

---

## **Exploring work values in Rabindrasangeet**

Debdulal Dutta Roy <sup>1</sup>, Esa Bandopadhyay <sup>2</sup>

1- Psychology Research Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

2- Performing Art Therapy Centre, Rabindrabharati University, Kolkata  
ddroy@isical.ac.in

---

### **ABSTRACT**

With the increasing complexity and industrialization of society work for many people has become more and more simply a means towards the end of earning a living. However, we are in danger of over-generalizing this trend and pushing it to its logical conclusion, expecting that working serves only a means function. Work value contingent upon tangible rewards induces dissonance in the Quality of working life in the organization. It is embedded dimension within the cultural fabric of society. One can understand the culture by analysis of performing arts like songs, music, drama, scriptures and drawing. Rabindranath Tagore composed several songs (Rabindrasangeet) filled with several stress reducing postulates (Dutta Roy, 2010). Aim of this study is to explore work values in the Rabindrasangeet. Some songs of Rabindranath Tagore were selected where in the word ‘ Karma’ or ‘Kaaj’ is depicted as they reflect the meaning of work. Script analysis revealed 15 path and 13 goal oriented work values. Finally some postulates were framed to frame new theory of work values.: The study has several implications in analysis of performing art for development of theories in management. Second, the extracted values will give new direction of research in shaping quality of life of people at work.

**Key words:** Rabindranath Tagore, work value, Rabindrasangeet

### **1. Introduction**

In the studies on people management, work value plays critical role as it changes one's perception to work and energizes individual to work in a specific direction. Value is the most striking fact about human life and as the core concept of human existence. Values are expressions of worth, likes or dislikes concerning things, persons, principles etc. Rokeach (1973) defined a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. So, value is a belief that is enduring. Since, it is enduring, values can not be changed easily. Value has the hierarchical structure or value system. One’s preference to values depends on his value system. Value system varies with the context. Values with reference to work are called work values.

#### **1.1 Work Value Theories**

Work value can be understood in terms of Figure and ground model where figure is value and ground is work setting. Super and Super (1957) defined work values as work related values

possessed similarly among the individuals in work place. Super (1970) operationally defined the construct with the publication of the refined work values inventory (WVI). It has 15 work values as altruism, aesthetics, creativity, intellectual stimulation, independence, achievement, prestige, management, economic returns, security, surroundings, supervisory relations, associates, variety and way of life. Schwartz (1992) identified ten different value types as universalization, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and self-direction. He also found that some value types were complimentary to each other, while others were in conflict. Values are the most abstract of social cognitions and hence they guide attitudes and behavior. Within a given situation, the influence flows from abstract values to midrange attitudes to specific behaviours. This sequence is called value attitude-behaviour hierarchy (Homer and Kahle, 1988). Bardi and Schwartz (2003) observed that values motivate behaviour, but the relation between values and behaviours is partly obscured by norms set by the society. Moreover, in specific situations, only a subset of values is made active, those that are seen as relevant to the salient alternative actions. For example, valuing equality might favour donating to charity and oppose purchasing a luxury item, whereas valuing a comfortable life might have the reverse influence. Not all activated values have equally strong impacts on behaviour. The strength of impact depends on importance of the value in the person's hierarchy. The hierarchical structure of values is called value system. As values are enduring beliefs, they are very difficult to change. Oliver (1999) found that the overall personal value structure of the American managers did not change in three decades. Zytowski (1970) reasoned that work values mediate an individual's preferences and work goals (e.g., when a promotion is offered, the degree of preference varies according to personal values). He argued two types of work values : intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic work values associate with psychological fulfillment or satisfaction from working (e.g., challenging tasks) and extrinsic work values associate with material rewards (e.g. benefits). Intrinsic work values have been found to influence organizational commitment more significantly when compared to extrinsic work values (Mottaz, 1988; Putti et al., 1989). Work values in association with pay satisfaction, and organizational commitment had significant influence in predicting turnover intention. All three variables were able to explain 56.7% of turnover intention. Rokeach (1973) assumes that work value includes specific mode of conduct (instrumental values) and end-state of existence (terminal values). In the Rokeach value survey (RVS), instrumental values are cheerfulness, ambition, love, cleanliness, self-control, capability, courage, politeness, honesty, imagination, independence, intellect, broad-mindedness, logic, obedience, helpfulness, responsibility and forgiveness. Terminal Values refer to desirable end-states of existence. These are the goals that a person would like to achieve during his or her lifetime. Terminal values are true friendship, mature love, self-respect, happiness, inner harmony, equality, freedom, pleasure, social recognition, wisdom, salvation, family security, national security, a sense of accomplishment, a world of beauty, a world at peace, and a comfortable life and exciting life. Work values are influenced by individual's knowledge, skills and work experiences and cultural environments (Hofstede, 1980). Researchers tended to explore work values from the philosophy of local culture. For example to find out Chinese work values, King and Bond (1985) found that Confucianism encourages the pursuit of long-term benefits (perseverance) as a trade-off for suffering short-term loss (thriftiness).

Adherence to this philosophy stresses the value of diligence and working hard to achieve long-term goals which can be related to the work values of self-enhancement, rewards, stability, and personal interest. Jaw, Ling, Wang, and Chang (2006) provided a model for Confucian dynamism that further reinforced the emphasis placed on self-enhancement in that, in their model,

Chinese work values are directly related to self-enhancement and openness to change. They asserted that For MNCs to be successful in China, they must integrate Confucian dynamism into their management practices in order to motivate Chinese workers to strive for the self-achievement and openness to change that is valued in Chinese culture. Besides ideas of philosophers, culture specific values can be extracted from performing arts wherein cultural values are imbibed. These arts are songs, music, dance, poems, stories, sculpture etc. Current study aims at exploring work values in the Rabindrasangeet.

## **1.2 Rabindrasangeet**

The revered Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore composed several songs. In a word this is called Rabindrasangeet. To him music is not an object rather a mediator to look at the inner and inner core of consciousness. Tagore himself wrote " ganer vitor diye jokhon dekhi bhobon khani,tokhon tare chini ami tokhon tare jani". Though it is very difficult to classify Rabindrasangeet, Tagore himself classified them into six parjays or chapters. These are Puja, Prem, Prakriti, Swadesh, Bichitra, and anushthanik. Puja parjay comprises songs related to devotion and worshipping the God. It includes 21 upaparjays or sub chapters as friend,prayer,awakening, enlightenment, beauty etc. Prem paryay includes songs about prakriti,the God and the human being. Prakriti parjay includes songs related to seasonal changes as summer,winter,rainy season, spring and Hemanta.Sometimes he meant prakriti as the God or as unconditional love or prem.Sometimes, he explained beauty of nature itself. Swadesh parjay includes songs that generate energy and motivate people to come out of weakness during pre and post independence of India. Anushthanik includes songs related to ceremonies as birthday, plantation, first entry to house, death. He did not divide bichitra parjay. So, it is basically archive of mixed songs. All the songs are written in Geetbitan. He had deep devotion to the Indian heritage. He visited Europe and several countries in Asia. Therefore, he was able to synchronize the western and eastern values. Another interesting feature in Rabindrasangeet is that the songs are eternal. This eternality leads people to sing Rabidrasangeet still now. In this year, the Government of India is celebrating 150th birth centenary of Rabindranath Tagore.

## **2. Exploring work values from selected scripts**

Four songs were selected based on some criteria. The criteria are (a) the flow of thought directed to karma or kaaj or work and (b) absence of mixed thoughts directed to mixed work like love, puja, anushthanik etc. For example, in Chandalika, there is a script " ogo deko na more deko na. Amar kaj-vola mon, ache dure kon-kare swapaner sadhana".Table 1 shows derived meaning out of the selected scripts and derived work related values out of the meaning. The extracted values were classified into two as path and goal oriented values. Path oriented values are related to the specific behavior to achieve the work goal. Path oriented values include 14 values as self-awakening, emotional control, developing positive power or energy, systematic, fearless, cleanliness, no work-family conflict, niskam principle, challenging, self-understanding, self-power, doubtless, free from fear of failure, advancement, altruism.

**Table 1:** Derived meaning, derived values from the selected scripts of Rabindra sangeet.

Script	Derived meaning	Derived Values	
		Path oriented	Goal oriented
A. <b>"Shaktirup hero</b> tanr,anandita,atandrita,bhurloke,vubarloke-Biswakaje, chitta majhe,dine rate."	Work starts by imagining the positive power that gives energy and feeling of constant enlightenment ("Shaktirup hero tanr,anandita,atandrita"). This will help to control laziness,doubt,interpersonal conflict ("shranti alasa bishad bilas dwidha,bibad,dur karo he").	self-awakening, emotional control, developing positive power or energy.	Peace, universalization, Enlightenment, Positive feeling.
B. <b>Sada thako anande</b> , sansare nirbhaye nirmalprane    Jago prate anande, karo karmo anande, Sandhay grehey cholo he anandagane    Sankate sampode thako kolyane, Thako anande ninda-apamane   Sabare khama kori thako anande, Chiro-amrito nirjhore santir sapane	Be joyful, fearless and with clean heart in the family. Wake up in the morning and start work being joyful, fearless and cleanliness. Carry forward same ananda or joyful feeling to the family. Forget worries, the insults made by others, Forgive others and be in peace.	Systematic, fearless, cleanliness, no work-family conflict	Peace, family security, sense of accomplishment, pleasure, inner harmony, self-respect, salvation,
C. <b>Jini sakal kajer kaji</b> mora tari kajer sangi   Jar nana ranger ranga mora tari raser rangi    Tanr bipul chande chande Mora jai chole anande, Tini jemni bajan bheri moder temni nacher bhanghi	We are the followers of the creator of all works. We are following his path disregarding any expected outcome. All of our activities are guided by his synchronized waves of work.	Following principle of Niskam, aesthetic.	Peaceful, inner harmony,
D. <b>Sankocher bihablata nijere</b> apaman,Sankater kalpanate hoyo na mriyoman   Mukta karo bhoy, apana majhey sakti dharo, nijere karo joy   Durbalere rakhya karo, durjanere hano, Nijere din nihswahay jeno kavu na jano   Mukta karo bhay, nijer'pore korite bhoy na rekho sanshay   Dharma jabe sankharabe koribe ahaban Nirab hoye, namra hoye, pon koriyo pran   Mukta koro bhay, duruh kaje nijeri diyo kothin parichoy	Be fearless, doubtless and self-insulting less. Be free from thinking of failure. Develop inner power and win self. Protect weak and attack bad. Never think yourself as helpless. Develop unflinching resolute when you face difficult task. Waiting for the clarion call of Dharma. Be polite and silently sacrifice yourself. Be fearless and introduce yourself in most difficult task	Challenging, self-understanding, self-power, doubtless, free from fear of failure, advancement, protecting poor.	Self-empowerment, altruism, feeling of peace, national security, Enlightenment, significance in life.

There are 14 goal oriented values as peace, Universalization, enlightenment, positive feeling, family security, sense of accomplishment, pleasure, inner harmony, self-respect, salvation, self-empowerment, altruism, national security, significance in life. The extracted work values are more related to Rokeach's value system. Though the said values are related to prior studies

(Super, 1970; Zytowski, 1970; Rokeach, 1973; Jaw, Ling, Wang and Chang, 2006), it must be kept in mind that one should understand differential framework of work settings as thought of Tagore and of other researchers. This can be understood by analyzing work value postulates.

### **3. Work Value Related Postulates**

Like western authors, Tagore never thought of work value as the end-state like pay satisfaction or job security. Tagore's work setting is different from the western researchers. Like western researchers, work is not assigned task by others rather it is an organized goal directed playful activities coming from within. Therefore, the economic returns, relation with supervisors, prestige values were absent in Tagore's work related values. To him, work is the process to enlighten self. It is predetermined by the creator of all works so we are just followers. It is organized by the supreme authority. The more we work, the more we understand ourselves, the less will be our self-doubt. Work gives significance in life. It is the process of inquiry or inquisitiveness. Therefore, work beholder must be fearless, challenging, inquisitive to know the self.

### **4. Discussions**

Though the study focuses on script analysis to explore work related values out of Rabindrasangeet, it is able to extract 14 path and 13 goal oriented work related values. The extracted values are in favour of researches based on sample survey research with questionnaire or checklist in western countries. Tagore developed own techniques to understand value systems. When western researchers paid attention to survey methods to explore work values, Tagore paid attention to the songs and its synchronizing effect on surroundings to understand values. All the values are useful in people management as they create intrinsic motivation or provide psychological fulfillment within the workers. The values are effective to be the supportive, innovative and transcendental leader in the organization who will pay attention to the psychological fulfillment of the workers during managing the organization. Future research in the direction of exploring work values from different performing arts will help the managers to manage people following culture specific values.

### **5. References**

1. Bardi, A, and Schwartz, S H (2003). Values and behaviour: Strength and structure of relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29 (10), pp 1207-1220.
2. Jaw, B. S., Ling, Y. H., Wang, C. Y. P., & Chang, W. C. (2006). The impact of culture on Chinese employees' work values. *Personnel Review*, 36(1), pp 128-144.
3. Hofstede, G. (1980a). *Cultural consequences: International differences in work-related value*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
4. Homer, P M, and Kahle, L R (1988). A structural equation test of the value-attitude behavior hierarchy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, pp 638-646.

5. King, A. Y. C., & Bond, M. H. (1985). The Confucian paradigm of man: A sociological view. In W. Tseng & D. Y. H. Wu (Eds.), *Chinese culture and mental health: An overview*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
6. Mottaz, C. (1988) 'Determinants of Organizational Commitment', *Human Relations*, 41(6): pp 467–82.
7. Oliver, B L (1999). Comparing corporate managers' personal values over three decades, 1967-1995. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 20 (2), pp 147-161.
8. Putti, J.M., Aryee, S. and Liang, T.K. (1989) 'Work Values and Organisational Commitment: A Study in the Asian Context', *Human Relations* 42(3): pp 275–88.
9. Rocheach, M. (1973): *The nature of human values*. New York: The Free Press.
10. Schwartz, S H (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M P Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 1-65. San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.
11. Super, D. E. (1970). *Work Values Inventory manual*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
12. Super, D. E., & Super, C. (1957). *The psychology of careers*. New York: Harper.
13. Zytowski, D. G. (1970). The concept of work values. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, 18, 176-186.

### **Acknowledgment**

Authors deeply acknowledge contribution of Professor S. K. Chakraborty, Retd. Professor of IIM., Kolkata who give suggestions to interpret the script of Rabindra sangeet in proper fashion. Authors acknowledge contribution of Ms. Moukana Saha of Performing Art Therapy Centre, Rabindrabharati University for her contribution to write Bengali script in digital mode.