

# Management Thoughts in Purāṇās<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Spirituality and ethics are core values that have shaped human life from time immemorial. However, as societies and their institutions progress and go through ebbs and flows, so does the relevance of such core values. Currently business entities are going through challenging times facing multitude of problems. Post 2000, there has been a wave of scandals related to the information and communications technology (ICT) sector (the cases of Enron and WorldCom for example). In recent times ethical issues were raised in the banking sector (London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) scandal for example). The Satyam episode in India also highlighted the consequences of fraudulent and unethical practices of business leaders. These have brought to limelight the inadequacy of current management practices primarily arising out of bad leadership, personal greed and unethical practices. The most frequently heard phrases include meltdown of the global economy, sub-prime crisis, perils of depression of not only of the economy but also of the people being sent out of companies. People talk about problems of supply crisis, price rise, salary cuts and layoffs.

This paper discusses the issue of management thoughts contained in our *purāṇās*<sup>3</sup>. The paper begins by highlighting some of the issues that modern day management faces. Therefore, there is an interest to look for alternative perspectives and ideas pertaining to management. This is followed by arguing that it is not surprising to find that the *purāṇās* indeed contain rich perspectives on management. The paper further proceeds to propose a schema for organization of our traditional wisdom that consists of the *śrīti*<sup>4</sup>, *smṛitis*, *purāṇās* and other ancient texts and demonstrate its parallels to the modern day repository of knowledge that any society needs for management. Using this schema the role of *purāṇās* in the context of management is established. Finally, a few specific issues of relevance to management today are taken up for discussion. The paper shows how the ideas contained in the *purāṇās* either clarifies certain aspects in today's context or provides alternative perspectives to the problems that we currently go through in the domain of management.

## Current Problems in Business Management

Among the many challenges in the business world, workers world-wide face increasing demands to work extended hours and consequently experience considerable work

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<sup>3</sup> In this write-up the term *purāṇās* will include the *itihāsas* and the *mahapurāṇās*.

<sup>4</sup> All Sanskrit words in this write-up are as per the IAST convention and are in italics. For details on IAST see, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Alphabet\\_of\\_Sanskrit\\_Transliteration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Alphabet_of_Sanskrit_Transliteration)

overload<sup>5</sup>. This invariably leads to mental stress and job burnout among managers. A recent research reported that a growing number of dissatisfied employees complained that they felt deprived of meaning in their workplaces<sup>6</sup>. The “Occupy Wall Street” and other anti-business movements clearly show the crisis of the materialistic management paradigm. Materialistic management is based on the belief that the sole motivation of doing business is money-making and success should be measured by the generated profit only.

The current state of the society points to an interesting state of duality. On one hand, there are indicators of progress such as more salary, greater buying power leading to many malls and hyper stores for shopping, better roads and higher educational standards. However, ironically on the other hand we also find that the stress levels are high and people are ageing faster. There are studies that suggest that India is the diabetic and hypertension capital of the world. Furthermore, several people increasingly complain of deteriorating quality of life. On an average we find that individuals feel more stressed today than perhaps 20 – 30 years ago. In today’s scheme of things, organizations and management philosophies will brush this idea into a personal agenda not worth getting into. The dominant thinking in management seems to be “you can keep aside all those individual issues and set your targets and make sure things work”. It is hard to imagine that individual issues can be kept away and still there is something called Business Management.

Another major source of worry for modern business management and society is sustainability. The western world seems to be waking up to the issue of sustainability after running the consumption engine to its maximum capacity. A paper published in 1999 suggested that in the US it takes 12.2 acres to supply an average person's basic needs, eight acres in the Netherlands and less than an acre in India<sup>7</sup>. Most strikingly, another estimate was that if the entire world lived like those in North America do, it would take three planet Earths to support the present population, leave alone the future generations.

The current approach to this problem assumes that perhaps we can create and/or tame nature. Unfortunately this could be nothing more than a wishful thinking. Another study showed how futile and fancy this idea could be. An experimental setup known as Biosphere II was created in Arizona. Despite \$200 million worth of elaborate equipment, Biosphere II had failed to generate breathable air, drinkable water, and adequate food for just eight people<sup>8</sup>. Business management practices today are simply incapable of addressing the larger issue of sustainability using market economy as the main vehicle.

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<sup>5</sup> Fry, L.W. and Cohen, M.P. (2009). “Spiritual Leadership as a Paradigm for Organizational Transformation and Recovery from Extended Work Hours Cultures”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84, pp. 265–278

<sup>6</sup> Marques, J. (2011). “Spirituality, Meaning, Interbeing, Leadership, and Empathy: SMILE”, *Interbeing*, 4 (2), pp. 7 – 17.

<sup>7</sup> Hart, S.L. (1997), “Beyond Greening: Strategies for a sustainable world”, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 75, No. 1, 66 – 76. Also, Donelia Meadows, (1996). “Our 'Footprints' Are Treading Too Much Earth,” *Charleston (S.C.) Gazette*, April 1, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Lovins,, A.B., L.H. Lovins and P. Hawker B. (1999), A road map to natural capitalism, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3, 145 – 159.

It appears that our ideas of business management do not seem to work well. The unfolding business crises and scams have exposed the leadership crunch in organisations. The current practice of leadership seems unable to resolve the major issues facing businesses. Furthermore, this has once again brought to the forefront the role of spirituality and ethical and moral values in all domains of the society including the business. A number of scholars mention a paradigm shift in management theory, and practice in the last few years. These changes in management include a shift from an economic focus to quality of life, spirituality, and social responsibility<sup>9</sup>, a shift from self-centeredness to interconnectedness<sup>10</sup>, and a change from a materialistic to a spiritual orientation<sup>11</sup>. Another researcher reports that Anita Roddick, the founder of the Body Shop, invested a quarter of the company's net profits back to the community to "keep the soul of the company alive"<sup>12</sup>. Such traits are exhibited by an individual when she/he is able to imbibe spirituality.

## Role of Purāṇās in Management

The moot question is whether our *purāṇās* contain useful ideas for management. A cursory glance at some portions of our *purāṇās* will indeed suggest that there is a rich repository of management thoughts contained in it. The reasons are not farfetched. Management is all about dealing with a multitude of people, situations, and entities around. Since the *purāṇās* contain a number of situations dealing multiple entities and people it is inevitable that they indeed bring out management ideas to the fore. In order to understand this better we need to delve a little bit into the manner in which the ancient Indian knowledge tradition is organized.

The core and primordial source of our knowledge is the *śṛti*. The vedic text consisting of *mantras*, *brahmanas*, *araṇyakas* and *upaniṣads* form the *śṛti*. *Śṛti* provides the overall defining framework for our living. Therefore there is a need to expand the tenets contained in this framework. It requires detailed explanations in terms of "how to" aspects of the ideas expressed in the *śṛti*. Therefore, we have another set of knowledge known as *smṛtis*, which provide detailed prescriptions in terms of do's and don'ts of specific situations. These are in the form of *dharma śāstras*, *gṛhya* and *śrauta sutras* etc. In other words the *smṛtis* are detailed commentaries that provide explanatory details of what is intended in the *śṛti*. Although *smṛtis* provide detailed instructions with respect to the application of the ideas enjoined in the *vedas*, several conflicting situations emerge and pose unique challenges in the applications of these principles. Therefore, knowledge of how different situations that can be subjective in nature, and need to be addressed based on the merits of the situation, have been handled is a very useful addition to the repository. This indeed will provide subtle dimensions and needed

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<sup>9</sup> Walsh, J. P., Weber, K. and Margolis, J.D. (2003). "Social Issues and Management: Our Lost Cause Found", University of Michigan Business School, Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>10</sup> Capra, F. (1996). "The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems", Anchor Books, New York.

<sup>11</sup> Neal, J. (1997). "Spirituality in Management Education: A Guide to Resources", Journal of Management Education 21, pp. 121 – 140.

<sup>12</sup> Karakas, F. (2010). "Spirituality and Performance in Organizations: A Literature Review", Journal of Business Ethics, 94 pp. 89 – 106.

clarity to handle a myriad of situations that emerge in one's life. The *purāṇās* serve this very purpose and provide this valuable knowledge for the benefit of the mankind.

It appears that in modern times we have adopted systems that are designed using a very similar approach to handle a variety of situations as they emerge from time to time. For instance consider the Income Tax Act 1961. This act will be cryptic and will merely enumerate the sections and sub-sections in the act. In order to understand its applications, typically a detailed publication known as "A guide to the Income Tax Act" is brought out. This will provide the explanatory notes detailing the intent behind the sections and sub-sections of the act. It will also unambiguously lay down the do's and don'ts pertaining to various sections and provisions of the act. This is the equivalent of the *smṛtis*. However, what makes the application of the act more meaningful and easy is the compilation of "Case laws". Case laws are detailed descriptions of how various complications arising out of situations from time to time have been handled. This is the exact equivalence of the *purāṇās* in our ancient knowledge tradition.

Viewed from this perspective, we will be able to appreciate the fact that *purāṇās* play a crucial role in helping us deal with the world of *vyavahāra*. Therefore, they indeed contain valuable knowledge relevant to management.

## Some Management Thoughts from Purāṇās

In our knowledge tradition under the category of *purāṇas* there are two *itihāsas* (*Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhāratam*) and 18 *Mahāpurāṇas*. There are several *upa-purāṇas* also. It is practically impossible even to take a single *purāṇa* and explore the management thoughts in them. Therefore, in this paper, we adopt a different approach. We take a few major themes discussed in the management literature today and explore the ideas pertaining to these discussed in the *purāṇas*. At the outset it may not be out of place to mention that in recent times there have been several attempts to cull out management thoughts from *Srimad Bhagavad Gītā*, which is part of *Mahābhāratam*.

### *The notion of Sustainability*

Over the recent past there has been a growing concern on the impact of business on environment. These arise on account of depletion of natural resources, waste generated from industrial activity, manufacturing and mass and service systems and at the end-of-life of products. Increasingly, firms are under pressure to take responsibility for restoring, sustaining and enriching the planet's ecosystem instead of merely exploiting them. In our contemporary approach to business growth and profitability, we seem oblivious to the fact that resources required for sustaining the current levels of consumption may be fast depleting. Further, today's management discourse on sustainability is dominantly one of economic sustainability. The other two dimensions; environmental sustainability and social sustainability are not well articulated and addressed today.

Ideas in *purāṇas* on the other hand provide an overarching and more comprehensive framework for sustainability. The notion of Dharma as the key *puruṣārtha* emphasizes

the notion of sustainability in a wider sense. In the *Karṇa Parva* of *Mahābhāratam* there is a basic definition available for *dharma*:

धारणाद्धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः ।

यद्स्यात् धारणसंयुक्तं स धर्म इति निश्चयः ॥ 72.58

*dhāraṇād-dharmam iti āhuḥ dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ  
yat syāt dhāraṇasaṃyuktaṃ sa dharmā iti niścayaḥ*<sup>13</sup>

प्रभवार्थाय भूतानां धर्मप्रवचनं कृतम् ।

यस्मात्प्रभवसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः ॥ 72.59

*prabhavārthāya bhūtānāṃ dharmā-pravacanam kṛtam  
yasmāt prabhava-saṃyuktaḥ sa dharmā iti niścayaḥ*

According to these prescriptions, the very purpose of *dharma* is to ensure sustainability of the living beings and all those that are fundamentally contributing to the cause of sustainability is indeed classified to be *dhārmic*. Furthermore, the overall framework of *dharma* is primarily intended for nourishment and development of the living beings. A deeper understanding of the various tenets of *dharma* can help today's society restore the balance from a perspective of sustainability. For instance, the notion of *yajña* as portrayed in our *purāṇas* (see for example chapter 3 of *Gītā*, *śloka*s 9 – 20) provide a larger meaning to sustainability. Similarly the concept of *panca mahā yajñas* envisaged in our *purāṇas* also presents a larger and a robust framework for sustainability.

The architects of our tradition clearly had a very unequivocal understanding of sustainability in letter and spirit. On account of the importance of sustainability, our *purāṇas* emphasized the need for protecting *dharma* as it in turn will protect the one who follows *dharma*, as is evident from the parting advice *Kausalyā* gives to *Śri Rāma* when he left for the forest (*Ayodhyā Kādam*):

यं पालयसि धर्मं त्वं धृत्या च नियमेन च ।

स वै राघवशार्दूल धर्मस्त्वामभिरक्षतु ॥ 25.3

*yaṃ pālayasi dharmam tvam dhrtyā ca niyamena ca  
sa vai rāghavaśārdūla dharmas-tvāmabhirakṣatu*

"O Raghava! the *Dharma* which you uphold with steadfastness and discipline may protect you from all sides".

The *manu smṛiti* presented the same idea as:

<sup>13</sup> All *śloka*s are rendered in Roman scripts as per the IAST schema for transliteration.

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।  
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥ 8.25

*dharma eva hato hanti dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ  
tasmāt dharmo na hantavyo mā no dharmo hato'vadhīt*

### *Inspiration Vs Satisfaction*

Modern management theories have spent disproportionately more time on the issue of satisfaction and motivation. On the other hand, if we look at the *paurāṇic* literature, the emphasis seems to be more on inspiration. One of the issues that Shri Krishna emphasizes to Arjuna through the teachings laid out in *Srimad Bhagavad Gītā* is the issue of leadership. In several chapters in the *Gītā* there are interesting discussions pertaining to the quality of leadership<sup>14</sup>. According to the *Gītā*, leadership is at its best only when it becomes inspirational. Inspirational leaders have several attributes<sup>15</sup>. These include:

- Outgrowing one's own vision from the narrow perspective of "what is in it for me?" (*Gītā*: 3.9) to an opportunity to make a difference to the people and the place that they associate with
- Unwavering commitment to lead by example (*Gītā*: 3.21)
- Developing a high degree of equanimity (*Gītā*: 2.14). No great leadership is possible without developing a sense of equanimity. Lord Krishna drives this point home in the *Gītā* in several places (Chapters 2 to 14).
- Understanding and practising the principle of mutual dependence (*Gītā* 3.11)
- Not being afraid of anyone and not generating any sense of fear in others (*Gītā*: 12.15)
- An ability to dramatically transform people and entities in a sustained fashion that they come into contact with. It is therefore not surprising that many entities and people in this country and elsewhere have been significantly influenced by a person like Mahatma Gandhi till date. This phenomenon is tightly bound to our continuing tradition.
- Leaving behind an impact that guides a large number of people and organisations for a long time to come. Collins echoes these attributes through his definition of Level 5 leadership, one that transcends self-interest through a paradoxical mix of humility and professional will<sup>16</sup>.

In order to achieve such a level of leadership, a strong current of spirituality must run in an individual. Spirituality will broaden the vision of an individual, melt his/her heart through empathy, embolden him/her to take steps without fear of failure and

<sup>14</sup> See for example Swami Ranganathananda's three part commentary on Gita, "Universal Message of Bhagavad Gita" published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> For more details on this see, **Mahadevan, B., (2013)**. "Inspirational Leadership: Perspectives from Gītā", Chapter 13 in Sanskrit and Development of World Thought, Kutumba Sastry V. (Ed.), D K Print World, New Delhi, pp 199 - 210.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, J. (2001), "Good to Great", Random Book House, London, pp 17 - 40.

significantly increase his/her leadership competence. This seems to be the underlying message in the *Gītā* on matters pertaining to leadership.

### *Sense of Equanimity*

A leader faces a variety of situations in his professional life. While some of them may be conducive, in several cases it can be hostile to his thoughts and actions. All great decisions are not taken in haste and excitement but with a mental framework of calmness and mental equipoise. Developing a mental equipoise is all about developing a superior frame of mind that enables one to face the world of ups and downs with evenness. Only with such a capability one can face the pushes and pulls of life. Unfortunately, modern management practices have not dealt this issue in great detail. The emphasis in most cases is to address situational factors rather than personal/individual trials and tribulations.

On the other hand, one of the major issues discussed in the *purāṇas* in several places and in great measure is the issue of equanimity (*tītikṣā*). We have already seen how this issue has been discussed in great detail in the *Gītā*. *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍam* of *Rāmāyaṇam* provides a wonderful illustration of the importance of this. In the 16<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, *Vālmiki* begins to describe the jubilant mood of Rāma (of becoming the king) when he was summoned by *Daśaratha*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> *sarga* he goes on to describe the mental pressures Rāma has gone through.

हन्त शीघ्रमितो गत्वा द्रक्ष्यामि च महीपतिम् ।

सह त्वं परिवारेण सुखमास्व रमस्व च ॥ 16.20

*hanta śīghramito gatvā drakṣyāmi ca mahīpatim  
saha tvam parivāreṇa sukhamāsva ramasva ca*

Here Rāma is portrayed to be in a happy state of mind and he instructs *Sītā* to revel in enjoyment with her friends so that he can meet his father and come back quickly. When he returned after the conversation with *Kaikeyī* and *Daśaratha*, he was full of grief and was making all the efforts to conceal his emotions and feelings.

धारयन्मनसा दुःखमिन्द्रियाणि निगृह्य च ।

प्रविवेशात्मवान् वेश्म मातुरप्रियशंसिवान् ॥ 19.35

*dhārayan manasā duḥkham-indriyāṇi nigrhya ca  
praviveśātmavān veśma māturapriyaśamsivān*

However, it was not possible to conceal his feelings, which is evident when we look at the following observation of *Sītā*. Rāma's face changed, and he looked sad and on seeing this, *Sītā* was worried and inquired him of the matter:

अथ सीता समुत्पत्य वेपमान च तं पतिम् ।

अपश्यच्छोकसन्तप्तं चिन्ताव्याकुलितेन्द्रियम् ॥ 26.6

*atha sītā samutpatya vepamāna ca taṃ patim  
apaśyat-śokasantaptaṃ cintā-vyākulita-indriyam*

विवर्णवदनं दृष्ट्वा तं प्रस्विन्नममर्षणम् ।

आह दुःखाभिसंतप्ता किमिदानीमिदं प्रभो ॥ 26.8

*vivarnavadanam dr̥ṣtvā taṃ prasvinnam-amr̥ṣaṇam  
āhu duḥkhābhisantaptā kimidānimidaṃ prabho*

*Rāma* has been going through these emotions for a considerably long time, which is evident if we read the text further. Even in the 53<sup>rd</sup> *sarga* we are able to see how the emotions of *Rāma* continue to pour out while he was in the forest. His mind was thinking of several issues connected to the event, which is evident from the following *śloka*:

इदम् व्यसनमालोक्य राज्ञश्च मतिविभ्रमम् ।

काम एवार्थधर्माभ्याम् गरीयानिति मे मतिः ॥ 53.9

*idam vyaśanam-ālokya rājñāśca mativibhRāmam  
kāma eva-arthadharmābhyāṃ garīyāniti me matiḥ*

The trace of events seems to have momentarily shaken *Rāma's* belief in the superiority of dharma as a *puruṣārtha*. In this *śloka* He says, “By seeing the behaviour of the king, it appears that *kāma* is superior to *artha* and *dharma*”.

Further, *Śri Rāma's* mind wanders into issues such as the luck that has befallen on Bharata to rule the kingdom and the wickedness of *Kaikeyī*. The following *ślokas* bear testimony to this:

स हि सर्वस्य राज्यस्य सुखमेकम् भविष्यति ।

ताते च वयसातीते मयि चारण्यमास्थिते ॥ 53.12

*sa hi sarvasya rājyasya sukhamekaṃ bhaviṣyati  
tāte ca vayasātīte mayi cāraṇyamāsthite*

With the aged father around and my being in the forest, it is clear that Bharata will determine fortune and happiness of the people of *Ayodhyā*.

क्षुद्र कर्मा हि कैकेयी द्वेषादन्याय्यमाचरेत् ।

परिदद्यात् हि धर्मज्ञ गरं ते मम मातरम् ॥ 53.18

*kṣudra karmā hi kaikeyī dveṣādanyāyyamācaret  
paridadyāt hi dharmajñā garaṃ te mama mātaram*

*Kaikeyī* is wicked in nature, and out of her bad feelings she may even choose to poison my mother and your mother.



With a stream of wandering thoughts like this and being alone in the forest *Rāma's* eyes were filled with tears and he could not sleep and was silently sitting in the night:

एतदन्यच्च करुणं विलप्य विजने वने ।

अशुपूर्णमुखो रामो निशि तूष्णीमुपाविशत् ॥ 53.27

*etadanyacca karuṇaṃ vilapya vijane vane*  
*aśrupūrṇamukho rāmo niśi tūṣṇīmupāviśat*

These thoughts and descriptions show how difficult is it for one to face disappointments and failures in life. However, towards the end of *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍam* we are able to see a different characterization of *Rāma* when Bharata meets the brother and pleads him to return to *Ayodhyā*. The conversation between *Rāma* and Bharata and *Rāma's* handling of the persuasions by *Vasiṣṭa* and other elders (*sargas* 98 – 116 in *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍam*) provide a wonderful reading and valuable lessons on the issue of equanimity.

The lofty ideas that *Rāma* imparts to Bharata in the 105<sup>th</sup> *sarga* shows the level of maturity *Rāma* has exhibited and the strength of his character. After a long conversation *Rāma* advises Bharata to return to *Ayodhyā* and get himself anointed as the King in order to fulfill the wishes of the father. He further told him that he is doing the same act of fulfilling the wishes of his father by staying in the forest:

भवानपि तथेत्येव पितरं सत्यवादिनम् ।

कर्तुमर्हति राजेन्द्र क्षिप्रमेवाभिषेचनात् ॥ 107.9

*bhavānapi tathetyeva pitaraṃ satyavādinam*  
*kartumarhati rājendra kṣipramevābhiṣecanāt*

ऋणान्मोचय राजानं मत्कृते भरत प्रभुम् ।

पितरं चापि धर्मज्ञं मातरं चाभिनन्दय ॥ 107.10

*ṛṇānmocaya rājānaṃ matkṛte bharata prabhum*  
*pitaraṃ cāpi dharmajñaṃ mātaraṃ cābhinandaya*

It is indeed hard to imagine how one can let go an opportunity to get back the kingdom. Managing one's temptations is the hallmark of leadership. The entire set of events and narrations in *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍam* provides a rich repository of knowledge as to how one can develop a strong character and clarified inner self. In today's scheme of things, our ability to exhibit superior leadership skills critically depends on these aspects. A deeper contemplation of the events in *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍam* will indeed give us valuable lessons.

#### *Other Management ideas*

There are a number of interesting ideas that one can draw from the *purāṇas* that may provide a concise yet an interesting perspective to several aspects of management. It may be worthwhile to mention one or two such examples here.

In the first *sarga* of *Sundara Kāṇḍam* as soon as Hanuman crosses the sea and reaches the shores of Lanka, *Vālmiki* points to the four factors that are important for executional excellence. Steadfastness and fortitude in the task at hand, a certain vision, good presence of mind supported by the knowledge of the problems and solutions and good executional skills are important aspects of accomplishing any task at hand.

यस्य त्वेतानि चत्वारि वानरेन्द्र यथा तव ।  
धृतिर्दृष्टिर्मतिर्दाक्ष्यं स कर्मसु न सीदति ॥ 1.198

*yasya tvetāni catvāri vānarendra yathā tava  
dhṛtir-dṛṣṭir-matir-dākṣyaṃ sa karmasu na sīdati*

Another valuable dimension in the *purāṇas* is the elaborate treatment of moral and ethical dilemmas that one's is likely to face in decision making. These issues have been dealt with in such a manner that it provides some more clarity on the application of *dharma* in myriad situations. The issue of *dharma sūkṣma* described elaborately in our *purāṇas* provides one with thoughts pertaining to handling multiple situations which are in the domain of management. The following *śloka*s from the *Karṇa Parva* of *Mahābhārata*m provides an idea of this:

सत्यस्य वचनं साधु न सत्याद्विद्यते परम् ।  
सुदुर्विदं हि तत्त्वेन तत्सत्यमिति मे मतिः ॥ 72.31

*satyasyaṃ vacanaṃ sādhu na satyādvidyate param  
sudurvidaṃ hi tattvena tatsatyamiti me matiḥ*

भवेत्सत्यमवक्तव्यं वक्तव्यमनृतं भवेत् ।  
यत्रानृतं भवेत्सत्यं सत्यं चाप्यनृतं भवेत् ॥ 72.32

*bhavet-satyam-avaktavyaṃ vaktavyamanṛtaṃ bhavet  
yatrānṛtaṃ bhavet-satyam satyaṃ cāpyanṛtaṃ bhavet*

In a conversation with Arjuna, *Śri Krishna* highlights to Arjuna that the exact meaning of truth and its applications are subtle and deep. He suggested that it is very difficult to understand truth observed in action. Truth becomes unutterable and untruth utterable, where untruth would pose as truth and truth as untruth.

## Conclusions

This paper merely provides a sample of what one can indeed look for in the *purāṇas*. A vast repository of knowledge contained in the *purāṇas* can provide valuable insights to several of the problems that we face today in our society. The choice is ours to make use of this. In our anxiety to cull out management thoughts from the *purāṇas* we must not lose sight of the fact that these texts are meant for a much larger purpose of shaping the thinking of the society on multiple aspects such as spirituality, religious practices, inculcating high thinking and setting aspirations for lofty goals of *mokṣa*. With such an overall understanding, we will gain more even when we cull out some useful perspectives in the domain of management.