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Kauṭilya's Philosophy of Selection

Success of any institution depends on its personnel. Any institution or organization is set up by its founder or founders to attain a goal or to serve a particular purpose. Family, the smallest institution of the society, is also set up or accepted to attain some well defined goals. The state, likewise, is the largest institution of the society. It has also some well defined goals to be achieved. In the same way, any business establishment is also set up to provide quality products or services to the society and to earn some profit out of these activities. But proper functioning of above mentioned institutions or any other institutions or organizations depends, to a great extent, on its members. So, it is quite necessary that an institution has a team of members, having certain qualities required for that activity.

Kauṭilya, in his work Arthaśāstra, discussed some qualities, some tests and some parameters to choose the right candidate for the proper functioning of the state to serve the purpose of welfare of the people at large. This selection of the right person is one of the five steps of mantra, discussed by Kauṭilya in *mantrādhikāra* as follows:

*Karmanāmārambhodayaḥ Puruṣadravyasampat deśakālavibhāgaḥ
vinipātapratīkāraḥ kāryasiddhiriti pañcāṅgo mantraḥ* (1.15.46; 44-45).

The whole concept of management of any activity depends on these five steps in view of Kauṭilya as he says, “*mantrapūrvāssarvārambhāḥ*” (1.15.2; 41).

Any activity must follow the due consideration. All pros and cons of the task to be undertaken must be taken care of before a project is pursued. Any angle left unconsidered or ill considered may cause a hurdle at later stage. Kauṭilya has listed them one by one in a structured order as follows:

1. Measures to undertake any activity.
2. Appropriate personnel and material.
3. Appropriate place and time.
4. Provisions against failure.
5. Accomplishment of the task.

Out of these, five steps second one is very much important. In the process of an action, these are the persons who employ the material as per requirement. Hence, the primacy of the personnel over the material is quite evident as the man being a conscious being can employ the matter as per his own wish to complete any activity. A careful observation will reveal that all other steps depend upon the personnel for execution. What so ever may be the plan; ultimately it is a person who has to execute it. Thus, the significance of a right candidate selected for a job is supreme. Only a right candidate can deliver the expected or the most desired results in a given condition. It becomes more important when the fact is considered that we cannot control some situations including natural calamities and public mood. Recession, inflation, wars, riots, epidemic and corruption are other factors which worsen the situation further. These are outcome of human policies or activities in a long run and though manmade, can not be controlled by a group of people, a government or a world body like UN, World-Bank , IMF,

or WHO. Only the factors those are in our reach or can be controlled easily, can be managed and must be managed.

Kauṭilya has discussed some qualities that must be considered while selecting management trainees. If these qualities are absent in a candidate, he cannot be trained as required by the organization. So HR department of a company, employer of any establishment, public or private, must pay proper attention in this direction in order to get desired result. Kauṭilya says:

*Kṛtakassvābhāvikaśca vinayaḥ Kriyā hi dravyaṁ vinayati nādravyam
śuśrūṣāśravaṇagrahaṇadhāraṇavijñānohāpohatattvābhiniṣṭabuddhiṁ
vidyā vinayati netaram (1.5.3-5;17)*

In view of Kauṭilya persons to be selected are of two types. Some are with proper vision and knowledge required for the job at the time of selection. These are included in the category of persons having natural humility (svābhāvika vinaya) and are not needed to be trained separately for the job. They learn in the school of nature through observation. Some lack proper vision and knowledge required for the job but have the qualities required for a trainee. These fall in the category of the persons having nurtured humility (kṛtaka vinaya). These are required to be trained for the job they have been selected. Before selection, Kauṭilya suggests to test whether they have certain qualities or not. These qualities are as follows:

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|----|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Desire to listen | (Śuśrūṣā) |
| 2. | Listening | (Śravaṇa) |
| 3. | Learning | (Grahaṇa) |
| 4. | Retention | (Dhāraṇa) |
| 5. | Analysis of cause and effect | (Vijñāna) |
| 6. | Understanding unexpressed | (Ūha) |
| 7. | Rejection of irrelevant views | (Apoha) |

8. Focus on reality (*Tattvābhiniṣṭabuddhi*)

A bit explanation will be helpful to grasp the idea behind this prescription of qualities deemed necessary for a trainable person.

1. Desire to listen

In Indian intellectual tradition listening is of foremost importance to learn anything because Indian tradition is oral tradition. In this tradition teachers used to instruct orally and students used to listen carefully. After listening they used to reflect on these instructions from all angles and then used to meditate accordingly. This sequence of listening, analyzing and meditation is indicated in Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad in these words.

Atmā vā are dṛṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyo
(vasudeva, 2.4.5; 87)

If one has not patience to listen, he can not know the viewpoint of others. In the same way if one has not desire to listen, simply he can not learn. So, employer must observe whether a candidate to be selected as a trainee has a tendency to listen or not. If he has not desire to listen, his selection as a trainee will prove futile.

2. Listening

If one has the desire to listen but actually does not listen for any reason, he is also not fit to be selected as trainee. But in this case it seems that there may be some problem with the candidate in acquiring the training and if that is removed then he may be fit for the post of trainee because he has desire to listen and thus he is open to receive the training. In our country so many years after the independence, a large section of people could not go to school for so many reasons, though it has desire to get education i.e. desire to listen.

So, if one has the desire to listen but could not listen so far, may be fit for the post of management trainee but his desire to listen must be strong enough. In other words he should not have the desire to listen only,

he should also have the patience to listen. Employer should test the patience of candidate to listen also before selecting him as a trainee.

3. Learning

One should have the ability to learn also. It is the necessary sign of a trainable person. Though desire to listen includes the desire to learn but desire to listen alone is not sufficient. After listening, one should learn also. In other words learning is an indicator of his proper listening. Listening must be followed by learning.

4. Retention

Learning should be retained as long as possible. If one learns quickly and forgets quickly, then it is not of much use. The trainee should be judged from this angle also. If one has this quality, he will be trained with less effort, compared to others not having this quality.

5. Analysis of cause and effect

One has to analyse the cause and its effect in a given situation after learning anything. Analysis of cause and its effect leads to advanced study of a subject. It is called *vijnana* by Kautilya. If one has this tendency, it will be better for an organization to have such person in its research and development section.

6. Understanding unexpressed

After the analysis of cause and effect, one should infer from the listened matter. A proper analysis leads to the understanding of even the unexpressed. This inference is necessary to grasp the subject in a better way as it supplies more material than received during the process of learning. It is called *ūha*.

7. Rejection of irrelevant views

Apart from the inference of relevant views in accordance with the nature of subject, it is also necessary to reject the irrelevant views. Rather it is more necessary to reject the irrelevant views than to include relevant

views by inference. It is called apoha in Indian tradition and Kauṭilya is indicating it in the present context.

8. Focus on reality

One who is committed to know the reality, remains ever ready to pass through this long and painstaking process beginning with listening. One should focus on truth rather than focusing on individuals and other sources of knowledge. If a trainee has this quality, he is the fittest person for the selection as a trainee because this is the most important quality which is followed by all other abovementioned qualities.

If one has all these eight qualities he is a fit person to be selected as a trainee and the effort put into his training will yield expected results.

Selection of one's own team

Often, organization has to prepare a team to work together to finish a project. Kauṭilya primarily discussed the qualities and various tests for *amātya*. *Amātya* literally means 'one who remains with'. In view of management *amātya* corresponds to the member of a team and Rājā corresponds to the team-leader. Further Kauṭilya makes difference between team-member (*amātya*) and counsellor (*mantrin*) and suggests more stringent criterion for the selection of counsellor. Kauṭilya recommends some qualities to be looked for to select team-members as follows:

*Jānapado' bhijātaḥ svavagrahaḥ kṛtaśilpaścakṣuṣmān prājño
dhārayiṣṇurdakṣo vāgmī pragalbhaḥ pratipattimānutsāhaprabhāvayuktaḥ
kleśasahiṣṇurmaitro dṛḍhabhaktiśśīlabalārogyasattvasamnyuktaḥ
stambhacāpalya varjitassampriyo vairāṇāmakartetyamātyasampat (1.9.1;
25)*

In this sūtra, Kauṭilya only named the qualities required for a team-member and left any elaboration to the discretion of the reader. Elaboration of these qualities is presented here as follows:

1. Origin (*jānapada*)

The candidate should be born in that country where his candidature is being considered for the selection as amātya. If a CEO of a company has to choose his team-members, he should consider the fact that local candidate will be better than a foreign one because local candidate is well-aquainted with the culture of the place and mind set of the people where he has to perform.

2. Family Background (*abhijāta*)

Family background should also be considered. If a person has a tradition of holding the similar posts or working in a similar environment in his family, certainly he will be a better choice because he would be benefitted by the experience of the members of his family in this connection and will excel others who are lacking such association of experienced people. So, definitely, it plays an important role. In army recruitment, a candidate from the family of an army man is preferred to others for the same reason.

3. Relatives (*svavagraha*)

If a candidate has many relatives with good name then he is better than one who has no relative at all or relatives with bad name. Relationships are good for personality development. Socialization of a person depends on handling relationships. One has to learn the balancing of emotions and ground realities, if he has to handle relationships easily. In this process he learns patience, tolerance and to take responsibilities. So, Kauṭilya seems to look for a worldly wise person for the post of amātya when he recommends that amātya should have good relatives in quality and number both. A team member has to deal with emotions, interests and styles of his team-mates while working together. It demands a great deal of maturity that may be hoped from a person who has many relatives and also good relations with them.

4. Experience of the Industry (*kṛtāśilpa*)

A candidate should have some experience of any craft, this is the exact sense of the words of Kauṭilya. In today's situation we can assume this as relevant experience to make a sense. A team leader should look for candidate who has some working experience in the area he has to perform after a selection.

5. Knowledge of the discipline (*caḅᅓuᅓmān*)

The candidate should have a proper understanding of the discipline i.e. management in this context. It is expected from a candidate to be selected as a team member that he has made his own view about the management after completion of his studies. If he has not derived a conclusion and not developed his own view, he is not fit to be selected as a team member.

6. Intelligence

The candidate should be intelligent. It means to have a vision of application of management theories in practical field because though it is tried to be developed at the time of studies by institutions, it is not possible at all, to make one visionary merely by instruction. There is an inherent talent that only can be developed through instruction and proper training. If one does not have required talent it can not be produced rather it can be refined.

7. Retention

The memory of candidate should be strong. This quality is very important even in every day behaviour, what to say about its need in holding the post of a manager. Though now-a-days emphasis is on keeping record in writing and Kauṭilya also discussed about it, need to memorize things, at hand, can not be ruled out completely. In addition to this, sometimes in extra ordinary situations when quick response is the demand of hour, only verbal exchange is carried out to manage efficiently and the person with a retentive memory is an asset in such type of situations.

8. Shrewdness

The candidate should be shrewd because he has to make many judgments in various situations for the welfare of the state or an organization. This quality is best judged when hard decisions are to be made.

9. Eloquence

The candidate is required to have a good ability of expression because as a manager he has to convince, motivate or persuade various types of people on many occasions. This quality will help him to impress the people.

10. Versatility

Management starts from the self. A candidate for any managing post should be able to adapt himself in every condition because he has to travel frequently many places within a short period. So, he must have the ability to adapt himself in varying cultures and situations.

11. Planning in advance

The candidate should have the habit of planning in advance before proceeding. Planning should have every detail of the possible situations likely to be faced. Kauṭilya has indicated the fact in fifteenth chapter of the first book in Arthaśāstra that all undertakings should precede a proper plan. (41) Kauṭilya uses the word 'mantra' for plan and mentions five steps of it. These steps should be taken care of while planning a project or mission. This habit is important because management cannot be imagined without proper planning well in advance. Before undertaking any project one should know the tasks to be done, sequence of tasks, timing of task, material and human resource required. A contingency plan to handle any untoward incident to counter the failure of the mission should also be prepared.

12. Enthusiasm and Influence

The candidate should be enthusiastic and be capable to exert his influence on others. This quality will help him to get promotions easily. On the contrary if he shows low spirit and fails to impress others, it is very difficult to get promotion rather he may face demotion or even dismissal.

13. Endurance

The candidate should remain calm and cool in difficult situations and tolerate suffering while performing his job. This quality is important for every person to lead a purposeful life and to achieve great goals. One who runs away from hardships of life, seldom achieves any goal.

14. Morality

The candidate must have the high morality. He should not behave in a wrong manner as it sends wrong signals to other team members also and brings a bad name to the organization. Kauṭilya has indicated the measures to test the morality of a candidate. These will be discussed later in this article. This is highly important because once an immoral candidate brings a bad name to the organization, it is very difficult to regain the lost repute. Such candidate can spoil the fortune of an entire company and as a result, all members of the organizations may suffer. So, employer should be extra vigilant in this regard.

15. Friendliness

The candidate should be friendly to other team-members. Good team leaders are always friendly to their associates. This quality is necessary to get projects finished well and in time because team members feel honoured when handled in a friendly way and put their full effort to accomplish the project. An ideal candidate should behave in a friendly manner to others even in harder situations.

16. Loyalty

One should be loyal to the organization and an employer must make it sure before selection because if a candidate with no loyalty, divided

loyalty or loyalty to opposition is selected he may cause the damage to the organization.

17. Humility, Strength, Health and Vitality

The Candidate should be humble, strong, healthy and energetic. These are the qualities good for success in every sphere of life. If one has these qualities such person will be an asset to any team, organization, society or a nation.

18. Lack of arrogance and fickleness

The candidate should not be arrogant and fickle. An arrogant person can not work in a team and fickle is not worthy to be relied upon. If one has these two bad habits, he will always be a problem for the group he joins.

19. Pleasantness

The candidate should have a pleasant personality. Though pleasantness has a link to physical beauty but here it is not intended because performance is the expectation of employer and it has nothing to do with physical appearance. Kauṭilya seems to communicate the pleasantness of dress, speech and physical gestures because he suggests to test the pleasantness through perception. If one dresses pleasantly, speaks pleasantly and makes pleasant gestures, it shows his application of wisdom in daily life. This quality is important and is being judged in interviews now-a-days by watching dress and gestures. Any movement including gestures is also watched and popularly known as body language. While dress may be designed by anyone else, movement of body cannot be decided previously and reveals your personality traits honestly in a natural way.

20. Lack of enmity

The candidate should be devoid of enmity. This quality is very important because if one gets involved in enmity, his whole attention will be

diverted and his energy will be channelized in taking revenge instead of managing the state.

So, a minister (*amātya*) should not be revengeful because this tendency may shift his focus from a creative application of intelligence to a destructive application. Forgiveness is the root of this quality but Kauṭilya mentioned lack of enmity instead of forgiveness because he seems to stress negation of enmity.

Measures to judge

Kauṭilya also suggested measures to judge these qualities. The employer should examine about the native place and relatives through a reliable source; knowledge of discipline and craft through fellows of the same discipline; intelligence, retention and shrewdness at the time of undertaking any activity; eloquence, versatility and instant response through conversation; enthusiasm, influence and endurance in adversity; morality, loyalty and friendliness through behaviour; humility, strength, health, vitality, lack of arrogance and fickleness from co-inhabitants, pleasantness and lack of enmity directly. Kauṭilya has suggested these measures of judgement in these words :

Teṣāṁ janapadamavagrahaṁ cāptataḥ parīkṣet samānavidyebhyaḥ śilpaṁ śāstracakṣuṣmattvaṁ ca karmārambheṣu prajñāṁ dhārayisṇutvaṁ dākṣyaṁ ca kathāyogeṣu vāgmitvaṁ prāgalbhyaṁ pratibhānavattvaṁ ca āpadyutsāhaprabhāvau kleśasahatvaṁ ca saṁvyavahārācchaucraṁ maitratāṁ dṛḍhabhaktitvaṁ ca saṁvāsibhyaśśīlabalārogyasattva yogamastambhamacāpalyaṁ ca pratyakṣataḥ sampriyatvamavairitvaṁ ca (1.9.3; 25-26).

Kauṭilya graded ministers in three levels. If all these qualities are found then the candidate is the best for the post of a minister; if one fourth of the qualities are found, then the candidate is normal; and if half of the

qualities are found then the candidate is supposed to be the least eligible for the job. (1.9.2; 25)

Other Tests for Ministers and Advisors

Kauṭilya suggested testing the morality of candidates regarding finances, women and commitment towards justice. Integrity of candidates should also be tested in fearful situations. (1.10.1-12; 27-28).

Eligibility for ministers

Kauṭilya has fixed the criterion separately for every responsibility. The candidates who are found committed to provide justice should be appointed as judges. The candidates, who are found honest in financial matters, should be selected for revenue department. The candidates, who are found to have a morally strong character in sexual matters, should be employed to take care of welfare of women. The candidates, who are found with uncompromising integrity in frightening situations, should be selected for personal assistance of the employer, team leader, CEO or a king. The candidates who are found pure in all matters, should be appointed advisors to the king or the leader of the organization e.g. C.E.O. The candidates who are found dishonest in all matters should be employed to look after mines, elephants and forests (1.10.13-18; 29). Kauṭilya seems to suggest that the candidates holding the qualities prescribed for ministers but found dishonest after testing in all matters should be kept away from the human society and given the charge of mines, forests and animals but they should not be given the charge of any financial dealing as they have failed to qualify the test of honesty.

Conclusion

Kauṭilya supplied the list of qualities expected from the candidates to be selected as trainees and team member or ministers in the context of the

state. These qualities may be judged in interview and afterwards in probation period. The most remarkable is the mention of various tests regarding finances, women, morality and fear. These tests are the need of the hour. If these tests are conducted without the prior knowledge of the candidate to be judged, we can expect scandal free corporate world and scandal free ministries. Issues of tainted ministers and Satyam like fraudulent accounting are warning signals for our society and governing system today. Philosophy of the Kauṭilya regarding selection will certainly prove helpful to suggest the solutions to the problems faced by management of corporate world as well as government of various countries worldwide.

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