

APPLICATION OF SUKRANITI – A CASE STUDY OF NALLI

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Abstract : This document gives a short summary of what is Sukraniti and what are all the management concepts mentioned in Sukraniti and how it is followed in Nalli Textiles. This is described as a case study.

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Key words : Sukraniti, Sukracharya, employee engagement, Niti shastra

Introduction This case study is an exploration of application of Sukraniti which comes under the Niti Shastra¹ and found to have applications in governance of country and business. It consists of 2,575 Slokasⁱⁱ divided into five chapters hypothesized to be written before five thousand years by Sukracharyaⁱⁱⁱ. The duties of a King and function of crown prince are described in first two chapters. The other three chapters provide general rules, especially related to the employer employee relationship. These rules which are based on duties of the king and his subjects. However the principles evolved may be used to strengthen Employer-Employee bonding and improve the Employee Engagement. This ancient text and its recommendations are still practiced in India by some organisations. Sukracharya has given these rules for appropriate governance and smooth functioning of society. He prescribed a holistic approach towards the issue of labour,

encompassing king- his officers – employer of business – his managers and the employee. He prescribed the qualities that the employer should possess such as truthfulness and philanthropy and posited that low wages, harsh treatment, insult, abuse and the imposition of heavy fines or severe punishment are the causes of unrest among the employees. ‘Satisfied by payment of adequate wages and in time, promoted honourably, enthused by gentle words and consoled in grief, the employees would never let down or desert their master’ (Sukraniti 2418-419). This is one of the most important dimensions of employee engagement that is foreseen. All the actions are based on destiny and labour (Karma^{iv}), actions committed in the previous birth are destiny and actions committed in this life are called Purushartha. This study is a research based case with references from Tamil, Sanskrit texts. However, every effort has been taken to cross

verify data from one language to another with some of the available English translations. Sukraniti is based on fatalism and patriarchal society which may not be acceptable by all. However, these practices are prevalent among business families when faced with conflicting situations.

Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti is a third generation Entrepreneur and most successful retailer for sarees. Himself being a Tamil Scholar, implemented many of the ancient Indian way of doing business. By way of case study, this paper explains application of Sukraniti.

He has got 'Employer –Employee Relationship' award by The Rotary Club of Madras, 'Pad-mashri' award by Indian Government and 'Kalaimamani' award by Government of Tamil Nadu.

Fundamentals of Sukraniti^v

These are the fundamental premise on which Sukraniti is built. The Sanskrit Slokas are translated to English.

KARMAIVA KAARANAM CHAATRA SUGATIM
DURGATIM DURGATIM PRATI^{vi} ||
KARMAIVA PRAAKTANAMAPI KSHANAM KI
KOSTI CHAKRIYAH ||

Karma is the cause of our SUGATI or happy conditions and DURGATI – miseries in this world. PRAARABDHA – providence, destiny is nothing else but our KARMAS (deeds, good and evil) of PURVAJANAM (our previous birth re-generation). Can anyone live for a second without doing a KARMA.

Caste System

While caste system is based on birth in a particular caste, Sukraniti is based on character of a person. The following Slokas will explain about the caste system and a rough translation is given here. In this regard, it totally differs from other nitis.

NA JAATYA BRAAHMNASHCHAATRA
KSHATIRYO VAISYA EVA NA ||
NA SHUDRO NA CHA VAI MLECHICHO BHE-
DITAA GUNAKARMABHIH ||

In this world, no one is Brahmin, Kshatriya. Vaishya and Shudra by birth but on the basis of quality (GUNAA) and deeds and actions (KARMA).

Brahmana

GYAANKARMOPAASANAABHIRD-
DEVATAARAADHANE RATAH ||
SHAANTO DAANTO DAYAALUSHCHA BRAH-
MANASCHA GUNA KRITAH ||

Brahmin (Brahmana) is created by having following qualities like GYAANKANDA (Having yearning for the Holy Scriptures), KARMAKANDA (knowledge of performing YAGNA (HOMA) and UPASANA (WORSHIP). He is also engrossed in worship of the Deities, is gentle, has controlled his senses and is kind.

Kshatriya

LOKASANRAKSHANE DAKSHAH SHOORO
DAANTAH PARAAKRAMI ||
DUSHTANIGRAHASHEELO YAH SA VAI
KSHATRIYA UCHYATE ||

One who cleverly protects his subjects, is brave, has control over his senses and whose nature is to punish the wrong doers is called KSHATRIYA.

Vaishya

KRAYA VIKRA YAKUSHALAAHYE YE NITYAM
PANYAJEEVINAH ||
PASHURAKSHA KRISHIKARAASTE VAI-
SHYAAH KEERTITAAHBHUVI ||

One who is efficient in KRAYA (Purchasing) VIKRAYA (Selling) daily earns his livelihood by his business, one who does PASHU PAALANA (animal husbandry and Farming is called VAISHYA in this world.

Shudra

DWIJASEVAARCHANARATAAH SHOORAAH
SHANTAA JITENDRIYAAH ||
SARIKAASHTHA TRINA VAHAASTE
NEECHAAH SHOODRASANGYAKAAH ||

Those who are in the service of the DWIJA (BRAHMANA, KSHATRIYA AND VAISHYA, brave, gentle have control over their senses, carry plough(HALA), KAASHTHA and TRINA (grass) are called SHUDRA.

Mleccha

TYAKTASVADHARMAACHARANAA NIRGHRI-
NAAH PARPEEDAKAAH ||
CHANDAASHCHA HINSAKAAH NITYAM
MLECHCHHAASTE ||

Those who abandon their own DHARMA (Goodness), lack kindness, cause harm to others, possess excessive anger and are violent are called MLECCHA and they lack the power of reasoning or Viveka.

Tyrant

AGINDO GARADASHCHAIVA SHASTRON-
MATTO DHANAAPAHAAH ||
KSHETRADAARAHARASHCHAITAAN SHAD
VIDDYAADAATTAAYINAH ||

One who ignites fire and causes destruction, one who gives poison, one who is ever ready to kill intoxicated by the power of his sword, one who plunders others wealth, one who overtakes others farm and woman – should be considered as a tyrant.

Duties of a Person

NOPEKSHETA STRIYAM BAALAM ROGAM
DAASAM PASHUM DHANAM ||
VIDDYAABHYAASAM KSHANAMAPI SAT-
SEVAAM BUDDHIMAANNARAH ||

One must not be indifferent towards his wife, his son, diseases, servants, domestic animals, wealth, knowledge and studies and doing service to a gentleman for a moment. One must always take care of them.

MAATRUPITRUGURUSWAAMMI BHATRUPU-
TRASAKHISHVAPI ||
NA VIRUDHYENNAAPAKURYAANMANASAAPI
KSHANAM AKCHIT ||

Learning of Good Qualities

SHATRORAPI GUNAA GRAAHYAA GUROST-
YAAJYASTU DURGUNAAH ||

One should accept the good qualities of even the enemies and should salute him but on the other hand even if his teacher has bad qualities, he should reject them.

Learning should be from honest persons and not from dishonest persons. (Added by case study writers)

Hasty work without due diligence

KRIYAAPHALAMVIGYAYAA YATATE SAA-
HASEE CHA SAH ||
DUHKHABHAAGEE BHAVATYEVA KRIYAYAA
TATPHALEN VAA ||

A Misadventurist, who tries to do any work in a haste manner without giving much thought, and without knowing the consequences, gets only sorrow either because of the work itself or because of the consequences of that work. Modern day work with deadlines and poor outcome definitions are bound to prove losses in the long run.

Effects Of Karma And Destiny

PRAAKARMA PHALBHOGAARHAA BUDDHIH
SANJAAYATE NRINAAM ||
PAAPAKARMANI PUNYE VAA KARTUM
SHAKTO NA CHAANYATHAA ||

A Man is capable or incapable of doing Karmas (good or evil) in his present life according to the Karmas done in his previous birth, then his mind will change accordingly in his present birth and will do good or evil Karmas to face its consequences.

BANDHIRUTPADDYATE TAADDYAG YAAD-
DAKKARMAPHALODAYAH ||
SAHAAYAASTAADDASHAA EVA YAAD-
DASHEE BHAVITAVYATAA ||

The mind changes as soon as the time comes to face the consequences of the Karmas.

As the destiny is, accordingly one gets friends (good or evil).

DAIVE PURUSHAKAARE CHA KHALU SAR-
VAM PRATISHITAM ||
PURVAJANMAKRITAM TAD DVIDHA KRITAM
||

All the actions of the world are based on BHAGYA – Destiny and PURUSHARTHA labour, actions committed in the previous birth are destiny and actions committed in this Life is called PURUSHARTHA. Thus, KARMAS have been differentiated in two ways whichever of the two (BHAGYA and PURUSHARTHA) is powerful forces the other to surrender. The strength cannot be identified merely by analysing the results of the Karma or by any other means).

Summary of slokas for servants (workers)

An examination of nitis for workers may give rise to the following decrement. Every worker needs economic, social and personal security, which to an extent resembles the hierarchy of needs as given by Maslow's theory of motivation. If these needs are not fulfilled, conflicts arise which lead to disputes. If law regarding industrial disputes is examined, 98% of the cases are relating to economic, social and personal security. Some of the other common causes of industrial disputes are psychological, institutional, economic and denial of legal and other rights of workers. Sukracharya highlights the psychological aspect of disputes by pointing out that the servant should leave such a king or

an organisation who does not remember the good done for him, is not satisfied with good service and is suspicious (Sukraniti 2,435). Similarly, the servant or worker should follow codes in his behaviour towards his employer (Sukraniti 184-88). Sukracharya considered that truth and philanthropy are the two most sacred of all virtues, while untruthfulness is considered as greater sin than all other sins. Communication is considered as most essential characteristic of good governance. Managers who do not explain strength and weakness of issues to employer are really are his enemies in the same sense he said a master who does not have faith in his counsellors is like a thief and exploiter. Ruler should not form his judgement based on hearsay. If the king and the subordinates are working in harmony then, wealth is abundant and long lasting. (Sukraniti 2254-57)

Promotion of Employees

All jobs should be based on merit. The top posts should be held by rotation. As the officers become qualified for greater responsibilities, they should be readily promoted as stagnation takes away satisfaction and kills the incentive to work and administration suffers on account of absence of motivation. (Sukraniti 2109-116)

Compensation

Sukracharya mentions about sickness benefits (2409-411), leave rules (2407-8, 412), bonus as defrayed wages (2,415), payment of pension, family pension (2413-14), etc to workers. Besides these, three types of wages (2,396-400), classification of workers (2,406), compensation to son and wife (2,416) have been mentioned by Sukracharya. Infact the bonus is considered as the claim of the employee on the profit made by industry. The note-worthy point is that according to Sukraniti, the payable bonus is 1/8th of annual salary, irrespective of the profit made or even in the absence of profit. Ac-

According to Sukraniti, bonus means deferred wages.

Nalli Kuppusami Chetti

Nalli Kuppuswamy Chetti is the third generation entrepreneur hailing from Kanchipuram, the temple town of Southern India. He is one of the most successful retailer for Sarees. Himself being a Tamil Scholar, implemented many of the ancient Indian way of doing business. He is the first entrepreneur in India to air condition his outlet in 1980. He has written books on entrepreneurship in Tamil and English which inspired generations of entrepreneurs. His vision of the organization is to provide high quality goods at the lowest cost and delivered the business proposition consistently to its customers. Nalli Kuppusami

Chetti's family members graduated from Harvard with younger members showing excellence in academics and at the same time preserved the family ties by a set of values. He strongly feels his knowledge of Sukraniti and its practice in his family business ensured great success for him. Nalli group crossed sale of 1000 Crores. The retail outlet was started in 1916 and at present it has 22 Outlets in different continents of the World. In his book written in Tamil, he chose one hundred Sukraniti slokas and describes how he has practiced in day to day running of Business. The first column is in translation of Sukraniti and second column is about its practice by Nalli Kuppusami Chetti.

| Sl. No. | Sukranithi | Practiced By Nalli Kuppusami Chetti |
|---------|--|---|
| 1 | Luxury | 1. The Manager/Company/CEO should keep the promises to the customer. It creates credibility for the company. 2. Nalli is the first organization in the country to advertise fixed prices for products. No bargaining and honest prices in 1970s. Never he advises people to be greedy. Greed is not good. |
| 2 | Stingy/miser | |
| 3 | Womenizer | |
| 4 | Greedy | |
| 5 | Cunning | |
| 6 | Cruelty | |
| 7 | Contradict with promise and action | |
| 8 | The unbiased king is equal to god else he is demon | To take the un-biased decisions and do not show the nepotism and favoritism is vital for management. He treats all his employees and children in the same way. His children has to follow the same routine. |
| 9 | The ruler should be generous in mankind. | The management should be magnanimous towards the employees in term of compensation, fringe benefits and bonuses. |
| 10 | He should not insult others, do not be cunning and cruel. | He reads everyday till 1 pm to reinforce what he learnt and he practices. |
| 11 | To attract the King people may act as scholarly, very polite; so king has to identify the trustworthy persons. | Trustworthiness is identified by incidental techniques and close monitoring by Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti himself. |
| 12 | King should know the ideas and thoughts of the prince from well wishers, trusted persons. King should always have a close watch on prince. | In the family business to offer some hierarchical position to heir will be beneficial for his career and company's future. |

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| 13 | Do not give key positions to the incapables | These are general rules which will make any business successful. By making worthless people happy, you will waste resources. In the same sense incapable persons destroy organization. The Elders who may give advice based on experience is always taken into account by meeting old employees who retired. |
| 14 | Not to develop enmity with elders | |
| 15 | To make a worthless person happy are unnecessary. | |
| 16 | To appoint two officers for the same position and marrying two women is senseless. | No one can work under two different bosses; there will not be Unity of Command |
| 17 | <p>King should not get goods for free from traders. He should not force people to get goods or service for free. If it is there, sorrow will ruin the kingdom. Orders issued to employees should be in written form.</p> <p>One third of the revenue spent for the defence.</p> <p>Half of the revenue should be spent for philanthropy and compensation for employees.</p> <p>Unspent money should be deposited in treasury.</p> <p>Do not be haste in buying or selling.</p> <p>Do not expose your desire.</p> <p>Do not get deceived for simplicity.</p> <p>If the lender received more than four times of principal, the borrower no need to repay the debt.</p> <p>Thoroughly analyze benefits achieved in future out of expenses before executing it.</p> <p>To spend more money to get small benefit is senseless.</p> <p>To take up the small spending and more benefit is making lot of sense.</p> | <p>Crony Capitalism is not encouraged.</p> <p>Written instructions create more onuses on giver and receiver. Written documents are important proof.</p> <p>Almost 1/3 revenue is spent on advertising, followed by spending on philanthropy. He is known for donating books, buildings for schools and colleges and paying fee to poor students. 50% of the profit should go to Salaries and incentives.</p> <p>Hasty decision will not work out any circumstances; He says Nidanam Pradhanam.</p> <p>Desires should be controlled.</p> <p>Every issue requires thinking. A simple problem may have deep roots.</p> <p>A good practice but not being able to follow due to legal restriction.</p> <p>All organizations are taking various process of planning before entering into any venture. Color schemes of sarees and other dress material is selected by him so that they are contemporary.</p> <p>Cost of production and profit. Input and Output ratio or productivity should be the highest. (Partha System)</p> <p>Statutory PF is given for all employees.</p> |

| | | |
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| | <p>1/6, 1/4 of the income from employees should be deducted from their salary, this will be fully returned after his / her service. King has to pay 1/8 of salary of an employee as bonus in every year.</p> <p>Cash reward should be given to people who complete the work in a quick manner.</p> <p>Employee is suffering from any illness; based on the duration of disease the pay could be either increased or decreased.</p> <p>For the person who works round the clock of service, he must be given 3 hours rest at day time and 9 hours rest at the night time.</p> <p>For the person who works only on day time, rest hours is 1.5 hours during the day.</p> <p>A person who worked more than 40 years in the Kingdom should be given half salary after his/her retirement.</p> <p>Retired person's son/daughter can be recruited on the basis of mercy ground.</p> | <p>Incentives.</p> <p>Medical Leave</p> <p>Medical Allowance</p> <p>Maternity Benefits.</p> <p>A worker will work maximum nine hours only and this practice was found in ancient India.</p> <p>Work breaks and intervals.</p> <p>Pension.</p> <p>Job for the son and daughter of deceased employee. If any employee dies in harness, their children are provided with employment.</p> |
| 18 | <p>If the king is not able to execute some task for any reasons, a capable person could be appointed to execute it.</p> | <p>Delegation of Authority. He delegates authority, responsibility and accountability. Each floor manager is totally accountable for all the activities undertaken. No worker will be questioned before asking the floor manager.</p> |
| 19 | <p>Whatever the situation or problem; just think before react. It should be based on thorough analyze.</p> | <p>Planning and thought should precede action.</p> |

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| 20 | Unwanted boldness. | Boldness is needed, but should never be used when situations are not suitable. |
| 21 | Being Cunning. | Note down the mistakes conducted by people and make sure that it does not happen again. |
| 22 | High Simplicity. | Never to show richness and look should be simple with promoting simple habits. |
| 23 | Over talking. | Never talk beyond what is required. |
| 24 | Anger. | Manage anger under extreme Provocation. |

Conclusion

This case study elaborates the process of Implementation of Sukraniti in day to day business.

This case of Nalli Kuppasami Chetti demonstrates how he has practiced Sukraniti. It is based on some fundamental axioms which are liberal and are applied by Nalli Kuppaswami Chetti for his family business whenever he was faced with a conflicting situation.

Remarkably, the ancient principles found to have an application in modern business, especially in Retail Sector. The Retail Sector which is booming in India, may choose to select some of the interventions given in the case study.

Questions that may arise after reading this article

1. Do you think Karma principle is still valid?
2. Do you think Nalli has succeeded because of practicing Sukraniti?
3. Can we add few more Sukraniti to the list of Nalli? Which one?
4. Do you think it is worthwhile to study Sukraniti and find its applicability in modern business? If yes, why?
5. Why should business be looked holistically? In the present case personality, morality aspects are emphasized. Is it possible or necessary for a family business to address all issues?

6. If truthfulness and other character dimensions of employee are emphasized, how to measure them meaningfully?

7. One person summarized the case study as "All needed things for business is already there in Sukraniti and Vedas there is no need for modern business". Do you agree with the statement?

8. In India, we use the word 'aram se' indicating do slowly or in Tamil, 'Nidanam Pradhanam'. However, Korea attributes its success to use of words such as 'palun' meaning fast, do you think use of words like 'aram se' and 'nidhanam' has slowed us down? What is your take on this? If you want to replace the word 'aram se' what should be the right word?

9. Please summarize your learning from the case study.

Appendix

(http://rulesforlyfe.blogspot.in/2012/07/nor-mal-0-false-false-false-en-us-x-none_5935.html)

Shukracharya's Rules (Nities)

Shukracharya was the son of Maharishi Brighu (one of the saptrishis). He had four sons and one daughter. He was knowing the art of making dead alive. He wrote a book Shukra Niti or Sukra Niti. Some of his rules are described below.

Shukra nities (Rules)

- 1) The mere mention of a woman's name delights a person and his thoughts are filled with lust, then why not by looking at a beautiful woman who makes her eyebrows dance.

2) Why not a woman, who is clever enough to have her food alone, who talks softly and delightfully, who can taunt affectionately, will capture the heart of any man.

3) The lust for 'other women' has caused destruction to many men like Indra, Dandakya, Nahusha and Ravana.

4) King should never have lust for 'other women', should never have greed for 'other's wealth', should never give punishment to his subject in anger because 'Lust', 'Greed' and 'Anger' are the causes for downfall.

5) One should not clean his nostrils by inserting fingers in it, should not draw lines on the earth suddenly or should not dig the earth. One should not scratch his head.

6) One must not be indifferent towards his wife, his son, diseases, servants, domestic animals, wealth, knowledge and studies and doing service to a gentleman for a moment. One must always take care of them.

7) One should accept the good qualities of even the enemies and should salute him but on the other hand even if his teacher has bad qualities, he should reject them.

8) A misadventurist, who tries to do any work in a haste without giving much thought, and without knowing the consequences, gets only sorrow either because of the work itself or because of the consequences of that work.

9) A man who is under the influence and control of women, who is a debtor, struck by extreme poverty, a demander without any quality and wealth- such a man is worse than a dead man, though being alive.

10) One should maintain secrecy of his age, wealth, demerits of his home, Hymn (mantra), copulation, medicine, charity, respect and disrespect i.e. he should never tell others of these nine things

11) In this world, no one is a Brahmin, a warrior caste, a caste doing trading/business and low caste by birth but on the basis of

quality (sanskar) and deeds and actions (Karma).

12) One who cleverly protects his subjects, is brave, has control over his senses and whose nature is to punish the wrong doers is called a Kshatriya.

13) One who is efficient in purchasing and selling daily earns his livelihood by his business, one who does animal husbandry and farming are called Vaishya in this world.

14) A man is capable or incapable of doing good or evil in his present life according to the Karmas done in his previous birth that is if he has done evil Karmas or good Karmas in his previous birth, then his mind will change accordingly in his present birth and will do good or evil Karmas to face its consequences.

15) The mind changes as soon as the time comes to face the consequences of the Karmas. As the destiny is, accordingly one gets friends (good or evil).

16) All the actions of the world are based on destiny and labour (Karma), actions committed in the previous birth are destiny and actions committed in this life are called PURUSHARTHA. Thus KARMAS have been differentiated in two ways whichever of the two (Bhagya and Karma) is powerful forces the other to surrender. The strength cannot be identified merely by analyzing the results of the Karma or by any other means

17) It would not have been possible to destroy the evils and evil doers if the destiny was unchangeable that is Karma (labour) can change even the Bhagya (destiny)

18) If the destiny is unfavourable then the most virtuous of actions gives bad results just like the king Bali who was tied up even after being so charitable and Harishchandra had to serve a MLECHA, even after being a Truthful man.

19) Good actions give good results and evil actions give bad results, so one must accept good action give bad results, so one must ac-

cept good actions and reject evil actions as described in the scripturesⁱ Niti(Pronounced neeti) shastra means the science of politics, economics and governance, in a more wider sense it is about what is right conduct and what are the best actions in different circumstances. When one is rooted in dharma the science of right action is Niti shastra. This science was traditionally given to kings and the warrior class at the ancient Indian Taxshaila university in Ghandara (modern day Afghanistan) but this science is applicable to everybody, because it contains truths applicable to all. Niti is to politics etc, wht Yoga is to health, Ayurveda is to medicine and Vendanta is to philosophy.

ii <http://ignca.nic.in/n1001905.htm>

iii Sukra in Sanskrit means lustrous. He appears in Geeta – 10/37/2. Here Krishna says “Muniam apyahan Vyasah, kavih. That is among poets, He was Usanaa or Sukracharya. Why? Because Sukracharya wrote “Sukranitih” a creative work.

iv <http://osdir.com/ml/culture.religion.advaita/2008-07/msg00144.html>

v <http://hinduonline.co/DigitalLibrary/SmallBooks/ShukraNeetiSanEng.pdf>

vi For a discerning reader, he or she may choose to have the original Sanskrit texts and translate it from <http://www.sanskritdocuments.org/>.

Teaching Notes

This case study is an attempt to find role of wisdom in ancient text in modern business. Sukraniti has no exclusive chapters on business. However, many of the principles that are capable to kings, crown princess, officers and workers are applied in family business organization and documented by Nalli Kuppusami Chetti. He also uses these principles for resolving conflicting alternatives. Different links provided at the end of the case study will help the participants.

The participants may be provoked to answer the following questions.

1. Caste system is similar to Racism?
2. Caste system based on qualities is better?
3. Sukraniti without caste system is most ideal. Agree or disagree.
4. Why patriarchal society is only emphasized and no rule for women is provided?
5. Is it possible to think holistic and make decisions?
6. What are the specific nitis to family business?

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