

Models Of Management And Satra Institutions

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Abstract: The Satras have been the bed-rock of Assamese civilization for more than 400 years now and have continuously provided the various communities and tribes that comprise the land and people of Assam, a unifying heritage, tradition, and a common culture. The Satras have evolved over a long time and have their ideologies refined over the period. And therefore it becomes pertinent to analyse Management models that can be relevant to the Satra institutions and their longevity. Modern organisations, with all there pomp and show, cannot usually survive beyond hundred years, but Satras have existed for a much more extended period. This study dwells on models relevant to the Satra institutions and based on their efficacy they can be implemented in modern organisations to increase their life expectancy.

Index Terms: Satra, Vaishnavism, Mahapurusha, Srimanta Sankardeva, Madhavadeva, Management, Management Principles, Management Tools, Management Models, The Mckinsey 7-S model, Bridges' Transition Model, Satir 5-stage change model, Four Framework Approach, The Holacracy Model

1 INTRODUCTION

The Neo-Vaishnavite Movement, which propagated through the entire country of India in the period between 12th and 16th century AD was a "Bhakti (devotional) movement based on the liberal doctrine of bhakti or devotion." In Assam, a state in the North-Eastern part of India, through which the mighty river Brahmaputra with all its major tributaries flow, this Movement was initiated by the great Vaishnava saint, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva along with his most decorated pupil Shrishri Madhavadeva and was propagated after their deaths, through the distinctively unique institutions of the Satra (Vaishnavite monasteries, literally meaning, "Holy areas") and its offshoot, the Namghar (community prayer halls). These institutions have become bedrock of Assamese culture and heritage, uniting the Assamese people across castes and tribes. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement brought about renaissance in Assam. The movement was unique in the sense that unlike other reformers in the rest of India during those times, Srimanta Sankardeva's Neo-Vaishnavism rested not on a discursive reasoning and abstract thinking, but emphasised more on ethnic integration, societal reforms, and spiritual uplift. It propagated an innovative mode of religious conduct based on indigenous elements of the region present at those times in history, when the society in Assam was in turmoil, fragmented into many small parts, always at horns with each other. The Satras have evolved over a long time and have their ideologies refined over the period. While Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva along with his most decorated pupil Shrishri Madhavadeva, established the institution of Satra and fructified the idea of a monastic institution in the form of a Satra, it is their direct disciples and subsequently their lineages, who formalised the structure, traditions and its religious administration giving a distinct paradigm to the Assamese society.

The word Satra has a revered intention, which is identified with the neo-vaishnavite movement of Assam, started by the great saint Srimanta Sankardeva, amid the latter half of the fifteen century. In the social sphere, Sankardeva was a great organizer. To propagate his teachings, he and his disciples established Namghars (prayer hall) and a network of Satras (monasteries), respectively. The Satras were instrumental in the spread of the neo-vaishnavite movement in Assam's length and breath within a very short span. Thus, it can be said that it is the institution that is central to the religio-cultural resurgence initiated in Assam between the 15th-17th century. The whole extent of religious, social and cultural activism radiating from the Bhakti movement was focused on the Satra in Assam, with the Namghar or kirtan-ghar as its core. The Satras have remained the fundamental organization to spread the teachings of Srimanta Sankardeva. But, after the demise of Sankardeva, four factions have risen into the "Ek-Śaran-Nāma-Dharma," called four samhatis (denominations): Brahma-samhati, Kal-samhati, Nika-samhati and Purush-samhati, and these samhatis or sects have propounded newer philosophies and beliefs. Subsequently, the Satras of Assam have stayed occupied to establish superiorities of their particular factions, which is regrettable. However, inspite of all their shortcomings, the Satra Institutions of Assam have survived for 400-500 years, and thus, their administrative setups require deeper studies for gaining insights into their functionings, which can help even corporate and other organisations to propagate over ages. The Satra is a centre of religion, learning and cultural activities with a Namghar or kirtan-ghar (prayer house) next to a manikut (sanctum sanctorum). Bhakats (or disciples) live in huts (boha), which are organized in linear fashion called "hati." Satradhikar lives in the main house. Officials like the Bhagavati, Pathak, Gayan, Bayan, Sutradhar, Medhi, Satola, Pujari, Bharali, Deuri, Khanikar, Likhak, Pasoni, Majumdar and Muktiyar and others have specific functions. The Adhikar (Satradhikar) or the Burha-adhikar or the Burha-satriya is the religious head of a Satra institution. In some Satras, one more person from the locality is appointed to assist the Satradhikar in his works. His position in the Satra institution is next to the Adhikara, and he is known as the Deka-Adhikar or the Deka-satriya. The Satra Institutions in Assam are excellent examples of the plentiful religio-cultural activities of the Vaishnavite era and have maintained a lot of their old traditions intact. The rich heritage of enlightened socio-cultural activities, art, culture, and literature and the firm foundation of the

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religious beliefs of the Bhakti cult of the neo-Vaishnavism of Sankaradeva are treasured and nurtured in these Satras. In a few words, the Satra institutions are still the nerve centres of the Vaishnava society in Assam for the last 400-500 years. Having said that the Satra institutions have proliferated over centuries due to the inherent management and governance mechanism within, it becomes imperative for us to discuss a few Management models which have an apparent bearing on the Satra Institution. The purpose of this paper is to provide a broad interdisciplinary summary of governance and leadership analysis concerning Management Models from a monastic viewpoint while identifying gaps in existing studies and to sketch out areas for further research. Besides, we want to examine the significance of the monastic administration and management principles through relevant management models for secular institutions like big corporations and enterprises.

2. MANAGEMENT MODELS AND THEIR PURPOSES

Management models and tools – such as the 7s-Model or the SWOT – are discussed with a bit of skepticism as well as controversy as they are not always productive to the extent claimed. Some people use them as essential tools for analysing businesses and developing strategies. Others would like to call them buzzwords used by consultants to boost their profile and their ideas. The actual value of management models probably lies somewhere in between. Therefore, any inference drawn should be taken with a small pinch of salt. A good definition of Management Model or Tool is provided in the research paper - “Conceptual Management Tools – A Guide to Essential Models for Knowledge Workers” by Martin J. Eppler: A conceptual management tool is a structured, model-based way of proceeding to improve the problem solving or decision making the process either individually or for a group in an organisational context. By providing action steps, thought structures and representation formats to facilitate convergent (analytical) or divergent (creative) thinking, a conceptual tool tries to achieve intended outcomes. A few essential reasons that indicate the purpose of management tools are:

- to improve the problem solving or decision-making process
- providing thought structures, action steps, and representation formats
- to facilitate analytical or creative thinking.

These purposes of management tools and models also imply what those tools are capable of and what they are not. The tools guide users through a process. Like many others, strategic planning processes suffer more from information overload than from very little information. The tools and models provide a framework to structure this information, to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, to realign the information so that new interdependencies and connections become visible, and provide formats for presenting information and conclusions. Therefore, they facilitate thinking. However, they don't think for us. They help to reach conclusions or strategies, but do not produce them. Management is the process of achieving individual and collective goals working with and through

human and non-human resources to improve the world. Management values include effectiveness of performance (achieving objectives), operational efficiency (not wasting resources in the process), sustainable innovation (continuously improving products and methods) and adding value (measured by the responsiveness of the parties interested). Good managers demonstrate good judgment by balancing these four competitive but complementary values. The four values inherent to some extent in all levels of management are incorporated into four management models. Those models focus on rational goals, internal processes, human relations, and open systems (Quinn et al. 1995), each of which involves ethical issues that have relevance for the management of science and technology.

2.1 Rational Goal Model

The rational goal model was introduced in the early twentieth century by which Frederick Taylor. It stresses the importance of external managerial control that results from the exercise of director and producer role responsibilities to employ humans and other tools to engineer optimal productivity (Taylor 1911). Setting goals, speeding up productivity and increasing profits faster than external competitors can bring performance effectiveness. The use of time and movement studies, financial incentives and technological power to maximize production also improves performance positively. The strength of this model is that it realizes that managers provide structure and initiate actions. However, the exclusive and extreme emphasis on the rational objective model imposes rapid movements like robots to people who were impossible to maintain, and this neglect of individual psychosocial needs in the search for economic benefits tends to result in offended individuals and destroys cohesion at the organizational level, thus damaging organizational productivity.

2.2 Internal Process Model

The internal process model introduced by Henri Fayol (1841–1925) in the first quarter of the twentieth century emphasizes the importance of internal administrative control resulting from the exercise of the functions of monitor and coordinator to exercise authority over humans to maintain the stability of hierarchical administration. Operational efficiency is achieved through information management, documentation control and consolidated continuity and emphasizing the measurement of the process, the proper functioning of the organization's operations and the maintenance of the structural order (Fayol 1916). Fayol described the five functions of the administration as planning, organization, command, coordination and control and established fourteen principles of adequate administration, the most critical elements being the specialization of work, unity and chain of command, and the routine exercise of authority to ensure internal control. When the internal process model is applied to political-economic control, socialist and communist regulatory infrastructures limit the negative externalities of the free market but create the risk of stifling technological and political-economic innovations through over-regulation. The strength of this model is that it realizes that managers maintain the structure and gather information. However, the exclusive and extreme emphasis on the internal process model results in stifled progress and unattended

possibilities at the organizational and extra-organizational level.

2.3 Human Relations Model

The human relations model, which Elton Mayo (1880–1949) popularized in the second quarter of the twentieth century, emphasizes the importance of internal administrative flexibility resulting from the exercise of responsibilities as a facilitator and mentor to improve human relations in the work and improve extra-organizational response from stakeholders. The responsiveness of stakeholders is achieved by showing managerial consideration to the psychosocial needs of employees, encouraging informal group collaboration and providing recognition at work, as well as promoting managerial social responsibility and building a human community in the society (Mayo 1933). Mayo's research at Hawthorne Works showed that management consideration, employee group affiliation and motivated special recognition could increase productivity. The strength of this model is that it realizes that managers show consideration and facilitate supportive interaction with stakeholders within and outside the organization. However, the exclusive and extreme emphasis on the human relations model creates the risk of slowing down production at work and abdicating decision-making authority in society.

2.4 Open Systems Model

The open systems model introduced by Paul Lawrence (b. 1933) and Jay Lorsch (b. 1934) in the third quarter of the twentieth century emphasizes the importance of external managerial flexibility resulting from the exercise of the responsibilities of the roles of innovator and intermediary to continuously adapt to changing environmental forces (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967). Sustainable innovation is achieved by cultivating organizational learning cultures, developing interfunctional organizational competencies for continuous creativity, and respecting the limits of quality and the ecological system while negotiating the acquisition of external resources, building sustainable business networks and allowing the creative improvement of the system.

3. MANAGEMENT MODELS AND THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As illustrated in the previous paragraphs, all management models and tools were developed in a different historical environment. They emerged from standard questions and situations that were suitable for managers and researchers at that time. Therefore, they inevitably assume some economic assumptions, for example, the basis of competition or the pace of change. If these conditions change, the models do not necessarily lose their validity. However, they cannot contribute to decisions as accurately as they did in their original historical context. There was a long period of relatively stable growth from 1945 to the mid-70s. Companies focused on growth and revenue growth. Competition was not so much a problem. Therefore, companies mainly opted for expansion strategies. They expanded to new products and new markets abroad. The typical management models that emerged during that period are portfolio planning tools such as the Ansoff matrix, the concept of the product life cycle or the Boston Box. From the mid-70s to the mid-90s, companies faced a period of increasing competition. The management approach

shifted to competitive threats, changing business cycles with phases of growth and recession, profitability and survival. Therefore, corporate strategies focused on restructuring, reorientation of core businesses, niche strategies. In addition, mergers and acquisitions became fashionable. The typical management tools and models for this period are Porter's generic strategies, the concept of basic skills and the reengineering of business processes. Starting in the mid-90s, the Internet began to influence the world of business. A period of turbulence, disruption and hypercompetence began. The external environment is characterized by rapid and non-linear change. Trends became even harder to predict. Corporate objectives moved to the management of such unpredictable developments. There are now appropriate corporate strategies on the redefinition of industry boundaries and business boundaries and business models. With the new technical possibilities offered by the Internet, association management became more vital. Typical tools and modes for this period are chaos theory and game theory.

4. MANAGEMENT MODELS IN SATRA INSTITUTIONS

Given today's information overload, models can be invaluable tools for organizing, analyzing and presenting information in an orderly manner. A management model cannot make a decision; However, it may help to make an informed decision. It makes sense to apply some selected models to a corporation or industry from time to time. This can be done as a brainstorm exercise to gather the variety of knowledge of the different members and departments of the organization. If a particular model demonstrates that it is not applicable (for example, the analysis of Porters 5 Forces does not fit the rate of transformation in an industry), it can be ignored anyway. The union of several models can compensate for the deficiencies of some models with the strengths of others. Even the most traditional models are still valid and can offer a thorough analysis. Their significant advantage is that they are well known and easy to understand by almost everyone. Management tools can help you better understand particular aspects of an organization or its environment. In this context, it is worth analyzing some management models, whose constructions have direct links with the structure, the spirit, the narratives and the schemes with the Satra institution with respect to their management, so they have survived for centuries.

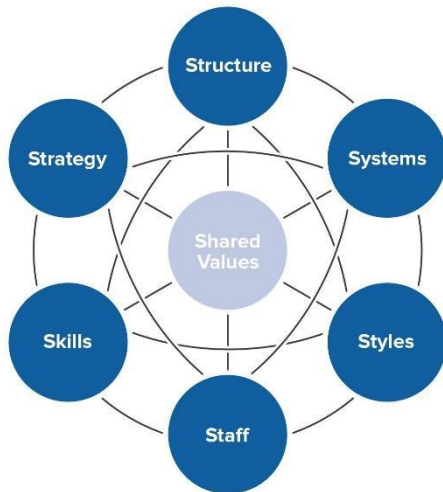
4.1 The Mckinsey 7-S model

McKinsey 7-S model comprises of seven interdependent determinants which are categorised as either "hard" or "soft" elements:

TABLE 1
THE 7 ELEMENTS

<i>Hard Elements</i>	<i>Soft Elements</i>
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Shared Values</i>
<i>Structure</i>	<i>Skills</i>
<i>Systems</i>	<i>Style</i>
	<i>Staff</i>

"Hard" components are more convenient to explain or identify, and administrators can influence them immediately: these are strategy reports; organization charts and reporting lines, and formal processes and information technology techniques. Meanwhile, "soft" elements can be much more difficult to explain and are less tangible and more influenced by culture. However, these soft elements are as essential as the hard elements if the organization is going to succeed. The way in which the model is shown in Figure 1 (below) shows the interdependence of the components and shows how a change in one can affect the others.



Let's take a closer look at every element:

Strategy: The policy formulated to sustain and build a competitive edge over the rival(s).

Structure: How the institution is built and who reports to whom.

Systems: The day to day actions and styles that employees do to complete the job.

Shared values: They are the basic or core standard upheld by an organisation in corporate culture and the general professional ethics.

Style: The technique of leadership utilised.

Staff: The workers.

Skills: The real abilities and expertise of the workers of the organisation.

Placing shared values at the center of the model indicates that those values are fundamental to the growth of each crucial element. The institutional structure, tactics, methods, technique, workers and skills originate from why the company was created in the first place and all that it represents: the original idea of the organization that was formulated based on the values of the builders. As values change, other elements change as well. In the transformation processes, most institutions focus their energies on the difficult S: namely, Strategy, Structure and Systems. As a result, they don't pay much attention to soft S: namely, skills, staff, style and shared values. However, Peters and Waterman, in their book "In Search of Excellence," stated that most prosperous companies continue to focus on these soft S. Soft determinants can create or crush a successful change process since the

latest arrangements and policies are difficult to establish on contrasting cultures and values. Such a crisis often arises in the unsatisfactory results of dramatic megafusions. The absence of achievements and synergies during such mergers is generally based on a collision of completely distinctive cultures, values and styles, making it difficult to establish effective standard systems and structures. In the case of Satras, all the elements of the McKinsey 7-S model are observed. The focus is more on Soft S: skills, staff, style and shared values, and that is why we can see that Satra institutions have survived for the past 400 years.

4.2 Bridges' Transition Model - Guiding People Through Change

People often are pretty uncomfortable when there is a change due to various legitimate reasons. So, on many occasions, they will resist and oppose it. As a result of this, it is essential to understand how people feel as change comes along. If there is a clear understanding of their outlook, they can be guided accordingly as per their adaptive capacities. Bridges' Transition Model is a good model aiding during changes in an organization. Change specialist William Bridges developed a unique pattern called the Transition Model in his 1991 book titled "Managing Transitions." The inner force of the model is that it concentrates on transition, not change. The difference between these is subtle but significant. Change is something that occurs to anyone, even when they don't want it. However, a transition is a desirable internal change, and it occurs in people's heads as they navigate through change. Change can happen abruptly, while a transition is more of a slow process. The model can shed light on the three levels of transition most individuals faced during the process. They are:-

Stopping, yearning & letting go - [End]

Open-minded zone.

The new start - [New Beginning]

Bridges stated that people would go through every stage, taking their own time. For instance, people who are content with the change are more likely to move through the three stages more quickly than slow adapters.

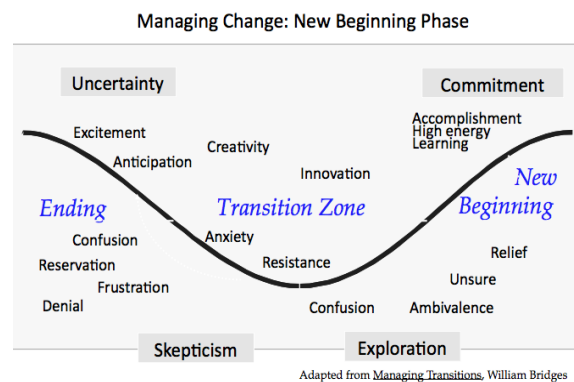


Fig. 1. Bridges' Transition Model – The 3 stages

In the Satras, the changes that are mentioned above, have been affected many numbers of times – by human-made causes as well as by natural causes. Death of the Satradhikar leading to a total overhaul of the leadership as well as seasonal floods displacing entire Satras are natural

causes creating changes, and the Satras have met those changes along the same lines as mentioned in the above Model. Further, human-made causes would include changes effected by the changing dynamic Satra-State relationship over 400-450 years starting with the Ahom Kingdom, the Maans, the British, and after freedom.

4.3 Four Framework Approach

In the 4 Framework Approach, Bolman and Deal (1991) imply that managers show leadership behaviours in one of four types of frameworks: Structural, Human Resource, Political, or Symbolic:

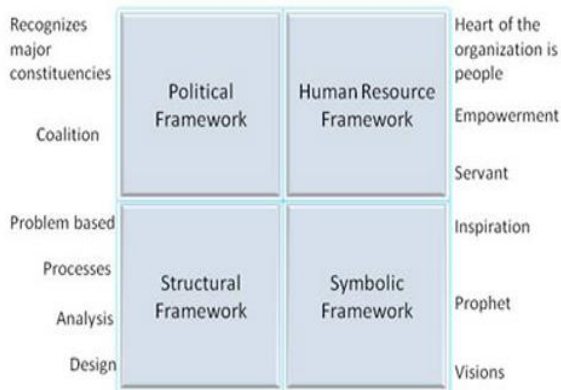


Fig. 2. Four Framework Approach

This model proposes that managers operate in one of these four categories, and there are moments when one of the approaches is more suitable and times when it would not be. That is, any style can be effective or be the exact opposite, depending upon the circumstance. Relying on only one of these approaches would be inadequate. Thus, we should try to be conscious of all four strategies and not just rely on one or two. For instance, during a significant organisation change, a Structural administration technique could be much more productive than a Symbolic administration technique. The Symbolic strategy is often more productive in times of steady growth. We also need to understand ourselves, as each of us tends to have a preferred method. We need to be conscious of these at all times and be aware of the limitations of just favouring one approach. Structural Framework - Structural managers concentrate on structure, policy, environment, implementation, experimentation, and adaptation. In an efficient administration situation, the manager is a social engineer whose leadership technique is analysis and design. While in an ineffective management position, the manager is a wretched tyrant whose management style is frivolous details. Human Resource Framework - Human Resource managers have faith in people, and they relate that belief; they are noticeable and available; they enable, improve assistance, help, give data, and prompt decision making down into the institution. In an efficient administration case, the manager is like a synergist and assistant whose management technique involves assistance, promoting, and boosting morale. While in an incompetent management situation, the manager is a pushover, whose management style is abdication and deception. Political Framework - Political leaders explain their requirements and what they can achieve; evaluate the

division of authority and interests, establish links with other stakeholders, use persuasion skills at first, but later deploy dialogue and force if required. In an efficient management situation, the boss is an advocate, whose management style is an alliance and team building. While in an incompetent administration condition, the boss is a hustler, whose management technique is manipulation. Symbolic Framework - Symbolic managers look at institutions as a stage or theatre where specific roles are assigned to people to perform to the best of their abilities. In an energetic management situation, the manager is a prophet, whose management style is motivation. While in an incompetent management situation, the manager is an extremist or fool, whose management style is smoke and mirrors. In the Satras earlier during the time of both the Gurujonas and then their direct disciples (who formed the various Samhatis), the Symbolic Framework of leadership was very much in vogue. However, gradually, as time passed, Human Resource Framework took over, and now the leadership in Satras is seen as visible and accessible; they empower, increase participation, support, share information, and move decision making down into the organisation. Decentralised decision making is a hallmark of Satra Institutions.

4.4 The Holacracy Model

Holacracy is a system of decentralised administration and institutional governance, in which power and decision-making are spread throughout a holarchy of self-organising units rather than being vested in a management hierarchy. For-profit and non-profit institutions have adopted Holacracy in numerous nation-states. A holacracy presents a flat management structure that disseminates power. A holacracy aims to guarantee that those who are assigned to complete work are given the authority to determine how the job is being done. According to advocates, holacracies can bring better productivity, agility, clarity, responsibility, worker engagement, and innovation. However, detractors argue that this design doesn't provide adequate lateral communication. To be efficient, the tasks, duties, and expectations for group members in a holacracy are precisely defined, but amenable. Connecting roles, which are also known as link roles, sit in various groups and make sure that such groups are acting as per the institutional overall goal and objectives. The word holacracy is derived from "holon" - a moniker minted by Arthur Koestler in his book "The Ghost in the Machine." A holon is a self-governing unit that is nonetheless a component of a more significant entity. The suffix 'cracy' denotes "ruled by." As such, holacracy is a form of administration in which self-governing groups enjoy large autonomy, and leaders are chosen based on merit. It is also possible that in the holacracy, people take up more than one assignment for the betterment of the institution. Responsibilities are overlapped in many cases while still maintaining work circles for every individual. To put it in simple terms, every person assigned responsibility is the manager for that given area of power and the follower of those roles in circles he or she is involved in. Circles are autonomous; they allot tasks and are answerable for their areas within the institution. Connecting roles, also called links, sit in various circles, and they ensure those circles are functioning as per the institution's goals and objectives. This is precisely the way

in the Satra Institutions function. There is tremendous decentralization of power inside the Satras Institutions and decisions are taken by self-organising units. The Satradhikar however takes the significant decisions, that too very democratically, with consultations of all elders of the Satras who mostly are members of the Satra Management Committee.

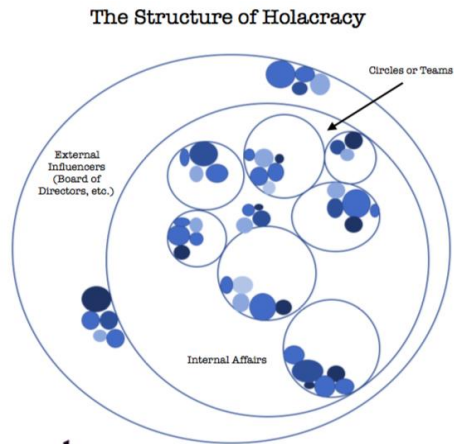


Fig 3.: Circles in a holacracy

The worldview behind holacracy - that authority must be disseminated everywhere across the network - makes intuitive sense, especially in an era of developing blockchain technology. Many people have seen the possibility of holacracy spreading from business domain with a new set of principles to administer states and territories. Societal holacracy is unquestionably a huge jump, but being a new system of institutional design, it is conquering many enthusiasts. One example of success is the HolacracyOne - a company that implemented holacracy in as many as 1,000 institutions. Big corporations like Google and government agencies like Dubai's KHDA have all tried holacracy, and of course, they came out with a different level of success. Thus, Holacracy, being a time tested phenomenon, can be tested in organization in varying measures to increase employee participation, productivity as well as longevity.

5. CONCLUSION

From the discussion as above, it is evidently clear that certain Management models which are in vogue these days and being hailed as efficient in increasing organizational productivity were very much in practice in the Satra Institutions of Assam for the last 400-500 years. While, every single element of the McKinsey 7-S model is observed in the Satras with more focus on the Soft S's - Skills, Staff, Style and Shared Values. That is the reason why, perhaps, we can see that the Satra institutions have survived for over the last 400 years. Bridges' transition model helps with the people-aspect of change management: turning them from obstacles to supporters. The Satras has realized for long that guiding people through transition was the key to successful change. This is what they have done for the last 400-500 years. As the Bhakats were affected by change move from one transition stage to the next, the Satra leadership changed their approach to people management in an empathic progression. As also discussed, the Symbolic Framework of

leadership was followed during the early times of the Satra Institution. However, gradually, as time passed, Human Resource Framework took over, and now the leadership in Satras is seen as visible and accessible; they empower, increase participation, support, share information, and move decision making down into the organisation. Decentralised decision making is considered widely as a hallmark of Satra Institutions. The decentralization of power inside the Satras Institutions and decision making by self-organising units, make the Satra Institution look like pure holacratic structures. What is being considered as a modern management tool, has been followed in the Satras for long. All these models have been an established component in the Satras of Assam for a long time now. From the analysis above, it can be concluded that the underlying essence of these models has a deep roleplay in the survival of the Satras in Assam over such a long period. This gives hope to modern organisations also, that, if such models are being imbibed, with increased employee satisfaction and participation, organisations can be successful for a long time.

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