
DHARMA AND MANAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM NEETI SHASTRAM- A HOLISTIC VIEW

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The Neeti Shstram, is a part of an ancient Indian Knowledge System (AIKS). Neeti Shastram may be defined as ancient Indian science or study of ethics, morality and overall a guide for human behaviour, leadership, and social welfare. It integrates personal virtue with collective responsibility, making it timelessly relevant to modern life, governance, and management. In ancient Indian knowledge System, Neeti Shastram appears in or is reflected through several classical texts, such as Garuda Purana, Vidura Neeti, Chanakya Neeti, Subhasita Niti etc.,

From the modern Management perspective, Neeti Shastram offers lessons for ethical leadership (Dharma-based leadership), corporate governance and organisational culture, corporate social responsibility, guidance on human relations and sustainable management practices etc.,

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on discussions with experts in the field, interaction amongst intellectual and practical observations of Garuda puranam, Neeti Shastram and other related books.

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the compatibility of Neeti Shastram with Management Lessons.
2. To analyze the role of Neeti Shastram in Personality Development of individual.
3. To analyse the role of Neeti Shastram in National Education Policy 2020

Meaning of Neeti Shastram:

The term Neeti signifies guidance, moral conduct, and righteous decision-making, while Shastram denotes a systematic body of knowledge. Collectively, Neeti Shastram functions as a structured ethical discipline aimed at regulating individual behaviour and leadership responsibility. Therefore, Neeti Shastram literally means: "The science or systematic study of ethical conduct, noble behaviour, and moral governance."

Modern Interpretation:

In modern terms, Neeti Shastram can be seen as an ancient form of Human Behavioural Science and Ethical Management, encompassing:

- Moral psychology (why humans behave ethically or unethically)
- Ethical leadership (how values guide decision-making)
- Corporate and social responsibility (how actions affect collective good)

Definition of Human Resource Management:**According to Dale Yoder, HRM is defined as follows:**

"The management of human resources is viewed as a system in which participants seeks to attain both individual and group goals."

Compatibility of Neeti Shastram with Management Lessons:

In recent years, the growing concern for ethical leadership, employee well-being, and sustainable organizational practices has encouraged scholars to revisit traditional knowledge systems for managerial insights. Among the rich corpus of Indian Knowledge Systems, Neeti Shastram emerges as a significant ethical framework addressing human behaviour, leadership conduct, and social responsibility. Rooted primarily in the Garuda Purana and supported by related texts such as Vidura Niti and Chanakya Niti, Neeti Shastram offers principles that closely align with modern concepts of Human Resource Management (HRM)

Another critical area of convergence between Neeti Shastram and modern management theory is ethical leadership. Ancient texts repeatedly caution that authority exercised without moral restraint leads to instability and social harm. Leadership, according to Neeti Shastram, must be grounded in dharma—fairness, integrity, and responsibility toward others. This principle corresponds with contemporary models of ethical and transformational leadership, which stress moral influence, transparency, and trust as foundations of effective leadership (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Chakraborty (1995) argues that Indian ethical traditions offer a value-oriented alternative to purely profit-driven management approaches. He highlights self-discipline, empathy, and accountability as essential leadership qualities—virtues consistently emphasized in Neeti Shastram. These attributes are now widely recognized in HRM as components of emotional intelligence and responsible leadership, which contribute to employee engagement and organizational stability.

Neeti Shastram- Case Study Management:

The entire Neeti Shastram is a Case Study Management. Few verses of Neeti Shastram are discussed below.

Case Study 1: Human Motivational Psychology:

From the perspective of human behavioural science, Neeti Shastram demonstrates a nuanced understanding of human motivation and psychological impulses. Several verses describe how intense desires for wealth (artha), pleasure (kama), knowledge (vidya), or survival (kshudha) influence behaviour and judgment

Shloka

अर्थातुराणां न गुरुर्न बन्धुः ।	Arthaturanam na gurur na bandhuḥ
क्षुधातुराणां न रुचिर्न पाकम् ।	Ksudhaturanam na ruchi na pakvam
विद्यातुराणां न सुखं न निद्रा ।	Vidyaturanam na sukham na nidra
कामातुराणां न भयं न लज्जा ॥	Kamaturanam na bhayam na Lajja

This Sloka is a compact model of human motivational psychology — describing how four primal drives (wealth, hunger, knowledge, and desire) control human behaviour when unbalanced.

Meaning of Shloka:

Arthaturanam na gurur na bandhuḥ:

Meaning: When obsessed with money or material gain, one becomes blind to relationships and ethics. Wealth anxiety makes even teachers or relatives seem unimportant.

Ksudhaturanam na ruchi na pakvam:

Meaning: Physical hunger removes the sense of taste; the focus is survival.

Vidyaturanam na sukham na nidra:

Meaning: The true student sacrifices comfort and sleep for learning. This represents positive passion — the desire for excellence.

Kamaturanam na bhayam na Lajja:

Meaning: A person dominated by lust loses both fear (of consequence) and shame (of morality).

Interpretation from HRM perspective:

a. Maslow's Hierarchy Parallel: These classifications closely resemble modern motivational theories, particularly Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow, individuals prioritize physiological and safety needs before progressing toward higher-order goals such as self-actualization.

This sloka aligns with Maslow's "Physiological Needs" principle.

- Ksudha = physiological needs
- Artha = safety and security needs
- Kama = social and esteem needs
- Vidya = self-actualization need.

b. Motivational Psychology: Every employee operates under some form of "āturatā" (intense drive). HR must recognize whether it is artha, kāma, vidyā, or kṣudhā — and manage accordingly.

c. Balanced Leadership: A good manager ensures that no employee remains arthātura (underpaid) or kṣudhātura (overworked), while nurturing vidyātura (learning-oriented) motivation ethically.

- d. Ethics and Self-Regulation:** The verse warns against greed (artha) and uncontrolled desire (kāma) — common ethical pitfalls in management. It praises the drive for knowledge (vidyā) but reminds that over-obsession without rest leads to burnout.

Significance

Neeti Shastram suggests that ethical reasoning and higher values are difficult to sustain when basic needs or excessive desires dominate the mind.

Case Study 2: Ethical Decision Making Skills:

In contemporary HRM literature, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and ethical conduct are recognized as outcomes of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Dessler (2020) emphasizes that fair compensation, job security, and supportive work environments are essential for sustained performance and moral behaviour. Neeti Shastram echoes this idea by warning that deprivation or obsession distorts judgement, thereby highlighting the importance of balance in motivation—an insight highly relevant to modern workforce management.

Shloka

कृषितो नास्ति दुर्भिक्षं जपतो नास्ति पातकम् । kṛṣito nāsti durbhikṣaṁ japato nāsti pātakam

मौनेन कलहो नास्ति नास्ति जागरतो भयम् ॥ maunena kalaho nāsti nāsti jāgarato bhayam

Meaning of Shloka:

Kṛṣito nāsti durbhikṣaṁ

Meaning: “No scarcity for one who cultivates”. A person who works hard and uses resources wisely will never suffer scarcity.

japato nāsti pātakam

Meaning: “No sin for one who chants (or keeps good thoughts)”. A person who constantly remembers higher values (truth, kindness, prayer, or positive intent) stays ethically pure

maunena kalaho nāsti

Meaning: “No quarrel for one who remains silent”. Silence prevents conflict; restraint of speech avoids unnecessary arguments.

nāsti jāgarato bhayam

Meaning: “No fear for one who stays alert”. Alertness and awareness eliminate risk.

Interpretation from HRM Perspective:

- The first line of shloka speaks about hard work and good productivity. A culture of diligence prevents resource crises
- The second line of shloka speaks about Dedication , ethics, values and mindfulness. Employees with moral grounding avoid misconduct.
- The third line of shloka speaks about conflict management and emotional regulation. Listening and restraint strengthen relationships.
- The forth line of shloka speaks about vigilance and foresight. The proactive leaders and organisations avoid failure.

Significance

This Neeti Shastram verse summarizes the foundation of ethical behaviour and responsible management — diligence, mindfulness, emotional control, and alert awareness — all key traits of successful leaders and organizations.

Case Study 3: Emotional Regulation and Self Discipline:

Emotional Regulation is the ability to recognise , understand and manage own emotions to build effective skills like self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills etc., and navigate challenges at work and life.

Shloka

ऋणानुबन्धरूपेण पशुपत्नीसुतालयाः।

Rṇānubandha-rūpeṇa paśu-patnī-sutālayāḥ

ऋणक्षये क्षयं यान्ति कातत्र परिदेवना॥

Rṇa-kṣaye kṣayaṁ yānti kā tatra paridevanā

Meaning of Shloka:**Rṇānubandharūpeṇa:**

Meaning: The term ṇa-anubandha means the link formed by past-life debts or obligations. A spouse, child, friend, or even a pet — each bond comes to repay or receive karmic dues.

Paśu-patnī-sutālayāḥ:

Meaning: The line mean all forms of worldly attachment — family, wealth, and property.

Rṇa-kṣaye kṣayaṁ yānti:

Meaning: ‘When the debt is paid, the bond dissolves’. Once the ṇa (debt or obligation) is settled, nature releases that bond like separation, death, or change etc.,

Kā tatra paridevanā:

Meaning: ‘Why, then, should one worry for this ? The shloka teaches emotional maturity and acceptance.

All relationships with animals, wife, children, and home arise from past karmic debts (ṇa). What comes to you is by debt; what leaves you is debt repaid. so why should one worry over it?

Interpretation from HRM Perspective:

- This shloka reflects the principle of psychological reciprocity i.e. human interactions are shaped by exchanges of emotional, moral, or social “credits and debts.
- This shloka parallels life-cycle theories of relationships (Relational Development Model (10 Stages) by Knapp , Family Life Cycle Theory by Duvall and Hill in 1948 and later refined by Carter and McGoldrick,, The Structural Helix Model by Richard Conville (1991) etc.,) and says that every relationship evolves, serves its purpose, and eventually transforms or ends.
- In Human Resource Management, this shloka teaches empathy without over-attachment, leaders must care for teams, but accept changes calmly.
- In grief management or counseling, it encourages emotional healing through understanding impermanence.
- In personal ethics, it cultivates gratitude and responsibility instead of selfishness.

Significance

This shloka serves as a reminder of the importance of fulfilling one's obligations and the liberation that comes from the settlement of debts. The greater lesson drawn is that by honoring one's commitments, one can experience emotional relief and strengthen communal bonds, ultimately contributing to social harmony.

Case Study 4: Social Welfare → Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

The relevance of Neeti Shastram extends significantly into the domain of Corporate Social Responsibility. Classical verses emphasizing ‘paropakara’ (service to others) suggest that wealth and power acquire meaning only when used for collective welfare. This ethical stance resonates with Carroll’s (1991) CSR framework, which positions ethical and philanthropic responsibilities alongside economic objectives. Rather than rejecting material prosperity, Neeti Shastram advocates for wealth creation guided by moral responsibility—a perspective consistent with sustainable business practices.

Similarly, Freeman’s (1984) stakeholder theory aligns with Neeti Shastram’s holistic view of social responsibility. The ancient framework recognizes the interconnectedness of individuals, institutions, and society, advocating decisions that benefit multiple stakeholders rather than narrow self-interest. In modern organizational contexts, this translates into responsible treatment of employees, customers, communities, and the environment.

Shloka

पिबन्ति नद्यः स्वयमेव नास्मभः	Pibanti nadyah svayameva naambhah
स्वयं न खादन्ति फलानि वृक्षाः	Svayam na khaadanti phalaani vrukshaah
नासदन्ति सस्यं खलु वारिवाहाः	naadanti sasyam khalu vaarivaahah
परोपकाराय सतां विभूतियः	paropkaaraaya sataam vibhootiyah

Meaning of Shloka:**Pibanti nadyah svayameva naambhah:**

Meaning: Rivers do not drink their own water.

Svayam na khaadanti phalaani vrukshaah:

Meaning: The trees do not eat their own tasty fruits. Trees symbolize sacrifice and contribution.

naadanti sasyam khalu vaarivaahah:

Meaning: Likewise, rain bearing clouds (which help growing various grains) do not eat the grains

paropkaaraaya sataam vibhootiyah:

Meaning: Surely, the aim of great noble and righteous persons in their lifetime is to do self-less service to the humanity.

Interpretation from HRM Perspective:**This verse perfectly mirrors the core principles of CSR and sustainability:**

- The shloka advocates a culture of giving, cooperation, and ethical conduct, aligning with empathy-based HRM, inclusive workplaces, and emotional intelligence. Just as clouds, rivers, and trees give without expectation, corporations must use their resources, technology, capital to uplift society.
- The examples of trees and water cycles symbolize the balance between consumption and regeneration, the very essence of ecological responsibility. HR should create systems that recognize contribution, not mere compliance.
- This shloka says that, that true prosperity (Vibhuti) lies not in accumulation but in distribution, which is benefiting employees, customers, and communities alike.
- Wealth and growth without compassion lead to imbalance; the noble use their advantages for collective upliftment — the essence of ethical capitalism.

In HRM, this śloka calls for leadership by service and empathy.

In CSR, it demands corporate compassion and sustainable contribution.

Significance:

This shloka explains the significance of “Dharma-based Management”, where personal and organizational success is measured by the value added to others’ lives. The wealth, talent, and power are meaningful only when they serve humanity.

Case Study 5: Neeti Shastram and National Education Policy 2020:

The Neeti Shastram is highly relevant to National Education Policy 2020. Few of the aspects are discussed below.

Indian Knowledge System:

NEP 2020 emphasis: Revival and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into mainstream education.

Neeti Shastram is a part of ancient Indian knowledge system and teaches ethics & Values, Ancient behavioural science, Governance and leadership wisdom and Social and economic ethics (dharma–artha balance) etc.,

Holistic development of learner:

NEP 2020 emphasis: Education must develop cognitive, emotional, ethical, and social capacities, not only academic achievement

Neeti Shastram teaches Character building, Emotional discipline (control of anger, desire, fear), Ethical judgement and Social responsibility etc.,

Value based education:

NEP 2020 emphasis: Education must cultivate constitutional values, empathy, integrity, and respect for others.

Neeti Shastram teaches, Truthfulness (satya), Non-violence (ahimsa), kindness, respect for teachers, parents and society, responsibility etc.,

Multi-disciplinary Education:

NEP 2020 emphasis: Education should be multidisciplinary and connected to life skills.

Neeti Shastram is a handbook of Management, because it explains Psychology (human motivation), Sociology (social harmony), Economics (ethical wealth creation), Leadership and governance etc.,

Ethical Leadership & Citizenship Education:

NEP 2020 emphasis: Education must prepare responsible citizens and ethical leaders.

Neeti Shastram focus on ethical leadership and social responsibility. It directly supports NEP's goal of producing values-driven leaders.

In the Indian educational and policy context, the relevance of Neeti Shastram has gained renewed attention through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education curricula. Scholars suggest that incorporating Neeti Shastram into management education can nurture ethically aware, socially responsible, and emotionally intelligent professionals (Sharma & Talwar, 2004). Such integration helps bridge technical competence with moral sensitivity, a combination increasingly demanded in today's organizations.

Neethi Shastram-My Experience:

My life experience proved that, Neeti Shastram is a best Mentor to any individual. In my childhood, my father Late S.Narasimha Charlu has made me to study the Neeti Shastram along with my school education.

The study and application of Neeti Shastram have played a significant role in shaping both my personal character and professional conduct. By internalizing its ethical principles from an early stage, I developed a strong moral framework that guides my thoughts, decisions, and actions in diverse life situations.

On a personal level, Neeti Shastram instilled self-discipline, emotional balance, and ethical clarity. Its teachings on controlling desire, anger, and fear helped me cultivate emotional regulation and patience, enabling me to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. The emphasis on effort (udyama), truthfulness (satya), and restraint encouraged a responsible approach to life, fostering resilience during challenges and consistency in personal values. Neeti Shastram also deepened my sense of empathy and social responsibility, reinforcing the importance of kindness, humility, and service to others.

In my professional life, Neeti Shastram has been a guiding framework for ethical decision-making, leadership, and interpersonal relationships. Its emphasis on duty (dharma) over self-interest shaped my approach to work, encouraging fairness, accountability, and integrity. The teachings on balanced pursuit of wealth (Artha) helped me maintain professional ambition without compromising ethical standards. As a result, I have been able to build trust-based relationships with colleagues, stakeholders, and teams.

Neeti Shastram also enhanced my leadership orientation by promoting values aligned with servant and transformational leadership, such as responsibility, inclusiveness, and respect for others. These principles strengthened my professional judgment, enabling me to handle pressure, competition, and ethical dilemmas with clarity and composure.

By integrating ethical wisdom with practical action, it has helped me develop into a disciplined individual, a responsible professional, and a value-driven contributor to society.

CONCLUSION

In summary, existing literature clearly indicates that Neeti Shastram constitutes a comprehensive ethical and behavioural framework with strong relevance to modern Management. Its emphasis on balanced motivation, ethical leadership, self-discipline, and social welfare complements contemporary management theories and addresses the ethical challenges faced by organizations today.

Incorporating Neeti Shastram into management curriculum or leadership training programs or corporate training programs can help develop dynamic, socially responsible, morally conscious and emotionally intelligent individuals — essential for holistic education in the 21st century.

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