

“Meditation for Effective Decision-making”

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Subject code-10, key words- Meditation, effective decision-making, intuition and imagination.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Decision-making is an important managerial function on which depends the entire success or failure of any business. Progress made in the field of analytical sciences and the information technology have no doubt made this task a little easier than what it was earlier. Yet in spite of all analytical tools and techniques available at the disposition of managers the role played by imagination, intuition and the whole lot of soft skills including even sixth sense can not be neglected. Many a serious thinkers as Adair, Mintzberg, and Bernard in their expositions on Effective decision making have included the role of non-logical elements of human mind such as mentioned above and the difficulties faced in developing such faculties. Meditation is now being accepted as a science, which has a more important contribution in the development of managerial minds than just a tool of stress management. Indeed, the latest medical research has brought out fascinating aspects of this essentially oriental science in the development of managers where it has been shown to have restructured the entire neural network and given access to those latent areas of brain which are essential in more creative and intuitive aspects of thinking. The paper takes an analytical and critical look at possibilities of use of this science of Meditation in improving the effectiveness of managerial decision-making. The author's own research for doctoral thesis also has been used as a take off point for this purpose.

2.0 Decision making –An Art or a Science

2.1 There are a no. of theories which try to explain the exact nature of the process of decision making and to explain the scientific and the artistic factors that contribute in this process. There appear to be no consensus about the real nature of this process. There are thinkers like Henry Mintzberg and Chester Barnard who give more stress on non-logical elements and believe it to be more of an art than science. There is an equal no. of other theories which give more importance to the rational and logical elements of the process of decision making and to develop models based on this. Decision making hence remains still a managerial process which is both difficult to explain and even more difficult to master. A study of how exactly managers who are successful take decisions and are there foolproof methods to ensure qualitative as also quantitative correctness in decision making still remain issues which have not been studied in detail.

2.2 Peter Drucker considers practice and performance as two main pillars of good decision making but considers there can't be a perfectionist approach to decision making as it could prove to be quite costly. Drucker describes the elements involved in this process but does not clearly explain the modalities and design of good decision making process. John Adair's thinking highlights the importance of this function and he goes to place it as the most important of managerial duties. He does give a step by step approach to the actual process of decision making, but also points out the role played by the non logical or non rational elements such as emotions, power politics and few other.

2.3 Authors like J. Frank Yate call decision making a function of the decision management art and gives ten cardinal decision issues as,

- a) Need
- b) Mode
- c) Investment
- d) Options
- e) Possibilities
- f) Judgment
- g) Values
- h) Tradeoffs
- i) Acceptability
- j) Implementation

There are other thinkers such as H.Igor Ansoff who takes a strategic view of decision making and describes the type of decisions managers have to make by the level and strategic typology.

2.4 Chester Barnard on the other hand firmly believes this most of the managerial problems and situations are not logical since the information on which they are based is not qualitatively precise and reliable hence to apply logical and rational methods to them can not really be correct. He thus believes this non logical elements such as imagination, intuition, judgment play more important role in decision making.

3.0 An Integrated Model of decision making

3.1 Any integrated model of decision making hence must be a combination of rational, logical as well as non logical non rational processes. It must be a combination of the Prescriptive i.e. the how the things should be done and Descriptive, i.e. how the things are done. In brief both the scientific (knowledge based) and artistic (practice based) elements should be brought together to evolve an integrated approach to decision making function.

3.2 One of the ways of doing this is by using the context and form model as given by C. Alexander in his thesis on 'A Synthesis of Form' and has been dealt with in more detail in another paper by this author. The aim of this paper is to develop a methodology that permits the optimal use of human brain faculties in effective decision making practices and the role played by Meditation as a science in developing the managerial minds to do this.

4.0 Meditation and its application for effective decision making

4.1 Meditation can be described as fine tuning of human mind aimed at making it more efficient and effective in solving managerial and other problems. This is the applied view of meditation as science since as per the Eastern philosophical thought, where it originated, its main use is much nobler and spiritual in nature. The latest research being done on this most fascinating of the sciences has thrown up very interesting findings in terms of its effect on the way brain functions and many other aspects related to mind, human behavior, efficiency and effectiveness of thinking itself.

4.2 **Some important findings about meditation and its impact on human brain and mind**—Serious research is being conducted at Harvard and Massachusetts medical centers have found the following interesting facts about meditation. These findings are based on scientific experiments done under the latest of advanced laboratory and technological conditions on meditating monks. These are,

- a) Meditation activates large areas of brain which other times remain completely latent and unused.
- b) Meditation creates the Alpha, Theta and Delta wave conditions which have been known to those in which human minds are most restful and relaxed.
- c) Practice of Meditation seems to actually re-structure the entire brain neural network itself and the exact impact of this on efficiency and effectiveness is still not clear to these scientists. In the eastern world of science particularly, in the Yogic science these effects have been clearly documented and are open for any curious mind to experience.

4.2.1 **Can Meditation help managers to be more effective?**—Doctoral research of this author wherein a sample of more than 100 managers who were practicing meditation were actually asked to respond to a model of self development factors in areas such as Self management, People management, and Business management, has conclusively proven the hypothesis this meditation does improve managerial effectiveness in all these areas. Decision making too was included in this model and in this function too impressive improvements were reported in before and after abilities of managers. Though, how meditation helps in these functions is still not known it is proven beyond doubt that not only meditation reduces stress levels of practicing managers but it brings about an overall self development in almost all areas of their managerial functions. Some of the findings of the study done by this author are,

- a) Meditation improves managers' interpersonal skills and makes their people management function more effective.
- b) Meditation allowed managers to take a more balanced view of managerial problems and situations thus making their decisions qualitatively better.
- c) Meditation reduces stress levels in managers under difficult situations thus making them more efficient and effective in dealing.
- d) Meditation improves managers self management function.
- e) Meditation improves managers general grasp of business environment and improves the business management functions.

Thus it can be said without any trace of doubt that yes, meditation does improve managerial effectiveness in almost all areas of management and hence is the most powerful tool available for

managerial self development. More detailed analysis and statistical data is available in the author's thesis submitted at the University of Pune for the award of Ph.D. degree.

4.3 A meditation based model of decision making—Since it has now been scientifically proven that meditation helps in giving access to more areas of the brain and also makes its functioning more effective it is quite certain that it can improve managerial decision making function. Managers need to be made more aware of this excellent tool available to them to make their decisions more balanced. Following is a step by step process of meditation based decision making –

- a) Training of the managers in meditation—There are a no. of meditation techniques available for managers to select from depending on their specific needs and temperaments. However guidance of trained personnel in this regards is of utmost important. There should not be any ad-hoc do it yourself approach as it can prove to be non-effective and detrimental to the purpose.
- b) A change in the approach to business based on more holistic and humanitarian principles rather than just profit making. Actually, meditation should be used for an overall self development and not just decision making.
- c) Dcisions should not be viewed in isolation but must be seen as an outcome of the total process of managerial thinking and a part of a holistic process of management.
- d) All managerial processes should be viewed as not just analytical processes but a combination of analysis and synthesis both. As a matter of fact not just decision making but even other functions are an outcome more of synthesis rather than analysis, needs to be emphasized in all managerial training efforts. An excellent model of such an exercise of mind is given in C. Alexander's thesis on a synthesis of form in the practice of design methodology. This model has been illustrated in more detail in this author's other paper on the same subject. Meditation helps in developing a more integrated rather than fragmented view of any human function and management needs this approach more than just the analytical which tends to miss the woods for the trees.
- e) Most of the managerial decisions go wrong because of wrong orientation in thinking and a narrow and limited perspective of business lacking in long term vision and purpose. Another missing dimension which makes decision making difficult is un clear perception of the total business activity itself. Rising above the mundane and trivial and nurturing high values will help in removing this narrow perception. Meditation will also give the managers an detached attitude of viewing the results in a more philosophic and unbiased way reducing the trauma of decisions gone awry.

4.4 Meditation as a Self Development technique—The ancient philosophy of Yoga gives a complete model of self development of which Meditation is but one limb or part. Meditation or 'Raj- Yoga' as it is termed in the ancient text of sage Patanjali is a part of the same sage's treatise by the name of 'Ashtang Yoga' or the eight limbed Yoga. This Yoga is the best technique of self development based on the king (Raja) of all Yogas viz. 'Dhyan'(meditation) yoga. This author's thesis clearly brings out the efficacy of this yoga of meditation in the overall self development of the managers any where in the world. It would not be wrong to introduce this self development system for the overall development of the business managers not just mangers but as human beings in pursuit of the highest of the goals of human life i.e. human evolution to a state of perfectness. It is thus necessary to widen the main purpose of application of meditation to this end and decision making will then be only one part of this enlarged vision and purpose.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 In conclusion, it can be definitively be said that Decision making being such an important managerial functions needs the greatest of attention. As a matter of fact decision making can be said to be the 'summum bonum' of all managerial efforts on which depends not just the success of any business but also the fates of thousands of people involved in it. It must be studied in more details and all efforts must be done to educate and train the managers in this skill.

5.2 Meditation which now has emerged as the most scientific of human technologies ever developed by the human minds, needs to be given its rightful place in management development field and a good beginning can be made by using it to improve the managerial capabilities in the function of decision making. This is the right tool which can answer the challenging task of combining the soft and the hard skills so to say of human mind, the marriage of analytical and the emotional, the rational and the intuitive ,the logical and the imaginative ,the synthesis of all thinking faculties making it the most powerful, the 'Brahmastra' of management techniques.

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