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THE RISHI ROUTE TO REALITY: ITS APPLICATION TO MANAGERIAL NECESSITIES

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The desire to search for the ultimate nature of reality has invaded the human mind for timeless centuries that it stretches as far back as the ancient civilization in Greece and the Vedic and Upanishadic periods, which stand as milestones in Hindu religious philosophy. The several explanations offered for the nature of reality by both the earliest Greek thinkers, the Pre-Socratics and the Vedic rishis correspond with each other recalling the fact that people of kindred cultured and civilizations such as the Greeks and the Indians, were in possession of similar ideas and beliefs. This was mainly due to their close political, social and cultural relations and most conspicuously the fusion of Hindu religious traditions into Greek thought. The search for reality is one such idea that attracted the minds of both the Greeks and the Indians. Referred to, in the present study as the Rishi Route to reality, this search was a rational enterprise that involved concentration on and concentration of the ultimate source from which all things originated and returned to.

Thales call this source water (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, xxi.196) and so it is in the Rg Veda (x.82.3).

Anaximenes calls it Air, (Aristotle, *Physics*, 24.26 A5) while the Rg Veda notes its equivalent as vata or prana (x.168.3.4).

Anaximander leaves behind such material explanations and introduced the Apeiron or the Boundless (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 984,9.5). Similarly Aditi is boundless (Rg Veda, 1.89.10).

For Heracleitus this source is none other than fire while it is Agni in the Rg Veda (1.143.3).

The concept of atoms as the original source is akin in both Leucippus and Democritus and the Nyaya - Vaisheshika and Jain philosophical theories.

The Vedic rishis and the Pre-Socratics have succeeded in providing acceptable solutions for the origin of the universe. they have realized that.

'From the imperishable living beings of many kinds go for the and again return to them'. (Mundaka Upanishads, 1.1.7).

The age old realization of Brahman as imperishable; the inner controller of nature or antaryamin, the soul of nature or atman; the bliss of all joy or sacchidananda; the light of all lights or jyotisham jyotih is made possible through following the Rishi Route. Whether it is the Hindu aspirant or Greek thinker the Rishi Route to reality paves the way for the acquisition of knowledge of the ultimate essence of nature.

The Rishi Route to reality includes jnana or wisdom devoid of avidya or ignorance. Jnana offers a spiritual consciousness of self-discovery or atmanam Vidhi. The Yoga Sutra is a dis-

cussion on moral training consisting of the following:

Non - injury or ahimsa. Truth-speaking or satya, celibacy or brahmacharya. Possessing nothing or aparigraha. Purity or sauca, Contentment or samtosha. Austerity or tapas. Study of self or svadhyaya, Devotion to God or Isvara Pranidhana.

This and breath-control in the form of several postures or asanas results in a perfect discipline of sense; a withdrawal from corporeal illusions; a blend of serenity and virtue. Patanjali notes the cardinal obstacles that prevent the cultivation of morals and virtue they are -

Ignorance or Avidya

Egoism or Asmita

Attachment or Raga

Haré or Dvesa

Self-love or Abhinivesa.

These cause illusion or Maya and nescience or Avidya which holds the soul in corporeal bondage. The true lover of wisdom whom Socrates frees himself from all sensory pleasures (Plato, *Phaedo*, 81D - 83A) and tries to get more and more closer to the divine (Plato, *Theaetetus* 176). The eschatological teachings of Orpheus, Pythagoras and Empedocles, too, are in striking similarity to the Hindu teachings which are of course based on the Rishi Route.

The Orphics believe that the soul undergoes the samaric cycle of rebirth and finally becomes one with the divine Aither; in sheer bliss that it cries out in final liberation 'I am mortal no longer' for he has 'flown out of the sorrowful weary wheel' (Gold Tablet, 5, Jane Harrison, p.670). on a similar footing is the Hindu aspirant who follows the Rishi Route by regular association of the Vedas, Upanishads, Aranayakas and Samhithas, and embraces jnana and finally unites with Brahman. He who follows the Rishi route to accomplish this unity is compared to a lump of salt fallen into the ocean (Bhadaranyaka Upanishad, ii.4.12) or to a river joining the sea (Maitri Upanishad, i.2).

He then realizes paravidya from aparavidya, or higher knowledge from the lower (Mundaka Upanishad i.1.4.5). He retains his jnana till the end of the cosmic process and spends his birth educating his kind and associating the Rishi Route as much as possible.

Such a spirituality fulfilled and morally content virtuous life that transcends all limits and boundaries and embraces all living creation into its selfless care based on the route that the rishis had introduced and followed can be successfully applied to managerial enterprises of the present day. The perfect attention on the goal only and nothing else, the well-disciplined mind that faces all obstacles with zeal and tireless vigour, obedience to the authority of rishis can be utilized to the fullest managerial effect.

Continuity of the Rishi Route

The 'Rishi' route to reality found its continuity in varying forms as is revealed by the spiritual view of history. There are many views of history such as creativity and civilizational contributions views and closely connected with the creativity and the civilizational contributions views of Indian his-



tory, is a spiritual view of Indian history wherein the Rishi route finds its continuity. While 'secular' views of history focus on economic, political and other material conditions, the spiritual view sees history as unfolding of the spiritual consciousness in different periods of history. India is widely acknowledged as land of 'spiritual heritage'. This heritage has been manifesting itself in varying forms in different periods. In fact, we have following dominant manifestations of spiritual consciousness during ancient, medieval and modern periods:

- 1) Vedic Period
- 2) Mahavir & Buddha Period
- 3) Shankara Period
- 4) Bhakti Period (Gururanak & others)
- 5) Vivekananda, Aurobindo & Gandhi Period
- 6) New Age Spiritual Movements Period of ISKCON, BK, TM, Art of Living, etc.

Each period represents unfolding of spiritual consciousness though an ancient connectivity like the flow of the river. In the process, new rivers have also joined in this unfolding and interesting metaphors have been used to describe this phenomenon. Vivekanand's "Brothers & Sisters" metaphor established the 'fellowship of religions' and a 'coalition of religions' and Gandhi's "Ishwar Allah tero naam..." created path for oneness of religions and a roadmap for 'confluence culture'. New Age spiritual movements such as ISKCON, BK (Brahma Kumaries), TM (Transcendental Meditation), Art of Living, etc., have now emerged. These movements are also taking the rishi route, a step further and have emphasized 'oneness of all religions'. This is at times reflected in their symbols that provide sufficient space for integration of religious symbols of all religions. This is also because their followers come from different religions and backgrounds. These movements have also acquired global presence. Fig.1 presents the spiritual view of Indian history.

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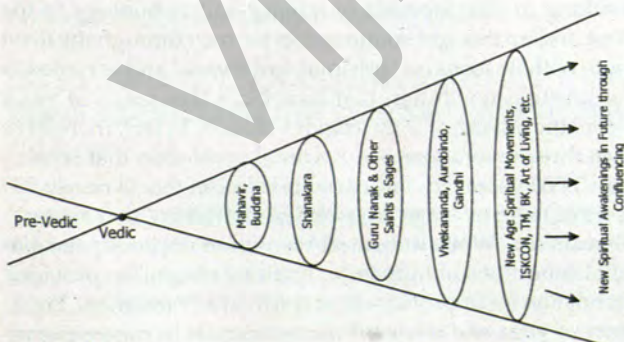


Fig.1 not only presents the past unfoldings of the spiritual consciousness but also suggests that in future new spiritual awakenings would be unfolded through new "confluence movements", wherein there would be new global confluence of various spiritual traditions of the world. Rishi knowledge unfolded through Indian spiritual traditions has already acquired a global presence e.g. globalization of yoga, etc. This would also pave the way for new confluences for which the path was created by Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi and many others. Thus, we see the continuity of the rishi route from ancient times to contemporary times.

AUM Foundations of USC & The Rishi Route

'AUM' the sacred syllable stands for 'All Unmanifest & Manifest' i.e. Brahman ("All") in its unmanifest and manifest forms. It is indeed interesting that these echoes of 'aum' can be heard in the voice of David Bohm who has suggested the idea of 'implicate' and 'explicate' order in this universe. 'AUM' constitutes the foundation of 'Universal Spiritual Consciousness' (USC) which manifests itself in varying forms. Ancient rishis were searching for the 'light of aum' presenting itself as 'light of USC'. This light was described by various names and forms. Gita refers to it as 'Light of all lights'. The continuity of Rishi route suggests that this light has infinite potential and a continuity of its own and the modern rishis have also 'seen' its unmanifest & manifest forms and described its attributes in their ways depending upon the space time and location contexts. In fact, various religions could be viewed as narratives and descriptions of the extra-ordinary experiences of their founders with respect to 'universal spiritual consciousness', which they have described in terms of luminosity of 'light of all lights'. Hence, 'modern rishis' such as Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi and others consider various religions as 'various rishi routes' to understand the same reality and reach the same destination. In fact, 'aum' finds its manifestation in spiritual and material forms in the 'atma' and the 'atom' wherein the two are integrated in the form of an 'infinity loop'. While scientists explore its 'atom' aspect, the mystics explore its 'atma' aspect and their search now seems to be leading to similar conclusions as we understand from the recent work in quantum physics. In fact, nature's PEN (Proton, Electron, Neutron) has a deeper connectivity with consciousness and scientists are trying to understand the same. In future, we may have a better understanding of the consciousness ("atma") behind the atom. Hence, in future there may be a convergence of the scientific route and the rishi route.

Rishi Route in Managerial Context: Towards 'Corporate Rishi'

'Rishi route' led us to the development of 'Rishi knowledge'. Is there any relevance of the 'rishi knowledge' to the contemporary world of management? Swami Ranganathananda (1980) created a new rishi route showing us the application of ancient rishi knowledge to the day to day problems of management and administration. Earlier, Swami Vivekananda had suggested the concept of 'Practical Vedanta' as a basis for organizing human activities and a basis for



holistic living. Swami Jitatmananda, Swami Someshwarananda, Swami Bodhananda and many others from 'religious orders' have taken the 'rishi route' and 'rishi vision' to the world of management. In addition to these efforts, there have also been many scholarly efforts to the application of 'rishi knowledge' in the managerial and corporate world. Pioneering work of Prof. S.K.Chakraborty (2003) is a pointer in this direction. Drawing upon the ancient scriptures, Chakraborty suggests the 'raj rishi' model of leadership for the corporate world. Athreya (2002) also draws upon the 'rishi knowledge' from epics and suggests the 'shrestha' (perfect and the best person) model of leadership. Sharma (1996, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003) drawing upon 'rishi knowledge' takes the 'model building' approach and suggests many workable models such as 'VEDA' model of enlightened leadership, OSHA model of human behaviour and interpersonal interactions, 'MBA' model of decision making, 'Ahamkara' to 'Aumkara' model of self-transformation, Rishi as Re-see approach etc. He suggests the 'Corporate Rishi' model of leadership for the corporate world. In the discussion below, we provide a brief outline on these models to indicate the continuity of the rishi route to the contemporary times.

- 1) 'VEDA' Model of Enlightened Leadership
- 2) 'OSHA' Model of Human Behaviour
- 3) 'MBA' Model of Decision Making
- 4) 'From Ahamkara to Aumkara' Model of Self-Transformation
- 5) Rishi Approach as Re-see Approach

The 'VEDA' model of enlightened leadership views leadership as a four dimensional concept of Vision, Enlightenment, Devotion and Action. The great leaders of the world exhibit these four qualities. They provide Vision, they are Enlightened and fully Devoted to their cause and mission and are Action oriented. Modern day leadership theories view the concept of leadership in terms of vision, mission and action. These are close to the 'VEDA' model, wherein the Vision - Action (VA) gap is filled through Enlightenment and Devotion. It may also be indicated that the 'VEDA' model also suggests us the integration of the four paths to self-realization viz. path of vision (raj yoga), path of enlightenment (jnana yoga), path of devotion (bhakti yoga) and path of action (karma yoga). Thus, it captures the essence of the rishi route to reality.

'OSHA' model with its roots in 'triguna' theory of sattavik, rajasik and tamasic gunas in nature, highlights the four levels of existence viz. O (Oneness), S (Spiritual), H (Humanistic) and A ('Animalistic' / Aggressive). In fact, model can be considered as essence of Gita. In organizational and managerial contexts it implies reducing 'A' - 'A' (Animalistic - Animalistic) interaction and thereby reducing the negative energy or neenergy, Feminine counterpart of OSHA model is the OSHE model wherein O, S, H, E imply Oneness, Spiritual, Humanistic and Existential aspects of life. When combined together OSHA - OSHE model represents an extension of the concept of Shiva - Shakti as well as the Yin - Yang. Management literature has now accepted the concept of 'androgynous' leader and the OSHA - OSHE combination of

human personality provides the intellectual foundations for the same.

'MBA' model of decision making views the decision making processes in organizations and society in terms of 'Manas' driven (intuition and right brain oriented), Buddhi driven (rationality and left brain oriented) and Ahamkar or ego and power driven. Now the management literature has recognized the role of intuition and creativity in visioning and envisioning the radical changes. The rishi route emphasizes the wisdom approach of combining the intuition (Manas) and reason (Buddhi) and avoidance of 'ahamkar' (ego).

'From Ahamkara to Aumkara' is a model of self-transformation, from lower self to higher self. In Gita and other scriptures, we find the conflict between the lower self and higher self. Lower self is ego oriented, higher self is eco oriented. Higher self drives an individual towards Higher Order Purpose of Existence (HOPE). In terms of OSHA model, it implies transformation from 'A' (Animalistic, Aggressive) state to 'O' (Oneness, Om) state of consciousness. In fact, we can identify three levels of self viz. Sin, Win and Yin. Sin level represents the lower self, Win represents the middle self and Yin the higher self. While, 'sin' is the ahamkara level, Win represents the self-actualizing level and Yin represents the aumkara level. Transformation from ahamkara to aumkara implies self-evolution towards Yin. This is also the finding of the ancient rishi route. In managerial context it means movement towards Yin model of leadership.

Rishi as Re-see represents the reformulation of Rishi approach for its contemporary relevance. Rishi route implies re-seeing and re-visioning the reality in new perspectives. Thus, a Corporate Rishi is one who can re-see the reality around him / her in new perspectives.

Concluding Comment: Towards New Convergence

In the beginning of this paper, we observed that there was a convergence between Indian and Greek thoughts during the pre-Socratic era. Subsequently, Greek thought took its own route which subsequently gave rise to 'scientific' worldview resulting in development of science and technology in the West. Indian thought continued its journey through the Rishi route with its focus on 'spiritual worldview' and is rooted in the spiritual revolution that took birth thousands of years before the advent of industrial revolution. In fact, there have been three revolutions viz. spiritual revolution that is more than 5,000 years old, industrial revolution that is nearly 500 years old and new age 'knowledge revolution' that is nearly 50 years old. While industrial revolution improved the material conditions of humanity, spiritual revolution provided foundation for improvement in spiritual advancement. Popularity of yoga and other similar techniques in contemporary times is a pointer in this direction. In fact, in the new knowledge revolution, once again there is a need for convergence of the 'scientific' and Rishi routes to reality.

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