

ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP IN INDIAN ETHOS: THE WAY OF THE THEORY K

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Abstract

This paper elaborates the idea of theory K in the form of a combination approach to theories X, Y & Z. The metaphor of organisation as a family constitutes the keynote of this combination approach which can be mathematically represented as $K = X^a Y^b Z^c$ wherein coefficients a, b and c indicate the intensity with which managers tend to us X, Y or Z style. Driving metaphor is suggested to indicate the matrix nature of the theory K wherein the attempt is to achieve proper matching between the managerial styles and situational requirements. Paper further presents an Indian model of enlightened leadership by combining the Indian guna theory and the management theories X, Y and Z. This model is based on a new approach to personality theory that can be referred to as "WE" or the West-East approach wherein human personality is thought in terms of six elements represented by personality set (tamasik, rajasik, sattavik, X, Y & Z). The model has three subsets viz. (Tamasik, X), (Rajasik, Y) and (Sattavik, Z). It is suggested that enlightened leaders create transformation towards (Rajasik, Y) and (Sattavik, Z) situations, because (Tamasik, X) personality creates considerable negative energy or negergy in organisations. Author's empirical impressions and case studies from Indian history and Indian social and business context provide a preliminary evidence in favour of this Indian model of enlightened leadership.

"Whatever a great person does,
is followed by others;
People go by the example the person sets up"

Gita 3-21

Is there an "Indian" theory of management, administration and leadership? In this paper we explore an Indian way of managing through the use of theory K derived from the metaphor of Kutumbh or family. The idea of organization as Kutumbh or family is derived from the Indian concept of "vasudhev kutumbhkam" i.e. entire world is our family. In addition, theory K recognizes the "need for freedom" and "need for justice" as fundamental human requirements. It may be indicated that in general, these needs have not been widely recognized in the management literature which in the past has usually restricted itself to McClelland's narrow view of needs in terms of achievement, affiliation and power. Before we explain the theory K, there is also a need to explore the inter-connectivity of well known theories of management viz. theories X, Y and Z with earlier intuitive ways of expressing the same ideas.

In general, there is a tendency to use dichotomous categories of tradition and modernity in viewing the past and present. As a result, we do not see the inter-connectivity of origin of many ideas to the 'ancient wisdom'. However, once we take the approach of continuity of the past into the present or the continuity of the tradition into modernity our perspective changes. In this perspective, modernity is not a break from the past but a flow of the past into present. Since, tradition and modernity are intertwined and inter-connected, we can observe the "linked-continuity" or inter-connectivity of a number of management concepts and theories to the traditional concepts presented to us in simple and sublime language. For example theories X, Y and Z have been known to the Indian mind in various forms through different metaphors. Therefore they appear to be familiar, similar and even identical to earlier

concepts. We will present a few of such metaphors subsequently. However, it may be emphasized that these ideas have been refined by the theorists for applications in modern corporate contexts. Thereby they have acquired the status of being classified as management theories. In theory K we present a similar refinement of a widely practiced concept. An initial and introductory discussion on theory K is available in this author's work related to "New Age Management".¹

Fundamental Assumptions of Theories X, Y and Z

Much has been written about theories X, Y and Z. Here we draw from Reddin's book because it provides at a glance the essence and the "ideological" moorings of the three theories. Accordingly the following summary of management style theories is compiled from Reddin's, *What's wrong with Style Theories?*²

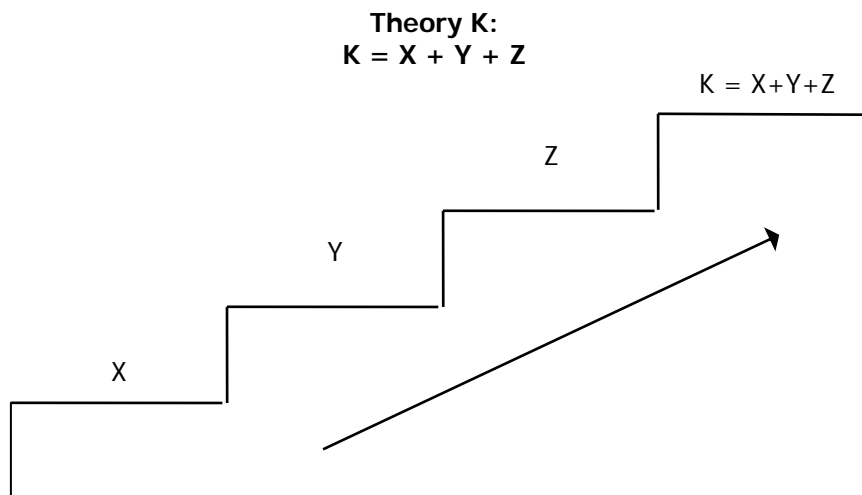
Table 1: Summary of Management Style Theories

Management Style/ System	X	Y	Z
Key Dimensions			
Assumption about humans	Man is a beast	Human beings are self actualizing	People have wills
Inherent nature	Evil	Good	Open to good and evil influences
Driving force	Biology	Humanism	Situation
Modes of interactions	Competition	Co-operation & collaboration	Inter- dependence
Social unit of importance	Individual	Group	Interaction
Intellectual advocates (According to Reddin)	Hobbes Machiavelli Freud Taylor Weber	McGregor Likert Argyris Maslow Hertzberg	Locke Fromm Sullivan Kelly Drucker

It may be indicated that there could be a difference of opinion on the classification of intellectual advocates as given by Reddin. It may be further observed that depending upon the assumptions about human beings, organizations tend to evolve X, Y or Z types of management and decision - making styles and systems. X style of decision making is authoritarian in nature, Y style is participative and in Z style there is close interaction and team approach orientation.

It is also interesting that above indicated management theories were also available, since centuries, in the form of popular metaphors and idioms in various cultures. In Hindi, "Laton ke bhoot baton se nahi mante" (People moved by force, can't be moved by word or persuasion) has been a popular way of expressing what is now known as theory X and theory Y. Variations of this phrase are also available in most Indian and other languages. Similarly the team spirit of theory Z is presented in many stories particularly the famous pigeons and the hunter's net. Such metaphors and stories indicate that since centuries, the theories X, Y and Z have been part of the social consciousness. In Indian context they were in practical use and were available in the common pool of knowledge either in written or oral traditions. In addition, need to elitise them was not felt, because they were for use by common masses in their day-to-day vyvahar or behaviour. However, it must be emphasized that application of these ideas in corporate contexts has given them a sharper focus in the form of theories.

Here, it would be useful to indicate that the so-called theory X has three shades viz. autocraterian, authoritarian and directive. Usually these distinctions are not emphasized and theory X is understood only in terms of authoritarian style. To capture this essence, we can categorize theory X in terms of X^- and X^+ . In its autocraterian and authoritarian form, it can be referred to as X^- and in its directive and just usage form, it can be referred to as X^+ .

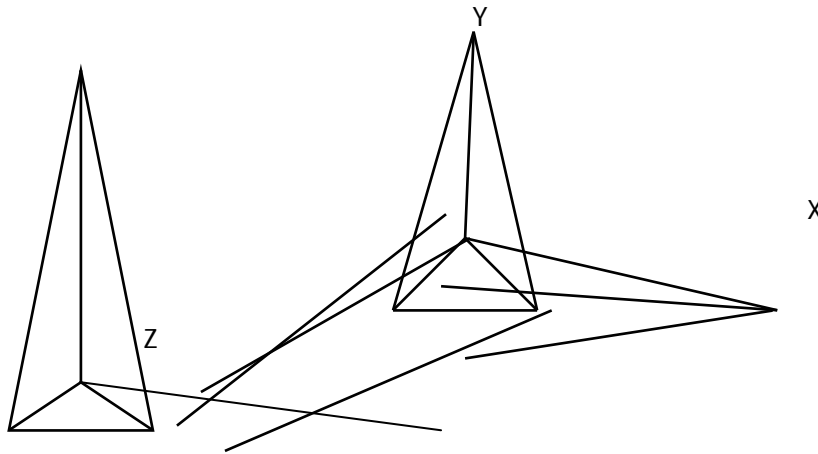


In managing a family or kutumbh, parents use a combination of approaches which includes use of theories, X, Y or Z depending upon the situational requirements. Accordingly theory K is essentially a combination theory where K is a combination of X, Y and Z. In real life situations, exclusive use of only X or Y or Z is not possible. Indeed a mix of the three can be easily seen in operation. Exceptions apart, most individuals are neither pure dictators nor 100% saints. Each individual is a mix of X, Y and Z represented in different shades depending upon the social and cultural upbringing. Societies that promoted colonialism are more likely to be high on theory X particularly in its X^- form. Similarly ideologies that are rooted in violence are more likely to promote theory X. However, long term implications of exclusive use of theory X particularly in its X^- form are there to be seen in the collapse of colonialism as well as the Russian empire. This collapse has occurred because "need for freedom" has always been very strong and in history it has been manifested in the form of freedom struggles.

We represent the theory K in the form of an equation, viz. $K = X + Y + Z$. This equation can also be represented by $K = X^a Y^b Z^c$ wherein the powers a, b and c represent the intensities with which theories X, Y or Z are used. These equations indicate that theory K is an appropriate blend of X, Y and Z depending on the situational requirements. Indeed theory K can also be referred to as XYZ theory of motivation and management wherein X, Y and Z appear in various combinations. It may be indicated that in theory K, use of X appears in its X^+ form and not in its X^- form..

The equation $K = X^a Y^b Z^c$ also represents a personality theory. Depending upon the values of a, b and c an individual's personality would have X, Y or Z tendencies or orientations.

It may be indicated that each individual consists of all the three types of qualities viz. X, Y and Z. If X is dominant in an individual with Y and Z having secondary and tertiary intensities, then the individual can be referred to as X oriented. If Y is dominant with Z and X having secondary and tertiary intensities, then the person is Y oriented. If Z is dominant with X and Y having secondary or tertiary intensities, then the individual is Z oriented. Figure 1 presents the three types of individuals in a diagrammatic form.



**Fig.1: X, Y and Z Oriented Individuals
Theory K in Inter - personal Context**

Using the framework of transaction cum interaction analysis, the concept of X, Y and Z qualities of human beings can be used for understanding and analysis of inter-personal interactions including the conflict and collaboration. Figure 2 presents the inter-personal dynamic on the basis of dominance of X, Y or Z types of qualities in individuals.

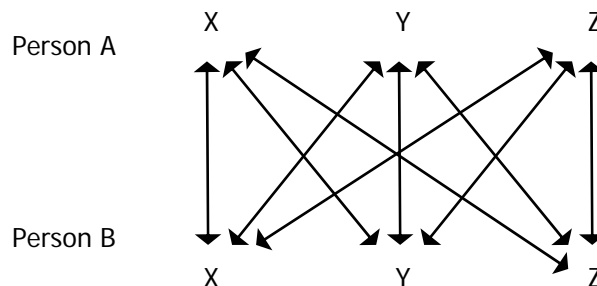


Fig.2: Two person interactions

The arrows originating from X imply X is dominant. Similarly arrows originating from Y and Z imply that Y or Z are dominant respectively. In two person interactions when both are dominant on X, this will lead to intensification of conflicts. If both the persons are dominant in Y or Z, there would be greater synergy, collaboration and team work. Thus, this framework is useful for designing teams in organizations. In addition, it is also helpful in understanding and resolving inter-personal conflicts and disputes.

In organizational contexts, the complexity of inter-personal conflicts gets enhanced because of the X, Y, Z personality mix of various individuals. Extending the above discussed interaction approach to three levels viz. managers, supervisors and workers, we can get a better understanding of complexity of inter-personal interactions in organizations. A manager could be X, Y or Z oriented. His/her supervisor could be X, Y or Z oriented. Similarly his/her worker could be X, Y or Z oriented. The inter-personal interactions between these three levels can be presented in a simplified diagramme presented in Figure 3.

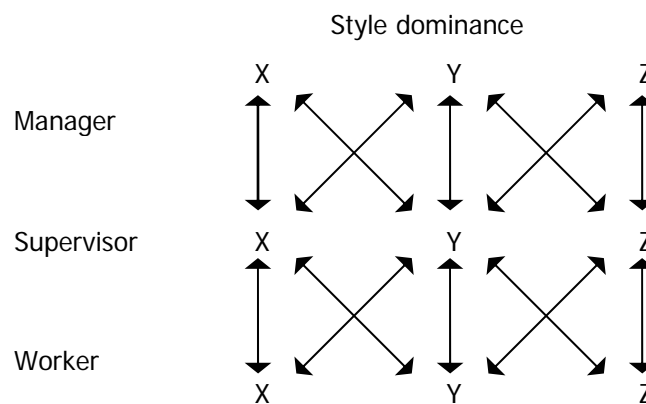


Fig.3: Three levels interaction diagramme

The three levels interactions framework can help us in forming better teams in organizations. It can also help us in a better understanding of the inter-personal tensions that exist in organizations. Theory K suggests that managerial response to conflict and collaboration should take into consideration the nature of dominance of X, Y or Z styles.

The Driving Metaphor and Theory K

According to theory K, different situations may demand different treatments. A situation may demand consultation or formation of teams. However, if manager does not display style flexibility, he/she may use theory X in such a situation. This would obviously lead to a mismatch between the style and the situational requirements. Through experience managers learn to fine tune their styles to the situational requirements. Thus, theory K suggests that the situational requirements may demand style flexibility. Use of theory K is like the car driving. Changes in situations may require the change in the gears. Thus, theories X, Y and Z can be considered as gears. Effective managers are able to make changes in the gears depending upon the requirements. Thus, they are able to get best performance from their work force. This idea of theory K can be presented as a matrix given in Figure 4.

		Situational Requirements		
		X	Y	Z
Manager's Style	X	(X,X)	(X,Y)	(X,Z)
	Y	(Y,X)	(Y,Y)	(Y,Z)
	Z	(Z,X)	(Z,Y)	(Z,Z)

Fig.4: Theory K in a matrix form

The situations (X,X), (Y,Y) and (Z,Z) represent the style fit. The other situations given in the matrix represent the lack of fit between the style and the situation. In these situations manager will have to undertake the change of gear in order to attain the better situation-style fit.

In the discussion so far we have outlined the key aspects of theory K. It is essentially a combination theory wherein the theories X, Y and Z are used in a blend form depending upon the situational requirements. In the discussion below we provide comparison of the theories X, Y and Z with similar Indian theories that are widely used though not written about in management text books.

**Sama, Dam, Danda, Bhed, X, Y, Z and K:
New Theories and Old Connections**

“Sama, dam, bhed and danda” is a theory well known to Indians. It finds its place not only in Arthashastra but also in several other Indian manuscripts and documents related to administration and management in ancient as well as modern times. Sama stands for persuasion, dam is economic incentive, bhed is “divide and rule” and danda is the use of force. It is interesting that the use of these means is in the order of sama, dam, bhed and danda. Subsequently this order was changed to sama, dam, danda and bhed. It may be noted that in original sequencing, danda was given the last priority as an instrument of last resort. It is perhaps this reason that India has not produced many dictators and despotic rulers.

In Indian context it was realized that rod / danda can produce undesirable results. Therefore, Kautilaya says, “A king severe with rod / danda becomes a source of terror, and a king mild with the rod / danda is also despised. The kind just with rod / danda is honoured. For the rod, used with full consideration, endows the subjects with spiritual good, material well-being and pleasure of senses”.³ Thus, a conditionality is imposed on proper use of danda or power. This conditionality implies that the person using the danda should be just with danda. This perhaps is a unique Indian contribution to management theory because in theory X, the question of justness does not arise. It is because of this reason, we have suggested two forms of Theory X viz. X⁻ and X⁺. The X⁻ form is autocraterian, authoriterian and devoid of justice. X⁺ form is directive with a sense of justice. X⁻ is indicative of negative use of power, X⁺ is indicative of the just and positive use of power. Kautilayan approach is X⁺ in its nature. The typical theory X is X⁻ in its nature.

Comparison of the sama, dam, danda, bhed theory with the theories X, Y and Z is interesting. Sama and dam can be contrasted with theory Y, danda and bhed can be contrasted with theory X. It may be observed that in sama, dam, danda, bhed, the approach is to use persuasion and economic incentives first and if they do not work then only use the other two with a sense of justness. Sama, dam, danda, bhed are used depending upon the situational requirements. This also is the essence of theory K which argues for use of X, Y and Z depending upon situation. Further, theory K emphasizes only the just use of X in its X⁺ form.

**Combining Indian Guna Theory with theories X, Y and Z:
Towards An Indian Model of Enlightened Leadership**

Indian guna theory provides interesting insights to the “models of human beings”. This theory is well documented and is available not only in scriptures but also in scholarly works. This theory is in essence, a theory of personality. It classifies humans into three types viz. tamasik, rajasik and sattavik depending upon the dominance of tamas, rajas or sattav qualities in an individual. Tamas literally means darkness, rajas refers to activity or drive and sattav refers to purity and illumination. The practical ideal is to move away from the tamasik qualities to rajasik and sattavik qualities. The spiritual ideal is to move beyond the three gunas and achieve a state of equanimity.

By combining the Indian guna theory and the insights from the theories X, Y and Z, we can evolve a new model of human personality. In this model, the human personality could be thought in terms of six elements represented by the personality set (tamasik, rajasik, sattavik, X, Y and Z). Thus, we get the following model of human personality:

I i.e. Individual = f (Tamasik, Rajasik, Sattavik, X, Y, Z)
with following subsets:

$$I_1 = f (\text{Tamasik}, X)$$

$$I_2 = f (\text{Rajasik}, Y)$$

$$I_3 = f (\text{Sattavik}, Z)$$

It may be indicated that in I₁, X is primarily in its X⁻ form. Individuals dominant in I₁ tend to create considerable amount of negative energy or negergy. Individuals dominant in I₂ tend to create positive drive and individuals dominant in I₃ create synergy. I₁ are violent types, I₂ are vibrant types and I₃ are silent types. Table 2 summarizes this model of personality theory, wherein Eastern approaches have been combined with Western theories to arrive at a new model. This model can be referred to as the “WE” (West-East) model of human personality.

Table 2: “WE” (West-East) Model of Human Personality

Personality type	“Western” classification	“Eastern” Categorization	“WE” Combination	Characteristic	Implications
I ₁ types	X	Tamas	Tamas and X (X in X ⁻ form)	Violent	Negergy or negative energy
I ₂ types	Y	Rajas	Rajas and Y	Vibrant	Positive drive or energy
I ₃ types	Z	Sattav	Sattav and Z	Silent	Synergy

An individual is a combination of I_1 , I_2 and I_3 and manifests all the three types of characteristics in his/her behaviour. Since, I_1 leads to negative energy and I_2 creates energy and I_3 create synergy, the ideal is to move away from I_1 to I_2 and I_3 . The idealized Indian "rajarshi" or "raja-rishi" model of enlightened leadership articulated in ancient scriptures is represented by a combination of "raja" representing the rajasik qualities and "rishi" representing the sattavik qualities. By combining Indian guna theory with theories X, Y and Z, we arrive at a new Indian model of enlightened leadership rooted in the Indian ethos. In this model, the enlightened leader creates a transformation from I_1 to I_2 and I_3 . Since, this model draws upon theory K, it can also be called as Theory K model of enlightened leadership.

Need for Justice: The Ethical Dimension in Theory K

One of the limitations of the theories X, Y and Z has been lack of emphasis on the ethical aspects as they are considered to be value-neutral. This also accounts for the appeal of these theories and makes them appear scientific in contrast to earlier traditional concepts that tend to be tilted in the value-positive direction. The seeming value neutrality of the theories X, Y and Z is not entirely true because they do tend to have certain ideological moorings. Indeed to twenty first century managers, it may appear strange that admired intellectual giants Weber, Freud and Taylor were indeed advocates of theory X.

In management literature, the "need for justice" has not received much attention. Kautilaya was perhaps the first scholar to give emphasis to the need for justice through his metaphor of the *matasya-nyaya*. Similarly, the "need for freedom" has not received due recognition. It may be indicated that the idea of "need for freedom" is derived from Tilak's famous quote "freedom is my birthright". In organizational contexts, need for freedom finds its expression in autonomy coupled with accountability.

Theory K, by emphasizing the justness in management actions gives due importance to the "need for justice" and the ethical dimension. In addition, theory K also recognizes the "need for freedom". Hence it emphasizes a shift away from X to other styles. The framework of theory K is both integrative as well as holistic because it not only integrates the Indian guna theory with management theories X, Y and Z but also takes a holistic perspective by incorporating the ethical and justness dimension in social and managerial actions.

Empirical Impressions about Theory K: Conceptualizing the Indian Experience

This author in his interactions with more than 6,000 practising Indian managers over last several years has observed that most managers tend to use a blend or mix of theories X, Y and Z and not exclusively just one of the theories. The empirical impressions also indicate that enlightened leaders tend to use theory K with greater reliance on Theory Y and Theory Z coupled with rajas and sattav qualities. Case studies of enlightened leaders from Indian history and Indian social and business contexts also indicate effective use of theory K. Though this author has not conducted any exhaustive survey to further confirm such empirical impressions gathered from the field as well as from case studies such an exercise could throw further light on this Indian model of leadership and management.

References

- 1) Sharma Subhash (1996), *"Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors"*, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, Pp. 41-42.
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- 3) Kangle, R. P., (1986) *"Kautilaya's Arthashastra"*, Part II, Motilal Banarasidass, New Delhi, p.10.