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**“Global Mindset, Indian Roots”: Is it Relevant to Search for Indian Roots in a Globalizing World? \***

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I wish to share the sense of excitement that I felt when Dr. Venkat Krishnan wrote to me about the setting up of the Yale-Great Lakes Center for Management Research last year. I felt really excited that something like this was happening because ever since I graduated from IIT Kanpur in 1971 - that's about 35 years ago - one of my major worries has been that we do not do good research in India. Fortunately the scenario has been changing in the field of engineering and perhaps some other sciences but I can still say that it has not happened in management. That's why my excitement.

I also wished to share with this gathering, though it is a little out of context, that only last week I received an email from Prof. Gunasekaran from University of Massachusetts saying that Inder Science Publications - which is a well known publisher of scientific research journals - has announced a new journal titled 'International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management' .I have been trying that one of the institutions in India comes out with a journal

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celebrating our own uniqueness. However, most of the Indian institutions have been, kind of, prematurely global. They think they can be global overnight and they want to only pitch themselves where they cannot reach rather than where they should start from! So there it is. The initiative has come, once again, from the United States. But I am glad and I think highly of these kinds of initiatives - the journal and the center here. India-centric management research should be a delight to the scholars who are interested in this domain. I am very delighted to know that this center has finally been established.

The second mail from Dr. Venkat Krishnan was about the announcement of this conference: ***Global Mindset Indian Roots***. I was very enamored with the theme of the conference I felt a peculiar tension in the two phrases used in this theme. Then Dr. Venkat Krishnan sent me another mail saying that he would like me to speak on the theme of this conference. Oh my god!! I couldn't think. What can I say to address this tension between global mindset and Indian roots; I think it's a very, very deep tension, and I have experienced it for many decades. As my introduction told you, I have had the best of American education in India both in engineering and management. But after completing my fellowship at IIM, Ahmedabad when I became the Corporate Manager HRD of Jyoti Limited, Baroda, I was so full of ideas which I had learnt at IIM, Ahmedabad and I wanted to prove many things. Fortunately, Jyoti Limited had very, very bright well-educated managers and they became friends with me and we would have lunch together. That is when they often used to tell me "Rajen, all that you teach in IIM-A doesn't work here", I replied at that time, "No, no. I will show you!!"

Much more important - and this haunted me when I started searching - is that middleclass professionals in India always blamed Indian culture for our inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. This was an intriguing theme but I couldn't at the bottom of my heart accept it and I do not agree on this point. Fortunately I started reading - and I read a lot of comparative literature - and, in one of the books which I picked up (it's a huge book and I read it from cover to cover) titled ***The Competitive Advantage of Nations*** by Michael Porter, one thing became very clear to me that wherever world class organization have been created, the cultures have been largely responsible. Of course, no culture is perfect but no world class organization has been created without leveraging something from the soil. Be it the design industry in Italy, be it the machinery industry in Germany, or be it the cooperative team-oriented working in auto and electronics industry in Japan, there is something that they leverage. So, if we continue to denigrate the whole of our heritage, how can we create world class organizations? That was my search and I have pursued it for the last 15 years and written about it repeatedly on different themes. When this theme came I was totally preoccupied with the "Indian roots" aspect of it, because that, to me, is the source of energy and the source of creativity. Of course, we want to reach the sky, we want to reach the globe, but where do we draw energy from? That has

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been my dilemma while trying to address this theme. Coming to its second part, the “global mindset”, I am still trying to understand global mindset. What is a global mindset?

I am not satisfied with this rhetoric about globalization as I am a critic of it. To my mind, I don't think we have a sufficient understanding of the Global Mindset. I think it is a challenge not only for us but also for the whole globe, to be constantly aware of that. We are using this big word without really knowing its full implications. Now what I would like to do is to formulate this question for myself: Is it relevant to search for Indian roots? I mean, I started searching for it when India was nowhere on the global corporate map. I am still searching for it. Of course, fortunately our software engineers and managers have made us proud so that we can ride on that pride and we can bask in that glory! However, I think, as management academy researchers, we still have much to show.

I am sure our managers, our engineers, our workers are capable of doing a lot. But there has to be a focus on research and the starting point of research would be - as Professor Balachandran was also saying - what is the research question that we need to ask if we want to do “relevant” research. So in this conference, I will try to break this talk into three themes.

***Three themes:***

Here is my little offering to this august gathering, my thoughts. The first thing I want to examine is: What is meant by status of management thought in India? I have labeled it using the theme of the conference “**Rootless state of management knowledge in India**”. Secondly, fortunately I have been associated with some of the best researches in India at least in the field of organization behavior, which is my area of specialization. So I would like to talk about “**Effort at rooting of management knowledge in the Indian context**”. Unfortunately, this is very rarely shared in MBA class rooms, so I would like to highlight it. And the third one, I am really playing with a pun on the word, it's a different meaning of the word “root” - “**Possibilities of rooting for the world**”. Can we? And that is where I would bring back the theme of “global”. What is globalization as I understand today. So these are the three themes I will cover. I have a little interest in business history and Dr. Dwijendra Tripathi of IIM, Ahmedabad, did a lot of pioneering work in it. Unfortunately, after Dr. Tripathi, I don't know of any business historian in a management school in India. While we are beginning to recognize how everything in human life is path dependent, we seem to wish away our history. But if you delve into it, you will find that, as the luck would have it, the whole of modern management, entire industrialization was an imported phenomenon in India. Obviously, it happened during the British period. Perhaps a lot of industrialization happened in Europe and England because of India. But the fact, so far as management thought and practices in India are concerned, is that - one must recognize - modern factories came to India based on the British model of factory management. Be it jute mills or textile mills, they all drew their inspiration from Manchester. As we dawned into the post-independence era, we owe a great

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deal to the management of the American companies which helped us understand how best to manage large companies. That was great, but what happened is that we have accepted all American management text books, all their management ideas as if they were the final truth. I am sure we have a number of senior scholars in the USA and I am equally sure that there is great turmoil in USA itself about these ideas, but we have tended to accept them lock, stock and barrel. When I was in Jyoti Limited, that was the time when Japan was on the rise and Japan was beating at least some industry segments in America and so the Japanese management was becoming popular. There was a huge wave of quality control circles just like in the American management model!

Administrative Staff College of India had a whole lot of work on “management by objectives” led by Dr.B.L.Maheshwari. He has written about it, and he mentions the same thing about quality control circles, the idea which came from Japan. There were mixed results, but I haven’t come across any authoritative conceptualization of why it faded, why it did not succeed in India the way it succeeded in Japan, even though they are both collective societies.

On the other hand we have a kind of historical progression and we have been very good at it. I mean one great thing about Indian culture is that we are open to ideas. I don’t think our knowledge is anachronistic, but we have to keep track of the genesis of management knowledge in India. That, to me, has been the story of management thought in India largely. While, I think, as I was saying, any human phenomenon is path dependent. When you do not remain in touch with your roots, you lose a major source of creative energy, and so you have to get back to it if you want to get to the best of the management concepts for your context.

We do not really understand why the software industry in India has done so well. Unless we try to understand it, how shall we leverage it in other sectors? So let’s move on because, fortunately, there have been some effects at rooting management knowledge in Indian philosophy and I feel very fortunate that I have been associated with some the scholars in this domain. We need to look at the ground realities, the economic, the psycho-social and the *aspirational* ground realities.

Any research poses two types of challenges: **conceptual challenges** and **methodological challenges**. That is the approach which helps build knowledge - explicit knowledge. But when we are talking of explicit knowledge or research-based knowledge, it always comes in symbolic forms. Theoretical research will always come in conceptual terms and symbolic terms, and if we want to do original, creative research which is in touch with ground realities, we have to allow the ground realities to influence our concept formation. Concept formation is the first step in scientific research. Unfortunately we have tended to accept concepts coming from abroad. As a scientist, I highly regard scientific community of the West. Essentially it is our way of engaging with them which, I think, has been problematic, because we have blindly accepted the concepts that have come from there. How will the new concepts come? These will come

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only when we immerse ourselves in our reality and allow ourselves to experience the messiness of our reality and then allow our own creativity to emerge in conceptual terms. As the English language says, the devil is in the detail. Similarly, I think the scientific knowledge is about very subtle changes in the conceptual structures and we have to recognize that certain differences exist between Indian realities and the realities abroad. Unless we are open to recognize these subtle changes and create constructs and concepts and put them to test, we will not be able to create localized management knowledge that can be applied in the global context.

Thus, conceptual challenges are linked with methodological challenges and - I have seen from my experience with Ph.D research in India - it is quite sterile and uncreative because we are in a hurry to capture some of the most well recognized variables in the western literature and fit our own reality into it. So we never capture our fine distinctions. The conceptual challenges are connected with methodological challenges of research. To quickly mention some of the conceptual innovations which have been done by Indian researchers, I would like to, first take the name of a person who has devoted himself to such research - Dr. J.B.P. Sinha. Living in the so-called backwaters of India known as Patna, he has done some of the most innovative research in the field of leadership. Today, any books of cross-cultural leadership would not be complete without the mention of his work. In this, he looked at the history of India, he looked at socio- psychology of Indians and then came up with this concept which he called a “nurturant task leader”. There, he captured something very, very subtly Indian. It may be also be relevant in other countries, just like an American idea has some relevance in India because that is how cultures are. Cultures are creations of people and we, at some level, are the same and yet each culture has its own genius and it is up to us to identify the genius and convert it into management concepts. I think we cannot contribute enough to the world if we don't do this conversion.

Professor Udai Pareek took McClelland's *Theory of Motivation* and he proposed two new additional motives - Extension Motive and Dependency Motive. I think that makes the model much more comprehensive and this also makes it much more humanistic. Look where Professor Pareek could take HRD in India! Fortunately this is one idea which has really gained prominence through diffusion in the national HRD Network. Look at some of the macro organizational studies, the work of Mr. Pradeep Khandwalla. Identifying the challenges before a society like India, he comes up with an idea that is called “Pioneering Innovative Strategies”. He looks at management from the individual level to the organization level and looks at strategic development organizations because a developing society needs that. I myself looked at, or re-examined, “in search of excellence” kind of field work. When I said we need to move from organization as a family-type metaphor to a truly familiar organization, I can see an interesting indication of the same in the way Great Lakes seems to be developing itself. It accepts the spiritual roots and it seems the students are called Dr.Bala's nephews and nieces whereas they

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call him uncle. This is what Indian ethos is at the sociological level. Hence if we do not recognize it, if we do not leverage this ethos, perhaps we will not be successful in creating world class organizations.

We can do a lot, but we need to be really committed to it. That is the whole idea if we want to leverage Indian roots. We can, but we have to progress conceptually and methodologically.

Now let us look at the issue of global mindset. I have been somewhat ethnocentric so far but that is not an acceptable stance at the broader level. I have a great attraction towards *systems thinking*, so the part and the whole will have a symbiotic relationship. If the globe or the world is the larger entity and India is the smaller entity, the world will not be seen without India and India cannot be anything without the world, so the question of globalization comes here. I think so far, what we keep talking of is “materialistic globalization”. We are only talking of movement of matter and money. We have serious restrictions on the movement of people which seems to be getting more and more difficult with the threat of terrorism. This is a very narrow kind of globalization that is happening and I think India has something special to offer to the world, and that is, what I call “rooting for the world”.

Today the world is full of diversity, conflict and dehumanization; do we have anything to offer? The word “balancing perspective” came to my mind and I said “wow!!” Kaplan has offered Balanced Score Card and we have been having a balanced scorecard for life, for millennia. If you look at *dharmā, artha, kama and moksha*, we have the four dimensions to create a truly balanced life. So I would propose this as one of the offerings. At first level of *kama* and *artha* are to be enjoyed within the dharmic frame, and there are treatises over treatises to help you understand this. But, of course, it has to be interpreted in the context of contemporary realities. Then some new reformulations of this concept and may be, some absolutely new formulations need to be created. At the highest level perhaps, the perspective of *moksha*, the transcendental perspective should be shown to the world. Also, the mystics of all places in the world describe the supreme reality in similar terms. I don’t wish to have the unilateral claim of this, but I think the truly global construct, if we have any, is the supreme unity. Perhaps we need to work on this fervently. Today, there is a whole lot of work happening on spirituality in the West. One of my students is doing work, and, of course, Professor Venkat Krishnan has been deeply committed to it. He has a number of students working on it. A student taking a research topic on spirituality in India still feels a little unsure because people around think this is not what management research is suppose to be all about, but I think it is a special offering that we can make to the world.

So, just to briefly say what we need to do. Of course, I am sure, Indian managers, wherever they go, carry these Indian roots with them. I think I’d like them to own these up rather than hiding them in the Pooja room. Therefore, we need to understand contemporary

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realities of increasingly interconnected world, but not to get carried away by the rhetoric of globalization. We have a long way to go. But that's what culture is all about. All genetic evidence till date shows that whole mankind across the planet has originated from the same small area in Africa. In that sense we across the globe carry common heritage. But also, by settling in different places on this planet, we have created different symbolic worlds and cultural worlds. So we must recognize the diversity rather than homogenization of the globalization rhetoric. We must overcome our fears and become creative. We must embrace humanity with the third eye opens - I am taking the metaphor from Lord Siva - we should also have a discriminating eye rather than accept everything. A non-critical acceptance of the rhetoric of globalization is what is called the "**flatness of post modernism**". We must be discriminating; not everything is good simply because nothing is absolute. And then of course we have an opportunity, a challenge and obligation or duty to help the world to become a better place. So that is why I do think that Indian roots have a place in the global mindset. And that not only helps us connect better with the rest of the globe, but also helps us contribute to it.

That is all I wished to say. Thank you very much!!