ETHICS IN THE POST 2015 INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper, being the product of a decade and half of research, is based on the conviction that the corporate leader in the future would have to be the ethical leader. This conviction has been mirrored in most of the works of Sadri and Jayashree between 2005 and 2015. Its argument is divided into four parts. The first defines the subject matter of the paper and deals with issues like values, beliefs and ethics. This part lays down the theoretical underpinning for the ensuing argument. The second takes up the issue of Managerial Styles examining a landmark study, conducted in India, in the process. The underlying assumption is that the answers we get to social issues depend on the questions we ask. The questions we ask depend on the values we have. Moreover, these values give rise to our beliefs and our ethical conduct. Hence, the Managerial Style is a good proxy for Managerial Work Beliefs. The third part deals with the question of the Values of the Chief Executive. The underlying assumption is that in a positivist framework, power flows downward and the tone as well as the tenor of managerial behavior is set by the behavior of the Chief Executive. This becomes all the more important when the organization is forced to thrive on the cutting edge of competition. The fourth part deals with what lies ahead and to that extent posits a considered opinion on the issue of Managerial Work Ethics.

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PART I: THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

This long and rather pedagogical paper is based on two convictions. Firstly, that it is through OD intervention, that organizational change will make the corporate body more effective, more efficient and hence more competitive. Since the positivist nature of organizational change in India demands that it be implemented from the top downward, it is only logical that we argument with a treatment of leadership as well as of the work ethic. The nature of the change is a movement of top management from the *feudal-mercantilist-trader* mode into the *competitive-innovative-entrepreneurial* mode. Secondly, this transition will require that the leader bases his actions on trust transparency and teamwork while adding value to the organization as well to all the stakeholders involved in it. This conceptualization of the change processes will be the basis on which the work ethic in the new millennium must develop.

No argument, no matter how profound, is tenable without a theoretical basis, an empirical validation and a cogent structure. Indeed *theoretical underpinning* and *empirical validation* are the two pillars on which every scientific inquiry must rest. So important is former that Aldous Huxley, the famous British essayist once stated *without theory facts shall continue to fall on the plains of human ignorance*. In keeping with the highest traditions of academia, this paper too predicates its prognosis on certain theoretical propositions, which have been empirically validated by research. This is necessary especially because every conceivable species of man has had something to say both on the topic of work as well as that on ethics. What he has to say forms the basis of his behavior. Like all social processes when corporate behavior is repeated it becomes a style and is consequently legitimized. (c.f. Habermas). Managerial Style also fits into a theoretical framework and this needs to be tested out.

Without empirical validation any construct would remain in the realm of hypothesis and cannot form the basis of a theory. This is even so in the case of social science where most theories are empirically validated tendencies rather than watertight principles as in the case of the physical sciences. The mutable nature of reality, with which social science is concerned, dictates this difference (c.f. Durkheim).

Hence, this paper begins with laying down the definitional premise and then goes on to examining the argument empirically. This leaves out *structure*, the third requirement in any argument. The abstract of the paper given above delineates the structure of the argument briefly and cogently. The ambit of relevance of this argument is global no doubt but examples are limited to India.

Kings and commoners, freemen and slaves, saints and sinners, iconolaters and iconoclasts have all spoken of ethics at some time or the other. More often than not they took either one of these two positions: (1) My ethics for the rest of you or (2) my subjective perception taken to be the objective social reality. It would, therefore be in order for us to examine the progression of thought, not necessarily in chronological order but certainly in order of the development of intellect.

As is the tradition of social science, let us at the outset define our position unequivocally.

Value is a *thought-based concept* whereas ethics is an *activity-based concept*. Whereas values are *intrinsic* to man ethics are the *manifested* behavior. Whereas profit making is a necessary condition of being in business, when profit making becomes the sole aim of business, we find that the transition from the *feudal-mercantile trader* mode to the *innovative-creative-entrepreneurial* mode has not taken place. Ethics is conveniently placed on the back burner and reserved for after dinner speeches. Trumpet tooting and loud boasts at cocktails (probably when the speaker is sufficiently inebriated), are the occasions when ethics is debated. That is indeed sad.

Let it be made abundantly clear that the ethicality of corporate behavior is the primary concern of *Business Ethics*. Management is concerned with the science of decision-making and the art of decision executing. In their daily business life, managers face ethical dilemmas. A dilemma exists when the manager is faced with conflicting or alternative choices of action. Reality is hardly ever clearly perceived in black and white. What exists is a vast gray area with several shades within it. The response of an executive to a managerial dilemma having an ethical connotation becomes the central concern of *Managerial Ethics*.

It is singularly unfortunate that both terms Business Ethics and Managerial Ethics are usually used synonymously. So is true of the two terms *values* and *ethics.* The academia is most guilty of this confusion and even so called experts in ethics have been known to make this error. They have consistently refrained from defining their position, and this paper suspects, nay it alleges, that this is because they are unsure of their own positions.

Those who take the contingency route and refuse to define their position are usually those who feel safe in being the *will o' the wisp* or continue masking their ignorance in connived abstraction. Schoolteachers who take lessons in moral science are no different. Consequentially the syllabus of the subject is nebulous and without rigor, the student adopts the *chalta hai chalne do* (let it be) attitude. Case studies and projects make for story telling sessions and interesting pass times. Homily is reduced to doing good and being good without bothering to define what being good actually means. Deep study eludes the student unless the teacher and the taught are both involved in the exercise.

The manager on the other hand has his own brand of ethics which he has picked up along the way and which sound conveniently close to what the manager actually thinks he does. This student enters the real world of business with half-baked ideas of ethics and meets the manager with his half-baked ideas of values. What ensues would make Lewis Carroll's *mad tea party* look like a very orderly piece of business. This is because like the schoolteacher, the CEO too promotes a culture where *ends* matter and the *means* taking a back seat.

There is, in India, over the last decade and a half, a great deal of talk about ethics in various occupations but seldom do we come across speakers who define ***what is ethics.*** The basic position adopted in this paper is akin to that taken in numerous co-authored works of Sadri and Jayashree. What this paper attempts is to address the issue of work ethics as we witness the dawn of the new millennium. Literature is replete with examples where scholars have used the word *morality* and *ethics* interchangeably. The lecture theatres are full of academicians who come to speak of ethics from either a moralistic perspective or based on their personal normative beliefs. In addition, most often they disagree on the fundamentals since each of them is ruled by his heart rather than by his mind.

The *soul-based philosopher* relies on a particular scripture or interpretations and variations thereof. The *mind-based philosopher* relies on the logic of choice in the face of a dilemma. The former is normative whereas the latter is positivist in approach. Morality lies within the domain of the former while ethics forms the concern of the latter. The distinction is very fine indeed.

Soul based philosophers will take the cue from the scripture they follow and these differ. Does that mean that they are unclear about their terminology? This author does not think so. The lack of clarity comes only when ethics is replaced by morality and morality is restricted to either good or bad, right and wrong or conformity and non-conformity to some standard of behavior.

At the etymological level morality and ethics *can be* used interchangeably. The word ethics has been derived from the Greek word *ethos* and the word morality has been derived from the Latin word *mores.* Both words imply *from a culture.* Hence, it would be quite in order to refer to Ethics as moral philosophy or to refer to Morality as an aspect of ethical philosophy. Moreover, morality is usually all pervasive whereas ethics is person specific, context specific, and culture specific. The third aspect of this author's position is of relevance in this paper. This is primarily because *work* is a social activity and its form and content is determined by the culture of the environment within which it is performed. Hence, *the general managerial ethic conditions the general work ethic.*

The culture, in turn, has its roots in time and space rather than in ideology alone. Its study is also guided by the rules of sociological method (c.f. Giddens). The culture specificity of ethics is not lost on corporate giants who left their inimitable footsteps on the sands of time. Consider the statement of the legendary JRD Tata:

There is need to rekindle old principles and ethical values which alas, have too often been ignored and neglected during recent years in the belief that quicker profits and greater accumulation of wealth will be the result.

The need to go back to the roots is therefore very important so that in our quest for the illusionary rainbow we do not forget our heritage and loose our cultural *raison d'être.* However,

heritage is like a rear view mirror in a car. It tells you what has passed but not what is happening. If you are too busy, looking at the car mirror you will run down a pedestrian! The principle problem with persons speaking of ethics in India is threefold.

(a) Some authors are so seeped in the past that they can only talk about either the Vedanta or the Christian Catechism or the Islamic doctrine or the Zoroastrian antiquity. They seek to draw parallels with the present day practices and are rather rigid in their beliefs leaving no room for dissent. They sermonize on the basis of historical constructs of a bygone culture. Those among this lot, who have intellectually degenerated further and/or have a historical agenda, become fundamentalists.

(b) Others politicize the whole issue of ethics and end up pontificating and their message invariably is camouflaged as *my values for the rest of you.* Such is the bitter anachronism of fate that even bent politicians dare to speak of ethics. Indeed, there is talk of ethics even in the Bombay Stock Exchange. This is not an oxymoron, as S Jayashree (2005) argued, but a new albeit belated awakening. When fundamentalist beliefs take over and morality is preached from the pulpit as well as the presbytery (irrespective of the religion), the issue becomes a dangerous one. The priest, the pundit, the rabbi, the mullah and the dastoor, have a personal stake in preserving *status quo* since their livelihood depends on it. Hence, their version of morality is politically motivated, logically skewed and its acceptance must be tempered with restraint.

(c) Yet, others reduce ethics to a list of dos and don'ts. They derive a code of conduct and having done so, act like petty bookkeepers that are more concerned with the letter of the rule rather than the spirit or the substance of it. Hence, to them ethical conduct is yet another company rule. Moreover, like all rules, as long as people think you follow them, it seems to be enough. Corporate governance is reduced to rule compliance. Perhaps this is what lies beneath the surface of the unending differences between the academia and the administration in Universities and Management Schools.

The distinction between morality and ethics, at one level, does not exist and another its division is important though fine. The import of this statement must be gleaned. Academics like Dhun

Dastoor see ethics as moral philosophy (c.f. *Fellowship Thesis*, 1995). Other scholars like this author go further and see ethics as being person specific, culture specific and context specific. Hence, whereas Dastoor restricts herself to examining the difference between good and bad, right and wrong, while this author goes further and maintains that *the subjectivity is absolute only if it exists within bounded rationality.* Here this author's position is similar to that both Sadri and Chakraborty who maintain that *objective reality is just our subjective perception of it*.

Chakraborty, while being a logical analyst, successfully holds the flag of soul-based philosophy aloft and almost single-handedly so. He depends on the goodness of man and the Vedantic roots of Hindu culture for his prognosis. Others like Peter Bonnerjee, (c.f. comments on his work in Sadri *et al,* 1999 as well Sadri and Jayashree 2006) are much thought provoking but appear somewhat caught up by their own dogma. Yet others like Ananta Giri have actually collated opinions and called it ethics for reasons that appear neither logical nor are they easy to comprehend. The other Indian authors on ethics who can be taken seriously belong to what we call the *soul based thought* and they are Theo Mathias and R C Sekhar. They deal with the trilogy of the *heart-soul-mind,* and predicate their prognosis on spiritualism. R C Sekhar (1997) for instance, posits an extremely erudite exposition of soul-based philosophy. This work falls in the same intellectual category as the work of Mathias or Bonnerjee who take a strong position. Subhash Sharma who brilliantly traverses the middle road can also be conveniently (though not accurately) bracketed with this train of thought since he cannot extricate himself from the moralistic framework. But his uniqueness makes him a class apart from Mathias and the rest, and at par with Chakraborty and Sadri while retaining his scientific temper.

In contradistinction, this author has always taken up the position from *mind-based thought*. She is concerned with the duality of the heart and the mind. Economics teaches us that in making a choice, an individual has to satisfy the *willingness* condition, which is the subjective condition, and satisfy the *ability* condition or the *objective* condition. When man makes a choice, he is consistent in that choice and makes it in such a way that his *utility function* is maximized, he is said to be acting rationally.

Therefore, taking the argument to its logical end, a confirmed drunkard, a habitual rapist and a drug addict would be rational under that Benthamite definition. Therefore, we must limit that rationality within socially accepted norms of behavior and here we enter the realms of *bounded rationality*. The position taken is that mankind acts along perceived notions of right and wrong, good and bad, so by definition these perceptions can neither be absolute or immutable. Hence, ethics has to do with a principled-based choice between competing alternatives. In this author's opinion, it is here that that the contribution of *Welfare Economics* and *Choice Theory* has left their indelible mark on the study of ethics. Similarly, when faced with an ethical dilemma, the manager reacts in one general manner. The manner of this reaction, in turn, conditions the work ethic in the organization. Three positions in which a manager reacts can be summarized as being *Teleological, Deontological and Praxis.*

The first is Teleological or Consequential wherein the end was justified by the means adopted. The end, of course, was emancipation of the soul and the *locus standi* was obtained from formal religion and accepted metaphysics.

In Western Thought this takes the shape of Jeremy Bentham's *utilitarianism* where a man makes an informed choice so as to maximize his pleasure and minimize his pain. Ethics is subsumed within this parameter and the question asked is *what is in it for me?* Or better still *how will the decision benefit me personally?* This we shall call the *individualized level of response.* Bentham honestly believed that it was the white man's burden to be ethical and educate the savages. He called it the *Christian Duty* of an Englishman.

Then comes William Stanley Jevons who spoke of *summum bonum* or the greatest good of the greatest number. Social altruism ruled the roost and the contention was *whatever is good for the majority is ethical*. This we shall call the *collective level of response*. The emphasis here has been on the heart, the emotion and the feelings of man and society. Hence, the subjectivity constraint is placed on a high pedestal. Once again, it is the Christian dogma that held sway.

The second is Deontological or Non Consequential position. In India, there was a socio-metaphysical revolution when such giant intellects as Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan

Roy, Anne Besant and the Theosophists questioned organized religion from a logical and socio-scientific platform. Madame Blavatsky too was deontological ina spiritualist sense. Even the clergy in the persons of Swami Ram Das, Ram Krishna Paramhansa, Sant Tukaram, Meher Baba and Sai Baba of Shirdi placed the needs of Man above those of God stating that service to Man was service to God. They disagreed with the accepted notions of ethicality and laid down their own genuine position without fear or favor.

Noted lawyers like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Dinshah Wacha, politicians like Bhikhaijee Cama and Vinayak Savarkar, and modern day crusaders like G R Khairnar, Baba Amte, Sunderlal Bahaguna and Medha Patkar fall in that category. They looked at morals and ethics in a Non Consequential way. The non-consequentialist holds that some things were right or wrong irrespective of the consequences or the actors. These were the social reformers who blazed a trail for lesser mortals to follow. They challenged the right of the powers that be in society to justify the unjustifiable and questioned their using of blatant money power, muscle power, metaphysical constructs and spiritual hyperbole as the case may be.

In Western Thought, Immanuel Kant stated the same thing when he laid down the *categorical imperative.* This was an unconditional moral obligation derived from pure reason. Kant divided the universe into the real world (where he placed man) and the metaphysical world (where he placed God). He stated that man sought to justify himself in the name of God and constantly legitimized the illegitimate. To him some actions were right or wrong irrespective of the consequences. This we shall call *didactic* and *absolute* variant of truth.

Georg Frederick Wilhelm Hegel then gave the astounding view that *all truth was relative.* He argued that the only absolute truth was God and the only absolute certainty was Death. He gave the world a new dialectic, a specific form of logic, which viewed life, two folds: one comprised of a *unity of opposites* and the other seeing *reality in contradictions*. Hegel said that when a moral issue was at stake the minority of one was enough to guide one's decision. If one were convinced that his path was that of righteousness then the philosophy of history would be on his side. This we shall call the *logical* and *relative variant of truth. Using the analogy of thesis*

antithesis and synthesis Hegel posited *a circular* logic in contradistinction of *Rene' Descrates' linear logic.*

Both Kant and Hegel, like Marx and Engels, later, were concerned with the dignity of man. (c.f. Cohen). Marxists like Victor Allen, Richard Hyman, Sorab Sadri, Robin Cohen and Amiya Bagchi correctly reiterate that *man is the beginning and the end of all analysis; he is both the subject and the object of social inquiry.* At heart Marx and Engels, one has to admit, were profound thinkers and social reformers who saw in ethics a necessary condition, which needs to be fulfilled before social emancipation, can take place (c.f. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844).* The quality of human life was of paramount concern and they moved towards *metaphysics* and *spirituality* rather than *dogma* and *religion*. Their concern all along has been to make this world a better place to live in. In addition, ethical behavior formed an important part of their larger scheme of things (c.f. Althusser).

To all of them it was the *means* that were important and the *ends* were historically inconsequential. The emphasis here is on the mind, the intellect of the actor. Goal and role clarity become paramount under this approach and the objectivity constraint is placed on a high pedestal. Moreover, this is very important for persons in our profession, i.e. for persons who are the supposed guardians of the business of education and the self-styled promoters of education in business.

Examining the terrain objectively, there are two dominant strands of thought in the field of ethics in India. S K Chakraborty of Calcutta heads the first school and Sorab Sadri in Pune leads the other one. Chakraborty relies on spirituality and the Vedanta whereas this author relies on positivist social science methodology. To Chakraborty one must develop one's inner self so as to understand the external reality. To Sadri it is the external reality, which conditions the inner self and that, in turn, reacts to that stimulus. Chakraborty's appeal is to the heart and the soul of the manager while Sadri's appeal is to the mind and the intellect of the manager. The soul has to be recognized by the mind before it can enter the logical calculus!

In an XLRI-NITIE all India survey in 1993-95 found 48% of the senior managers were operating in the non-consequential mode while 52% were consequential in their response to an ethical dilemma. This led Sadri to question the initial findings of Dastoor and another dimension was inserted through a question: *If I can discuss a decision openly and freely then that decision is ethical. Do you agree?* The three authors in *The Theory and Practice of Managerial Ethics* (1999) discovered to their horror that a majority of the managers [85% from an all India sample of 3000 senior level executives] fell into the last category. They operated in the ***Social Acceptance Mode***.

This author then called it the *Praxis School.* [Praxis is a term borrowed from Marx to denote the process of conversion of theory to practice.] It signifies that the subjective need to gain acceptability showed that Indian managers were not prepared to walk their talk put their money where their mouth is or stand up for their beliefs. The preponderance of managers ascribing to this mode of behavior and the concomitant rise in mediocrity vindicates in a way, this author's (1999) position that the finding of Sadri *et al* is incorrect and states:

> *We fervently hope that the finding is wrong although the*
> *weight of evidence supports it. If so, a specter is haunting*
> *us, the specter of mediocrity.*

Let us not be hasty and paint every businessman with the same brush. To clarify the author's position on managerial work ethic further, two hallmarks in conduct need to be pointed out by way of example on non-consequential business leadership.

1. About five decades ago, there was a complaint that something was oozing out of the safe. Pirojshah Godrej suspected that the moisture generating and fire-resisting compound supplied by a firm of international repute was defective. This was not a fault of Godrej and Boyce but even so, the management recalled all the safes, the defect rectified and the safes returned to the delighted owners.

2.   About three decades ago, there was a complaint that village folk in Sub-Saharan Africa were using adulterated water to mix with powder milk. The company had not specified on the carton that only filtered water should be used. There was a spate in infant mortality consequently. Lever Brothers recalled all the tins of baby food, repackaged them with the warning and sent it back for sale.

Now let us look at two instances of the consequential variety where decisions were taken, supposedly for ethical reasons but which led to raising serious questions regarding their propriety.

1   About one and a half decades ago there was a model of the Ford Motor car called Pinto. This had a fuel tank at the rear and on impact the car would go up in flames. In the interest of public safety, the company should have called back all the sold cars from the market, withdrawn the product. Instead they reduced the damage to dollar values and compensated the hapless victims.

2   One fine morning, fish were suddenly found floating in the Powai Lake (Mumbai) in 1992. Nobody thought of taking to task those textile companies that were dumping their waste in the wee hours of the night into the lake and depleting the oxygen content thereby. Instead, the Government chose to soft peddle the issue in the interest of hushing up the event. The Fourth Estate too did not raise a rumpus and was conspicuous by its silence.

Ethical conduct has become the absolute compulsion in every walk of life if India has to make a mark for itself in the global economic order.

Unfortunately when the criminalization of politics and the politicization of crime have become everyday items in the news, the need for ethical leadership is more seriously needed than ever before. The newspapers too have climbed down more than a peg or two. The *Hindu* and the *Statesman* continue to hold the fort; but how long? *The Times of India* today, for instance, is far cry from what it was when Girilal Jain was in charge. Ethics in the Indian stock market with the likes of Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh is a pious wish. There is crisis of leadership and a concomitant depletion of moral standards in every occupation. Students try to broker for marks

so as to keep up the rat race and in keeping with the spirit of the capitalist *dog eat dog* mentality. As teachers, we owe it to society to resist bending down to meet the students but instead stretch our arms out to pull the students up to our level. This means giving man his due dignity and being ethical about it. Moreover, this primary work ethic must permeate all levels of civilized society.

PART II : THE MANAGERIAL STYLE

The social as well as work ethic is determined by how management behaves. And any behavior when repeated becomes a style. How Managements behave and why they do so has been at the heart of all inquiries. This has been so ever since Adam Smith wrote his *magnum opus* in 1757 and Frederick Taylor posited his version of Scientific Management at the turn of the present century. At the London School of Economics and Political Science, Sorab Sadri (1977) posited a model for measuring the health of an Industrial Relations System. In 1988 Sadri and Williamson tested this model (with the help of postgraduate students) over five countries and examined large corporations having a workforce of at least 1000 men on rolls on an average day during a particular year. In 1990 Sadri and Lukose tested this model for a single country, and found that the model was equally valid for large corporations as it was for macroeconomics traits of a country. In 1991 Carlos Rodrigues Linara examined the Education Sector of Hong Kong and found that the original Sadri model held true. Critics in the academia contended in 1991 that the model might not be valid for small-scale industry of India. They were probably correct.

Small-scale industry was certainly not within the ambit of reference in the original prognosis. Consequently, this author from NITIE between 1992 and 1994 studied the issues and they were empirically validated in Southern India through a monitored and extended research. It undertook an examination of Sadri's methodology of auditing industrial relations in the context of small-scale industry of three states in Southern India. Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Sadri's original prognosis was concerned with only large-scale industry, which had a discernible corporate culture. Jayashree assumed that the *Industrial Relations Styles* of the original model could be converted into *Managerial Styles* without much trouble and without vitiating the *raison d'être* of the original prognosis.

An important clarification is in order. Not for a moment is it implied that all family owned businesses are autocratic and all publicly owned businesses are democratic. Nor does the author imply that power in the private sector is unitary and power in the public sector is pluralistic in character. In fact, it has been observed that many of the family owned businesses were more progressive than the so-called publicly owned businesses in the State Sector. Many students who ape their ill-informed mentors often and erroneously make such a generalized assumption. In fact, it has been found that family owned businesses like Godrej and Tata are highly democratic whereas even some publicly owned Management Institutes like NITIE have highly autocratic types of leadership. Power location similarly is found to be unitarist in many high tech software firms while it is found to be pluralistic in BHEL as well as in several units of SAIL.

AUTOCRATIC

PATERNALISTIC   *REACTIVE*

UNITARY   **PLURALISTIC**

PARTICIPATIVE   *PROACTIVE*

DEMOCRATIC
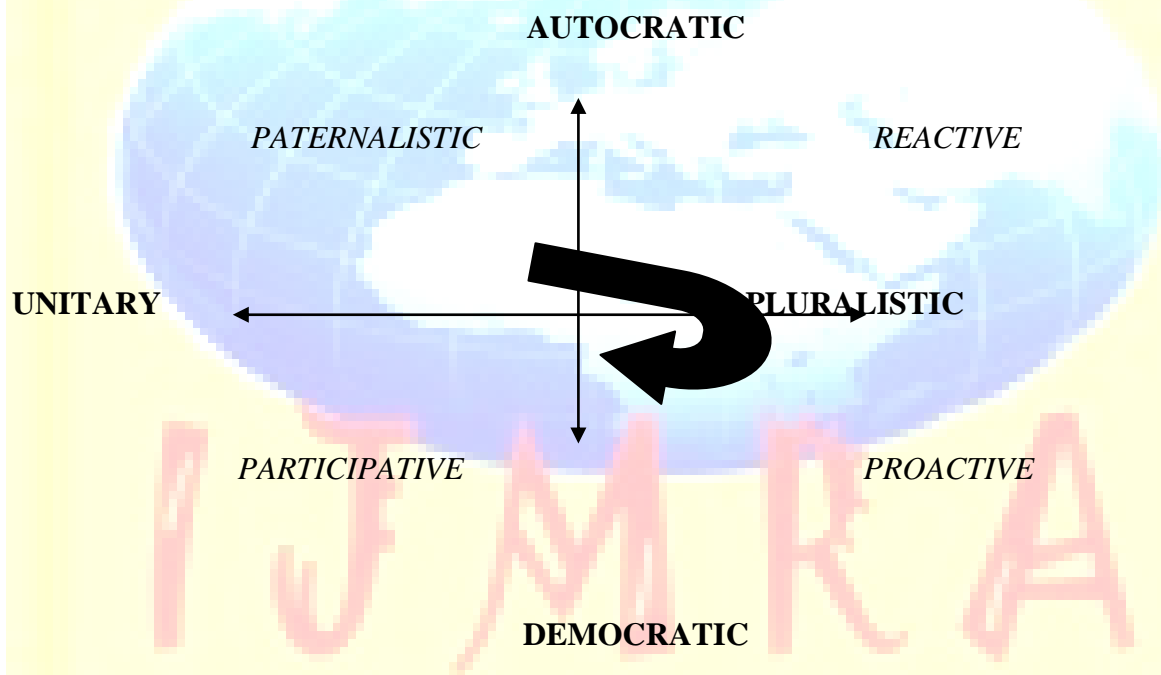
Management as the representatives of the owners of capital *ipso facto* have a vested class interest in perpetuating the inequality alluded to earlier in this paper. Hence, it has an ideological motive as well as an economic motive to act in the manner that it does. This ideological motive forces managerial action to retain *status quo* even when *stability* degenerates into *inertia*.

The original work of Sadri had emphasized that no management is wholly unitarist or pluralistic, nor is it possible to have a wholly autocratic or democratic management. Hence, these terms

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merely signify a tendency towards the direction described by the definition, arrived at by observing past management behavior and present (stated and unstated) objectives. This combination of managerial assumption and controls, they posit, give rise to the above matrix, which depicts four possible styles of Industrial Relations Management.

The original model borrowed the continuum along the vertical axis from Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. The continuum along the horizontal axis was adopted from Alan Fox's seminal work. A combination of the polarities produced a style. It is the contention of the author that these Industrial Relations Styles could also be used to describe Human Resource Management Styles.

The style mentioned in each quartile also reflects the level of managerial maturity within an organization. In other words as a management matures it moves from the first quartile on to the second and thence to the third *en route* to the fourth. Contrary evidence also exists to support the view that many organizations unable to withstand the pressures of change regressed from quartile three to quartile two and ensconced themselves in the familiarity of quartile one. Such was the dynamism in the small-scale industries sector

PART III: THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

A scientific prognosis is unless it can be empirically validated and this was taken up by the Jayashree study whose findings (with permission) are reproduced here. Any business concern that employed more than 5 and less than 100 employees was taken as a small-scale industry. Names of concerns were taken from the local offices of the Registrar of Companies in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Trivandrum. No names will be disclosed as the interviews were conducted on the tacit understanding that anonymity will be ensured. A sample of ninety small-scale industries chosen at random from the three Southern States formed the basis of the empirical examination. The purpose was to show that the Sadri Model (1977) developed originally for a core capitalist economy was equally valid in a peripheral capitalist economy of a retarded variety as well. In addition, on the strength of the empirical evidence the author advises

OD experts to consider adopting this methodology in their organizations as well. It is simple but not simplistic. It is indicative but can be used for forecasting reactions as well.

In the small-scale sector a manager is known to perform many varied functions and Industrial Relations is just one of them. This author admits that it would be dangerous to generalize, therefrom, without committing the *fallacy of composition* (when what it true for a part is taken to be true for the whole). Hence, she retains the specificity of our findings. In the small-scale sector it must be noted that Human Resources Management is restricted to two activities: General Administration including Pay Roll, and Industrial Relations including Statutory Compliance. Her study examined the latter directly and the former indirectly.

The aforementioned studies assumed that the function of industrial relations is to anticipate and regulate conflicts and aid the parties in achieving their set objectives. Industrial Relations Audit becomes an ongoing exercise in a free market economy. This does not *ipso facto* assume that all conflict is endemic and must be contained. (c.f. Hyman). It only assumes that all conflict, which hinders the achievement of corporate objectives, must be anticipated and regulated by industrial relations. Some theorists justifiably go to the extent of stating that conflict arises out of change, is a proof of dynamism and hence must be welcomed. This is indeed an extreme view but has great merit: it prevents stability from becoming inertia as has been witnessed in the Public Sector of Indian industry, either in the primary, secondary or the tertiary sectors. The result of this is that there is little or no real value addition arising out of managerial action. What in fact happens is that management perceives that their action will lead to the realization of their objectives and thereby add value *ipso facto*. Since the objectives are those of a mercantilist-trader-businessman, the perception of value addition is flawed and real progress is vitiated. The inevitable result is that we have organizational paralysis with all the symptoms of *development-less-growth*, which is a typical feature of peripheral capitalism of a retarded variety.

A brief examination of each style would be in order since that would indicate what kind of work ethic would devolve from it.

1. *PATERNALISTIC STYLE*

This might be described as benevolent despotism and is normally associated with an absence of union recognition, (although not necessarily in absence of union members). Management (or owners of capital) takes the initiative and the terms and conditions of employment reflect the general concern for the well being of the employees with the added advantage that the company normally creates a favorable position for blood-relatives or cast-brethren of those who hold power. Discrimination abounds and people are promoted or given benefits on the basis of who they are, they know rather than what they can do or how they know whom they know. This author's investigation revealed that village affinity, caste bias and political positioning of management accentuated the Paternalistic style. In the plantations of Kerala for instance this was very much in evidence.

2. *RE-ACTIVE STYLE*

In this kind of scenario, unions or the workers generally take the initiative and management mounts a series of rear guard actions designed to preserve what is magically "the right to manage". (c.f. Hyman). The approach to negotiations is on a "win/loose" basis and this philosophy might be described as "fire fighting". The concept of an industrial relations audit would be somewhat alien to this culture despite the situation in fact demanding it. Management and unions operate on a win-loose basis and terms such as "us" and "them" are common parlance for both the owners of capital and the owners of labor power. This author's investigation reveals that the reactive style was adopted not so much in respect of the actions of workers themselves. However, the environment in which the company functioned e.g. the PWG in the locality, the interest of the MP or the MLA, determined the style. So too the state government policy regarding particular industry e.g. small machine shops in Karnataka and Bidi plantations in Andhra Pradesh.

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3.   *PRO-ACTIVE STYLE*

This might also be called the predictive style where management accepts conflict but regards this as having virtues providing it is channeled in constructive directions. This type of organization is generally sophisticated in its approach believing in a forward-looking philosophy, which is generally associated with a clearly defined corporate policy. Negotiations are on a basis where the aim is for all parties to optimize their varying interests. This sort of philosophy might be called "fire prevention" i.e. where the Management and Unions arrive at an equilibrium saddle-point. In the case of small scale industry, management which take the workers into confidence before affecting a policy would fall into this category. This author's investigation revealed that the Proactive style was more prevalent in cases where the workers were skilled craftsmen as in small machine shops of Karnataka or where the manager was on educationally qualified person as in Kerala.

4.   *PARTICIPATIVE STYLE*

In this approach there is a commonality of purpose based on open and joint management. This should not be confused with participative mechanisms such as Works Councils or Elected Employee Directors, which may simply reflect political expediency rather than a true participative philosophy. In reality very few organizations will be found in this sector due to the difficulty of achieving a common purpose within the organization. In the small-scale sector this would be closer to co-operative societies irrespective of whether they belonged to producers or consumers. This author's investigation revealed that co-operative societies especially in Kerala fit the description best. In The Case Of Andhra Pradesh, especially where it shares its borders with Tamil Nadu the level of consciousness was found rather low.

To a positivist political economist like Sorab Sadri, Industrial Relations is nothing but the behavioral aspect of the Micro Economic Production Function. Will it then not be fair to suggest that these styles depict managerial behavior towards capital and labor? Moreover, is that not what OD is all about anyway? Personnel management as a concept has been criticized and the Sadri - Dastoor (1992) paper which can be seen as having read the funeral rites for the orthodox

view of Personnel Management. Jayashree concedes that the sample was biased. It is also conceded that only the owners and few of the employees were interviewed. But the analysis can be well defended on the grounds that within the given limitations and the specificity, the contentions are valid.

In the small-scale industries studied it was found that family owned concerns of feudalistic structures where exploitation of human labor was the norm, the management operated along Paternalistic lines as in the case of the Palm-oil and Bidi Plantations. In exchange for freedom, labor was guaranteed employment and a minimal welfare for the families. With a disequilibrated labor market and an uncertain employment position the exploited labor force welcomed this. Sadri had found that even in 1997-98 a stainless steel cold rolling mill in Navi Mumbai operated under a crass exploitative top management.

In contradistinction thereof, this author had found that the managerial style was reactionary in concerns where the top management was involved in day to day production. This was in machine tool component manufacturing where the level of workers was that of a skilled craftsman with a minimal educational background. Here labor exploitation was overt. Workers knew their rights and also how to exercise them. However, lack of alternative employment prevented them from making too much "noise" when the management became over exploitative. In the case of business where there was some amount of bureaucracy and paper work such as small computer companies, the management followed a proactive style of management. The level of deceit and exploitation was no longer overt but covert. In the case of co-operative societies either of the producers or the consumers the style of management was participative. Power was shared to an extent and decisions were jointly taken. This was because there was a sense of belonging among the participants in the decision making process.

It would indeed be interesting to see where companies in the Middle East or in Japan fit into the typology presented earlier and tested yet again herein. Whereas these were mere tendencies there is no doubt that an absolute categorization is foolhardy. This paper opines that the original 1997 model within certain parameters is found to be valid in the Indian small-scale industry

sector as well. Hence, it is a useful instrument to be used by the OD expert in organizational diagnosis. Nothing more is claimed by this author.

Cognitive learning is important for managerial scientists, not so much for managers, who need to understand more *theories in action,* to quote Pareek, Rao and Pestonjee (1996). In this paper empirical evidence was used to validate a model of Managerial Styles. How Management behaves conditions the basis of the work ethic and here the role of the chief executive comes to the fore. The final part of the paper will examine the futuristic role of the chief executive from a kind of objectivity alluded to by Chris Frost (1998).

PART IV: ETHICS IN THE FUTURE

Corporate Leadership arises out of and determines the nature of the work ethic. Hence, no examination of the work ethic is complete without an examination of the corporate leadership. Along with new global alignments and trade rules, a new set of modalities for business has emerged. To take Sadri's lead we can name a few:

- Business has per force become transnational. The boundary-less universe has emerged, and an era of concurrent collapse has been ushered in.

- The pace of change is non-linear, non-Newtonian and non-incremental. New power brokers have emerged and teamwork has gained ascendancy.

- The issue of moral hazard has raised its ugly head when state guarantees were no longer adequate safeguards of investment.

- The myth of the technological competitive edge has been exploded. Effects of all managerial decisions are seen

  a) In terms of long term growth and stability, and,

  b) The effect it has at the point of production or at the point of sale.

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- The product profile has changed whereby there is a marked preponderance of the knowledge component over the erstwhile raw material component.

- Dependent economies along the periphery of the capitalist world economy found that their growth was immiserised and their infrastructures were fragile and dependent.

The effect of these modalities on organizational behavior is two fold. Organizations are going through a kind of Corporate Olympiad, a massive change of corporate focus in line with the market scenario, where only the fittest can survive. There is a felt need for creative definition of functions and structures, wherein the approach to organization must be geared towards a culture and style transformation as well as be zero based. The *doing* executive of the 1950s and 1960s became the *learning* executive of the 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s beckoned the age of the *thinking* executive. It was no longer enough for the corporate leader to be *activity based* but to combine it with being *thought based*. The leader's paradigms had to be flexible, proactive, pioneering, holistic and global. Re-engineering, which was a fad of the 1990s no longer, gave the desired results. Organizations were no longer satisfied with *product leadership;* they needed to have *competence* by competition for *opportunity share*. (Both Michael Porter's Diamond and the B.C.G. Matrix were more descriptive than predictive and consequently had become old hat). It was not enough *allocate and utilize* to resources optimally but to *accumulate* them for *strategic leverage*. The *knowledge worker* had come to stay and his loyalty was only to technology. Once he found that his technological base was not being expanded, he would quit. Hence, policies had to be designed to *stretch* along with changes in the environment rather than fit into a particular construct. In addition, all this was expected of the corporate leader who will take the organization into a better tomorrow with a new work ethic.

To begin with, let us see what the organization expects of the leader in the future. Some of the key characteristics that emerged when the question was posed to managers by another XLRI - NITIE research conducted in Western India   (1994 - 1995) were:

i. The leader is to help perpetuate history and yet bring about change.

ii. Adapt the character of the corporate management to the needs placed upon the organization by the environment.

iii. Keep faith and uphold key commitments so that at no point is his credibility questioned.

iv. Maintain a healthy tension between tradition and change.

v. Make a lasting impact on the organization, and in turn the market.

When one were to examine this list a mite more closely, one would find there is a kind of causal link from point (i) to point (v).

In order to predicate the views of this paper, certain key terms need to be properly defined. Hence, this paper must take issue with the *nature of corporate leadership* itself.

Clearly, the first task of the leader must first of all work towards gaining acceptance. Once that has been achieved, the rest can follow.   However, this may not be easy. Vested interests will be keen to scuttle progress for the sake of individual security. The structure of the organization is most often the first thing a leader examines. By *structure* is meant the distribution along various lines, of people among social positions that influence role relations between the incumbents. One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is that while organizational structures are constructed along concentric lines (for greater effectiveness), the incumbents (managers and workers) still think and act as if the organizational structure is built along hierarchical/ pyramidal lines. To achieve long lasting results the leader must change this attitude.

To bring about a change in attitude, the organization's *mission* and *purpose* must be clearly defined. If one does not know where one is going, one cannot be lost. Unfortunately this fits the description of most traditional organizations in India beautifully, which can help an organization to link its activities to the needs of society and legitimize its existence. By *purpose* is meant statement of intent; of what an organization strives for and sets the objectives, goals, policies and plans accordingly.

An *objective* is a close-ended attribute, which is precise and can be expressed, in specific terms of quantity, quality cost and time. If not, progress would become hard to measure. The objective

in turn springs from a *goal, which* is an open-ended attribute denoting a future state or outcome than organization strives for. To actualize an objective the leader needs to clearly *define* the policy, the procedure, the rules and the plans.

The organization's *policy* is a guideline to action. *Procedures* are a series of tasks or steps expressed in a chronological order. Rules are prescribed courses of action which explicitly state what is to be done under a given set of circumstances. The rules could, of course, be either substantive or procedural. And these rules, procedures and policies are to be geared towards achieving the objective of the organization.

It is the task of the leader to define the goal and role of each aspect/function within the organization so that both clarity and non-ambiguity exist. This would facilitate the appreciation and understanding that will help fulfill the mission born out of the vision of the organization. To summarize, the organization leader is one who articulates the vision and mission of the organization, brings about goal and role clarity and *facilitates* the achievement of the objectives through teamwork. The leader builds the team, nurtures it and proactively leads it in order to achieve the organization's objectives. However, leadership has to be focused, benchmarked and accountable above all else. The leader needs to carry his team along with him and for that, he needs to build trust relations, make decision processes transparent and foster teamwork. He can do so only if he walks his talk. Three factors that will be crucial in the years to come are core values, an entrepreneurial spirit and corporate governance.

This point was not lost on Sir Adrian Cadbury who in an interview in late 1996 stated:

In India I think one has to focus on opening up the system. I would not try, for example, to control transactions a company is entering into. I would rather try and establish a scenario where more information on that transaction is available to shareholders and the press. The need is for all deals that companies make with others and within themselves to be transparent.

In the same interview, he went on to say that:

What is important is that there should be clarity of responsibility between the board and the management. Often there is confusion about precise responsibilities. There has to be a clear line

between the tasks of the board and management as to who plans and manages and who executes the plans.

Obviously, Cadbury's concept of governance is different from the *Inspection House* of Bentham. For Cadbury, quality is built into the system and not inspected at the end of the process or product line. Hence, to him good governance is crucial to good management. Most corporate leaders today recognize this.

What will be the nature of this leadership? In 1997 a study conducted by the Sloan School of Management confirmed a commonly held belief. It was fact that only those companies will remain as effective players in the global market during the next century which have placed a great importance on Ethics and which practice Value Based Management. Such a powerful statement needs to be examined in detail to understand what it implies and what ramifications it may have for Indian industry and business. But first, let us see what do these terms in the corporate context mean mean?

- Values are a set of beliefs held by a person or a group of persons or an organization and which the person or group or organization stands for, is known by, and form the basis of its subsequent actions. It is a thought-based concept.

- Ethics are a pattern of moral behavior, of a person, a group of persons or an organization, which are in consonance with some assumed, explicit, stated or unstated beliefs. It is an activity-based concept.

Values and Ethics are dialectically connected to one another and the distinction drawn above is purely epistemological. The question then pops up: *So, why should managers study ethics?*

Ethics has long been the subject of study but Managerial Ethics has gained importance only after the Stock Market crash of 1987 when one stock market after another crashed: Tokyo, Zurich, London, Sydney, New York, Singapore, and Hong Kong. A study conducted by the China Economic Research Center, Macau, in 1986-88 (with which Sorab Sadri was involved), came to

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the conclusion that the three main reasons for this stock market crash, which threatened the fabric of several free market economies were :

1. Ham handed economic policies on the technical side.

2. Poor communication between the banks (lenders) and the the industries (borrowers) both of whom were speculating without adequate gold reserves.

3. Low level of Business Ethics in the financial sector which created disharmony and lack of trust between the various markets : Sydney, London, New York, Hong Kong etc.,

Hence, to an economist like the present author, a serious study of ethics is crucial for business and industry. What   does this imply*?* To this author it implies five main things or attributes: (a) *dependability (b) trust relationships (c) quality assurance (d) consistency and (e) marketability*

The question was posed : at what levels do these five traits imply? The answer is that it must be studies *at the level of the PERSON, the PROCESS and the PRODUCT.* Naturally, one need to know how does the business or industry benefit from this? The answer lies in the fact that *it enables the company to gain a competitive edge in the market place by converting the customer into a client.*

When a person comes to buy a product he is a customer. When he comes again for the product, since he is convinced that he gets good value for his money, he is a client. Managerial Work Ethics makes this possible based on the five traits given above. The study on ethics conducted from XLRI and NITIE and cited earlier in the paper meant that the top-level manager was not always a leader who stood for values and blazed a trail for others to follow. Rather, he was someone who wanted to play safe, hurt nobody in power, ruffle no feathers and thereby continue to enjoy his position of authority. As a people we were perpetuating mediocrity. This being the case, industry must shake off its lethargy otherwise stability will lapse into inertia and we would have achieved development-less-growth. The study also found that as managers move up the hierarchical ladder they become less ethical. The all-important question is begged: *why do senior*

level managers who are financially secure, act unethically? What happens to the work ethic at that point?

Five possible reasons are thrown up by further research conducted in U.K. between 1994 and 1997.

1. The individual and internalized values of the manager are either unclear or weak: e.g. he does not have the guts to stand up for his beliefs.

2. The individual is concerned with the bottom line only: e.g. he wants to get profits at any cost.

3. The individual believes that anything is right so long as others believe it to be right: e.g. a public relations guided mentality where the person is eager to be popular.

4. The individual is inherently exploitative for meeting personal goals and ambitions: e.g. riding piggyback on colleagues' efforts and taking the credit.

5. The individual is insecure and is afraid of change so he promotes stereotypes and undermines empathy as well as compassion: e.g. the boss who promotes "yes men" and thereby empowers mediocrity.

Similar researches in the USA showed organizations tend to reward behavior that violates ethical norms. Most societies value ethics and imbibe morality in its citizens. The study concluded that managers faced an ethical dilemma because of the conflict between *societal norms* and *organizational counter norms* e.g.

SOCIETAL NORMS		ORGANISATIONAL COUNTER-NORMS
Be open and honest	Vs	Be secretive and deceitful
Follow the rules at all costs	Vs	Get the job done any how
Be cost effective	Vs	Use it or lose it (as in a high priced computer)
Take the responsibility	Vs	Pass the buck (save your butt)
Be a team player	Vs	Take credit and move up

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Given the capitalist nature of most developing economies today could the above views not be universalized? If so, what sort of OD intervention is needed to address this anomaly? Therein lies the key to improving the work ethic: *to convert competition into cooperation for sustained development.*

In Denmark, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, France and Sweden, as well, Managerial Ethics is given a very high priority. Ethical Codes and Audits are consequently introduced in every major company/business. Cadbury speaking on Governance alludes to this all the time. However, *what does this mean?*

A *Code of Ethics* is a set of documents describing what an organization stands for and the general rules of conduct expected from all employees irrespective of rank.

An *Ethics Audit* is a practice of regular assessment of employee behavior so as to identify incidents of dubious (questionable) behavior. Here two systems can operate. Anyone can complain about anyone to an Ethics Manager. Where everyone is his brothers' keeper and is duty bound to complain, correct, and guide anyone who may be seen as falling out of line with corporate norms of conduct.

The final question can then be thus posed:

Is it just good business sense for management to be Ethical?

                                        or

It is good for management to be ethical and be seen to be acting ethically anyway?

The precise answer given by top management will determine the kind of ideology and the concomitant work ethic. History demonstrates and Sadri's research supports the fact that:

- Managers operating in the Consequential Mode are usually opportunists and carpetbaggers. Very often they do well in life.

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- Managers operating in the Acceptance Mode are usually insecure, seek peer approval and promote mediocrity. Very often they live behind a facade.

- Managers operating in the Non Consequential Mode are the trailblazers, history makers and true leaders. Most often they are the ones who make the difference.

An atmosphere that promotes creativity and innovation clearly allows trail blazers to flourish. Moreover, it is here that the OD facilitator must take his cue in formulating the intervention needed so that a work culture emanates and enables the organization to thrive on the cutting edge of global competition. There is little doubt that next to God if man should fear anything then it is History. For, when history passes judgement it is most unforgiving. Every person like every country makes his own history but does so under definite conditions over which he has little control. What kind of history would you like to be a part of? Are we perpetuating a culture of mediocrity in the name of conformity? Each of us has to make his own decision, walk his talk and stand up to be counted. What will your decision be? What kind of a work ethic will your OD intervention produce? That is the important question we must, as professionals, address to ourselves if we are to help India move into the new millennium from a position of strength. If meritocracy is indeed to replace mediocrity then we really have no other choice but to make ethical management a passion.

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