole of mankind with deep conciseness. The study is an inquest into where and how his thoughts are relevant and applicable in business and management.

Conceptual Framework

The study is an inquest into the application of the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda in almost every part, techniques, theorems/thoughts and tools of business and management in a qualitative way. The term "management" implies the theories and techniques of management, especially business management, etc.

Summary of Key Literature

The review of literature will guide the researcher in gaining an understanding of the methodology used, limitations of various available estimation procedures, database, lucid interpretation and reconciliation of the conflicting results. Besides this, the review of earlier studies will explore the avenues for present and future research related to the subject matter. A number of studies have been carried out on different aspects. Some of those are mentioned below:

- Swami Someswarananda was a *sannyasi* of the Ramakrishna Order. He was the director of the Vivekananda Centre for Indian Management, Indore, and believed in just one mantra - Indian Indigenous Management. He had patented a business model called the *Ekalavya* Approach, in which workers learn managerial skills without looking up or behind their shoulders. Several successes in the unorganised sector prove his theory that business strategies evolve from within. Swamiji Vivekananda believed everyone has the potential to manage. In the book “*Swami Vivekananda Ebong Management*” (Classic Books, Kolkata), the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on management are discussed lucidly. He pointed out the differences between traditional management thoughts and the vision of Swami Vivekananda. *Rajarshi* Model on Leadership, *Ekalavya* Approach on construction of sales management, *Arjun* Model on managerial creativity, *Namaskar* Model on marketing, etc., are examples of the application of Swami Vivekananda’s thoughts in an indigenous way for better business management. (Someswarananda Swami)
- Koutilya, Mitra discussed the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda in economics through his book – “*Artho Chintai Vivekananda*” (Prachi Publications). Swami Vivekananda was a multifaceted personality; his vision was not only on spirituality but also on navigating countries for overall economic and industrial development. Mitra Koutilya discussed in a very intellectual manner, the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda to boost the economy of local-national, rural-urban, national-global levels. (Mitra Koutilya)
- Roy, Hirendra Nath, in his book, “*Economic Thinking of Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in the light of modern theory of Economic Development*” (2017), pointed out the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda for overall economic development. (Roy, Hirendra Nath)
- Chaudhuri, Ashim (2016), in his book named “*Swami Vivekananda – The Ultimate Paradox Manager*”, discussed the management of paradox from the view of Leon

Festinger's "Theory of Cognitive Dissonance" over Swami Vivekananda's life. He identified five paradoxes of Swami Vivekananda and showed the way out, how Swamiji managed the paradoxes. (Chaudhuri, Ashim)

- Bhattacharyya, B. (2018), in his book named "*Swami Vivekananda – On Institution Building & Management*", discussed the thoughts on the ways of institution building and managerial process. He has laid out how the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda are applicable to organise, plan, forecast, lead, coordinate and motivate undoubtedly. (Bhattacharyya, B)
- Goswami, Sribas (2014), in his article named "*Swami Vivekananda: A Management Guru*", conducted a study on how Swamiji is relevant to management in various contexts such as leadership, globalisation, conflict management, etc. (Goswami, 2014)
- Swami Nikhileswarananda, in his article, "*Swami Vivekananda: The Innovator of Management Values*", discussed globalisation, corporate responsibility, trusteeship management, servant leadership, efficiency and universality concepts of Swami Vivekananda and how these concepts are significant in today's corporate world. (Nikhileswarananda, Swami)
- Goel, S. L., in the article "*Swami Vivekananda: Administrative Thoughts*", conceptualised the administrative thoughts of Swami Vivekananda. He highlighted the ideas of Swami Vivekananda on the unity of the world, world peace and brotherhood, education & training to promote man-making, education of masses, women empowerment, science of yoga, scientific approach of religion, the value in natural heritage, casteless society, etc. He coordinated these concepts in the administrative process. (Goel et al., 2013)

C. RESEARCH PROBLEM

For the study, the available literature in the relevant areas and topics has been duly considered. From an analytical study of the literature, it is found that several studies have been conducted on Swami Vivekananda and management, leadership, administration, motivation, industrialisation, women empowerment & women entrepreneurship, etc. But as per the reviewed literature, no comprehensive studies have been carried out to inquest or analyze the significance, relevance, application or impact of the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on the various segments of the commerce and management domain.

D.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The work will be conducted with the objectives:

- 1) To compare the traditional thoughts of business and Management with the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda. In this regard, its cardinal aim is to propose a way of application or update the traditional ideas from the perspective of Swami Vivekananda
- 2) To reappraise the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on business and Management.
- 3) To rethink or re-approach traditional thoughts with constructive, humanitarian and global perspectives in the Vivekananda way.
- 4) To suggest a curriculum based on the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda regarding business and management.

E. METHODOLOGY

This work is qualitative research. To do the document analysis, it will utilize the data from primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data source is the 1-9 volume of *“The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda”*, published by Advaita Ashram. This set of books is easily available. The secondary sources of data are from the books on Swami Vivekananda, e.g., 1-6 volume of *“Swami Vivekananda in The West”* written by Marie Louise Burke, *“The Master As I Saw Him”* written by Sister Nivedita, etc. and lectures of the senior monks of the Ramakrishna Mission, information from branch centres of Ramakrishna Mission in this context, reports of corporate and industrial world in this regards etc. A qualitative approach will be applied to meet the objectives of the study. But no comprehensive case study has been done for this work, which is its limitation.

Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on Business and Management

Swami Vivekananda prescribed that all work should be selfless service that creates a positive, collaborative, trustful and harmonious environment in an organisation. His famous quote in Bengali, *“lokshe na pouchhano porjonto themo na”* (don’t stop until your goal is achieved), shows how he emphasized the importance of setting goals and achieving them. For organisations too, the importance of setting the mission and vision, objectives and goals and ensuring that achieving these becomes the responsibility of not only the management, but every ground-level employee, has now been recognized as the key to strategic management, in line with the thoughts of Swamiji. He proposed the idea of Servant leadership, insightful leadership, empathetic leadership, which have been identified as some of the most important characteristics of a good leader these days globally.

Servant Leadership is the concept of helping subordinates with their needs to do the job successfully. Robert Greenleaf recognized the concept of Servant Leadership from the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and focused on the corporate world in the 1970s. Swamiji was a very pragmatic person who believed in Servant-based Leadership, which says that a leader should always try to empower all those around them. J.Sterling Livingstor describes it as ‘Pygmalion Effect’ (Goswami, Sribas). A leader tries for a gradual improvement of

subordinates. His urge to motivate people around him can be seen from a letter of his direct disciple, Swami Shuddhananda in 1897. He writes, “...Lastly, you must remember I expect more from my children than from my brethren (his brother disciples). I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Every one of you must be a giant-must, this is my word. Obedience, readiness, and love for the cause – if you have these three, nothing can hold you back.” He also emphasized the importance of continuous learning and self-learning for professional growth.

Not only was the Servant Leadership, Indian Indigenous Management models like the *Ekalavya* Approach, in which workers learn managerial skills without looking up or behind their shoulders, *Rajarshi* Model on Leadership, *Ekalavya* Approach on construction of sales management, *Arjun* Model on managerial creativity, *Namaskar* Model on marketing, etc., are examples of the application of Swami Vivekananda’s thoughts for betterment of modern business management. (Someswarananda Swami)

Swami Vivekananda was a spiritual leader, a social reformer, a nationalist, a yogi, an educationist and so on. His vision is very important in leadership management. He has the power of spiritual leadership and also of institution-building. After returning from the West, he made the blueprint for the Ramakrishna Mission Association that was founded on 1st May, 1897. Somebody might be surprised that a yogi founded an association! But his mission is nation-building in a spiritual way. Then, the conjugal works of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission have been transmitted around the world. Swami Vivekananda did not have any formal degree in management, but his practical ideas helped him to build the organisation. According to William Hitt, a leader must have four basic traits (Figure 1) –



Figure 1: Four Traits of Leadership

Swamiji was a born leader. He had some qualities: a) Spiritual attainment, b) High IQ, c) High motivation power, d) Commitment, e) Transparency, f) Impersonal Interest and g) Selflessness. All these have been identified as the essential and most desirable characteristics of a corporate leader as well.

Swami Vivekananda has the infinite power of a source of insights on almost all dimensions of management- team building, conflict resolution, conceptualisation of institutional structure, coordination, etc. (Bhattacharyya, B). Swamiji teaches us how to build an institution and a managerial process by founding the Ramakrishna Mission. He has laid out the thoughts which are applicable to organise, plan, forecast, lead, coordinate and motivate clearly.

The Father of Indian Industry, Sir Jamshedji Tata (1839-1904), was inspired by the great spirit of Swami Vivekananda. On the inspirational discussion in the ship going from Yokohama to Vancouver (1893), Jamshedji established the Research Institute of Science in November 1898 and appreciated Swamiji.

"But for him, we would not have gained our freedom. We, therefore, owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and wisdom inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasure received from him"- C. Rajagopalachari. "He was less than 40 years of age when he lay stretched upon the pyre. But the flame of that pyre is still alight today. From his ashes, like those of the phoenix of old, has sprung a new conscience of India-the magic bird faith in her unity and the Great message, brooded over from Vedic times by the drawing spirit of his ancient race-the message for which it must render account to the rest of mankind"- Romain Rolland. Swami Vivekananda worked for the unity of the world, world peace and brotherhood, education & training to promote man-making, education of masses, women empowerment, science of yoga, scientific approach of religion, preservation of natural heritage, casteless society, etc.

Besides, the zenith of contribution, Swami Vivekananda, in his personal life, overcame some personal paradoxes. There is a scope to discuss the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance on Swami Vivekananda's life. He was a self-actualizing person, eliminating the dissonances that reached the level of 'self-actualization' of Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs". Swami Vivekananda could manage his paradoxes successfully by reducing his dissonances could be attributed to the fact that he was a self-actualizing man. He had actually reached a level higher than that of 'self-actualization', a level that Maslow explained as 'self-transcendence'. But Maslow was not very aware of how an egoless monk like Vivekananda could reach the stage of self-actualization or self-transcendence. Swamiji was quite indifferent to the lower-level needs because he would pursue the lower-level needs in favor of the higher needs. This may be related to servant leadership, in which this indifference to the lower-level needs is the inner voice. However, A leader/entrepreneur may have some paradoxes from a personal level or organisational atmosphere but they also defeat them by following the Vivekananda Way. (Figure 2)

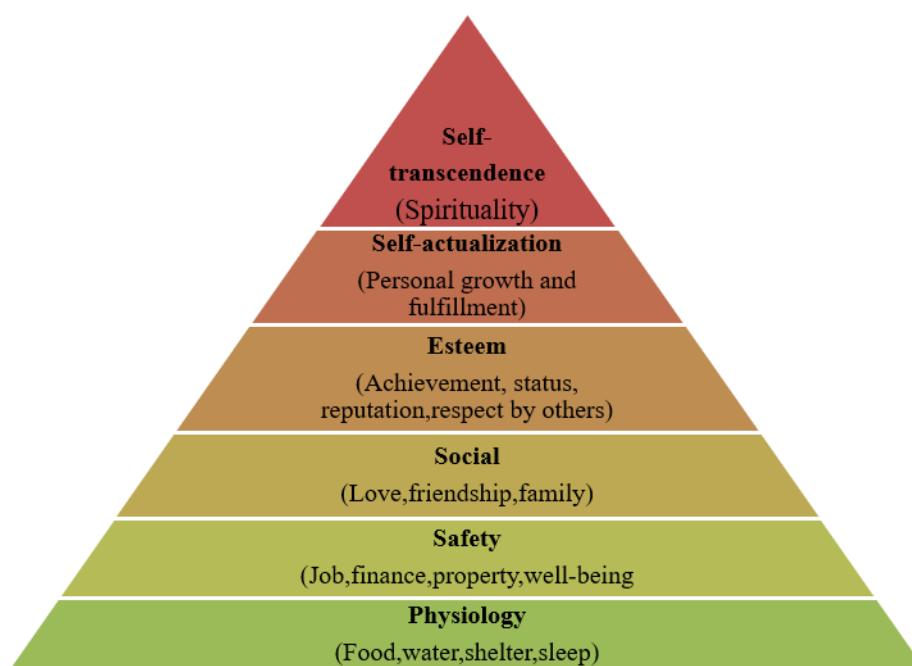


Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid

Source: Chaudhuri, Ashim (2016) - *Swami Vivekananda – The Ultimate Paradox Manager, modifying by adding ‘self-transcendence’ at the top. The top two are being needed and the bottom four are deficiency needs.*

While the traditional model of Maslow’s theory focused only on the first five needs of the pyramid, the recent incorporation of the transcendence need or the need of spirituality shows how the thought of Swami Vivekananda on the significance of spirituality in leadership is relevant in today’s scenario. Abraham Maslow said, “Transcendence also means to become divine or godlike, to go beyond the merely human. But one must be careful here not to make anything extra-human or supernatural out of this kind of statement. I am thinking of using the word ‘metahuman’ or ‘B-human’ (Being-human) in order to stress that this becoming very high or divine or godlike is part of human nature, even though it is not often seen in fact. It is still a potentiality of human nature.”- Abraham Maslow

Traditional thoughts of management and thoughts of Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda refers to management in a different way from traditional thoughts of management. The core differences are stated in Figure 3.

Traditional Management Thoughts	Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchy centric • Marketing is competition • Management is manage men tactfully • Image of the organisation based on profit & loss • Profit making is the ultimate goal • Management meets needs • Manager comples tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work centric • Marketing is co-operation • Management is inspire men to do the best • Image of the organisation based on social values • Making value for society and nation is the goal • Management solves problems • Manager creates performers

Figure 3:Traditional Management Thoughts and Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda

The view is different from traditional management thoughts. Swami Vivekananda navigated a unique path for modern management-

Work-centric: Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda in the context of management are work-centric. Swami Vivekananda consistently stressed upon hard work, perseverance to achieve a goal. According to him, work is worship, work as a means to self-realisation. Deep

concentration on work results a success. He emphasized Karma Yoga, which inspires selfless work. It purifies the heart and leads to fulfilment. Work is a means of opportunity to manifest one's inner divinity and potential.

Co-operation:

He argued that marketing is not a competition, but a co-operation. Swami Vivekananda emphasized that each soul is potentially divine. All should respect everyone's skills and contributions.

Motivation:

The manager motivates others and creates performers. Swamiji believed in the inherent divinity and strength within every individual. Manager can nurture a positive work environment by believing in their team members' abilities. He provides opportunities for them to take responsibility. In the modern management context, it is the 'Pygmalion effect'. Vivekananda urged to reach the goal, stating, "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

Creates performers: He advocated by cultivating unwavering faith in oneself and one's abilities.

Wealth maximisation and sustainability: His concept is deeply intertwined with the holistic development of society. He emphasized an inclusive economics. Manager operates with integrity, considers the long-term consequences of thinking and actions.

Social values:

Profit or high dividend is not the only factor of the goodwill of an organisation, he emphasised, social values.

Problem solving:

According to him, management does not meet needs; it solves problems.

Corporate Social Responsibility:

The inclusion of corporate social responsibility as an essential and inevitable activity on the part of a company highlights how traditional management thoughts are changing and how the world is moving towards accepting the way of management and leadership in line with the thoughts and suggestions of Swami Vivekananda. There have been several studies corroborating a positive impact of CSR activities on the profitability of companies. (Maqbool & Zameer, 2018)

His management thoughts focus on stakeholder well-being. Integrity, honesty and responsibility are very important for sustainable business practices. Modern management can move towards embracing the thoughts of swami vivekananda.

Curriculum based on the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda regarding business and management

After analyzing the content in this regard, a suitable curriculum based on Swami Vivekananda's thoughts may be framed which is more holistic and practical. His man-making policy is applicable in all sectors. Management inspires men for the organisation. In addition to the existing curriculum, a cohesive or copulative curriculum may be shown in his thoughts on management by Figure 4 -

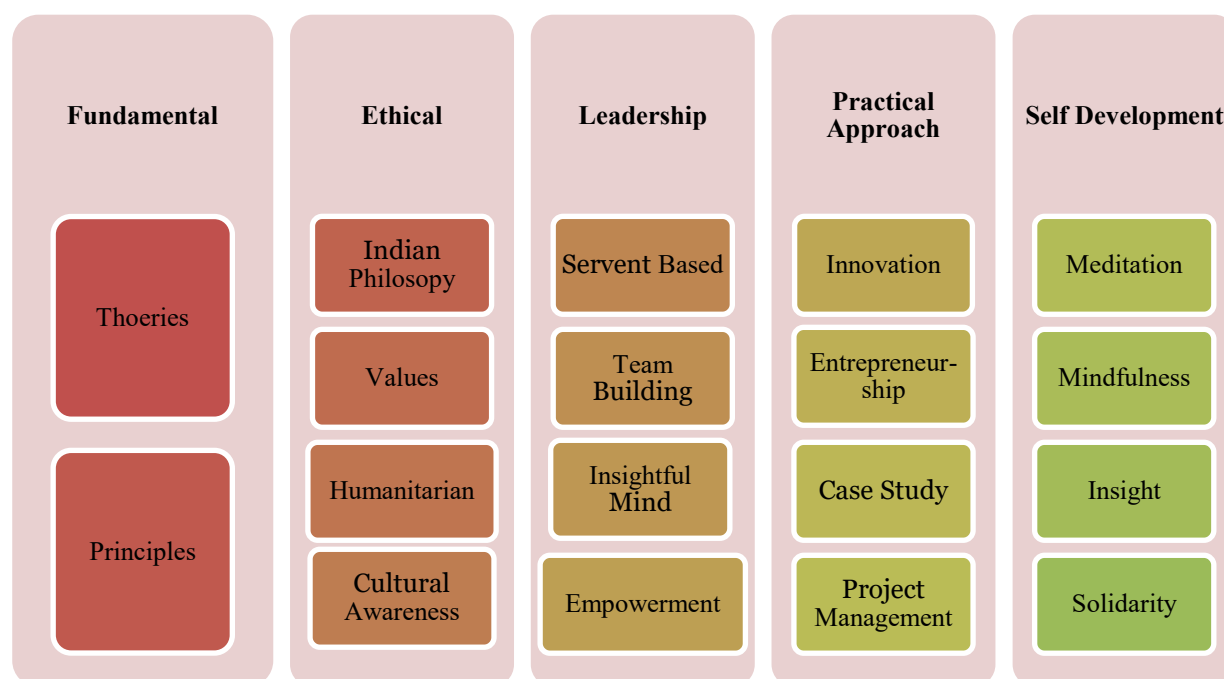


Figure 4: Proposed cohesive or copulative curriculum

Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is based on 'man-making education'. He emphasized character building, strong mentality and self-reliance. Fundamental theories and principles should be the priority for management studies. Management is for people and with people, so there should be some concept of Indian philosophy, values, humanitarian aspects and cultural awareness, etc. embedded in the process. Leadership is the core element of management, and the proposed curriculum guides for leadership. Swami Vivekananda always concentrated on a practical approach and self-development. The curriculum might have some provisions for these.

F. CONCLUSION

There are so many thoughts or schools of management, viz., Classical schools – scientific management, bureaucratic management, administrative management, Behavioural schools – human relations, behaviour, Quantitative approach, Systems schools, Contingency approach, etc., which hold their relevancy in the appropriate situations. Along with this, application of the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on management is also practicable or applicable and there should be a separate school of thought based on management in the Swami Vivekananda

Way. His thoughts help organizations focus more on wealth maximization rather than profit maximization, reaping long-term benefits. Several concepts propounded by him are being widely accepted around the world and a more detailed study on his thoughts is required to achieve a more holistic style of management for a sustainable future.

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