

Management Thoughts in Assamese Proverbs with Special Reference to Health Management

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Abstract

In Assam, Assamese society has the richest of folklore and folk literatures or oral literature like folk song, folk tale, proverbs, maxims, proverbial sayings i.e. sayings of Dak etc. All the components of folk literatures have been transmitted to them by their ancestors from generation to generation and have shaped and nurtured them till date. It is the collection of tales passed from generation to generation and from the old to the young by word of mouth. Though there are different components of folk literature in an Assamese society, here in this study, the researcher has emphasized mainly on Assamese proverbs. The present study concentrates only Assamese proverbs which are spoken in Assamese language. There are numerous Assamese proverbs some of which have already been documented or preserved, but still some are in oral form even today. In this study the researcher has tried to contextualize the Assamese proverbs from the management perspective and to explore the health management thoughts from the Assamese proverbs. The result signifies that there is a great potential to use these proverbs as a base for developing management thoughts.

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Introduction

Management has achieved enviable importance in recent times. Management is an essential element in every organisation. It also plays a pivotal role in every aspect of life. It is a dynamic subject and management thinkers are developing new theories even today. It is getting the right things done in the right way, at the right time, by the right persons with the right number of resources and effective use of resources. The importance of studying management thought consists of the knowledge of the basic theory of management, helping problem-solving, increasing managerial efficiency etc. Assamese community has the richest folklore and folk literature or oral literature like folk songs, folk tales, proverbs, proverbial sayings like the sayings or maxims of *Dak* etc. Folk literature is transmitted from generation to generation, shaping and nurturing our society. It is a collection of tales passed from generation to generation and from the old to the young by word of mouth. There are many ethnic terms or proverbs, invariably known as *prabaad*, *prabachan*, *phakara jojanaa*, *dristaanta* and *patantar*, which have been accepted in the Assamese community.

Though there are different components of folk literature in Assamese society, in this research work, the researcher has emphasised mainly on Assamese proverbs. The Assamese proverbs are vital to the Assamese folklore. Most of these proverbs are found in one or two -line verse forms containing assailable truths; hence, their popularity and importance have remained strong. The significance of these proverbs in solving various business, economic, social, monetary, family, health, agriculture and all other life-related issues cannot be denied. They have been used since time immemorial, guiding and advising simple rural folks in their daily lives. The present study intends to identify and explore the management thoughts contained in the Assamese proverbs. The study has tried to

contextualise the Assamese proverbs from the management perspective and to identify the health management thoughts in proverbs.

Review of Literature

Konch J.C. (1990) in his book “*Asomiya Bhasar Alankar Fokora Jojona*” reveals that proverbs are a resource of the Assamese language. The author described proverbs as the wisdom of many and the wit of one. They are, in effect, the capsule wisdom, the distilled knowledge of the people. They are also based on observation, experience or, without being first-hand, accepted as applicable truisms on a hand-me-down basis from the past. This book mentions sixteen hundred three numbers of proverbs in different fields related to human life and also briefly discusses their applicability.

Lauhakangas O. (2007) in his study on “Use of Proverbs and Narrative Thought” states that the functions of proverbs in social interactions. The study discusses the power of different rationality in using proverbs, the narrative strength of proverbs in social contexts, and the functions of proverbs seen through seven paradoxes, i.e. predictability, safety, detachment, maintenance of hierarchy and control, relieving situations, a uniform way of thinking and identity of a community. Although the study focuses on the use of proverbs or proverb-like sayings, namely on their functions of them in social interaction, one will find questions concerning the same themes as in folk narrative research in general: selective memory, reconstruction of experiences, explaining and reasoning about the past, giving instructions and warnings for the future, encouraging or amusing each other, etc. The study also indicates that proverbs are multifunctional and flexible instruments of everyday reasoning, although they may maintain solidified attitudes or traditional modes of thought of a specific culture.

In the research work of Muniapa B. (2008) on “Managerial Effectiveness from the Perspectives of the *Bhagavad-Gita*” attempts to explore managerial effectiveness from the perspectives of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which presents one of the Indian (Vedic) views on managerial effectiveness. The study reveals that the philosophy of *Bhagavad-Gita* should not be viewed from spiritual perspectives only, but also as a guide in developing managerial effectiveness. The findings of the study show that the scope, content and context of managerial effectiveness are wide. The study discusses about three basic principles on improving managerial effectiveness from the selected verses from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. These three principles are mind management, management of duty and the principles of self-management.

Nachimuthu (2008) in his study on “Management Philosophies in *Ramayana*” attempts to explore and find the several management philosophies in the famous epic, the *Ramayana*. The study discusses management concepts such as planning, organising, staffing, directing and organisational behaviour. The study concludes that ancient Indian wisdom and sculptures have plenty of management concepts, and modern managers must learn and appreciate them.

Rajguru H. (1972) in his book “*Asomia Pravada*” has addressed a comprehensive compilation of Assamese proverbs and adages with an elaborate introduction. The author has picked up and collated such six thousand Assamese proverbs and all proverbs were analytically explained his book. According to author proverb may be described as a condensed parable of wisdom hailed down into essence from generation to generation.

Ramani M. (2017) in his study “An Analytical Study of Management Thoughts in *Kamba Ramayana*” examines the existence of management thoughts in *Kamba Ramayana*, an ancient Indian Tamil Literature, to establish a relationship between ancient management thoughts from *Kamba Ramayana* with the contemporary management thoughts. This particular research work made an analytical study by examining some selected verses of *Kamba Ramayana*. This research work has found the

existence of management thoughts on planning and organizing. It is explained with reference to the meaning and elucidated by quoting with recent courses in management. The study has some selected stanzas of *Kamba Ramayana* which were required for analysis of the relevance of management thoughts on directing and controlling.

Zigarell M. (2008) in his book on “Management by Proverbs: Scriptural Wisdom for Superior Results” stated that the proverbs praise and encourage others. In particular, they teach us the value of praise and specifics about how and when to offer it. They are remarkably practical advice and strikingly transcendent. The study is comprised of six different parts; each part covers various principles. These parts lay a foundation for success, excel at the essentials, build a competitive workforce, cultivate a culture of commitment, measure and reward performance and control workplace conflict.

The research objectives considered in the study are i) To contextualise the Assamese proverbs from the management perspective, 2) To explore the health management thoughts in Assamese proverbs, and 3) To assess the philosophical base of these proverbs and the extent of their uses in forming management thoughts.

Research Question

Based on the review of related literature, research question is formulated to be addressed in the study - Are there any significant indicators relating to management thoughts in Assamese proverbs?

Database and Methodology

The present study deals with the Assamese proverbs practised among the people of the Assamese community and entire Assamese folks. The study is a humble and sincere effort of the researcher to find out the management thoughts contained in the Assamese proverbs. The study is interpretative and exploratory. The choice of research method primarily depends on the research questions and the type of data the researcher wants to collect. The data for the present research work has been collected from secondary sources i.e. from relevant books written by various Assamese eminent authors, relevant literature by scholars. More than a hundred nos. of Assamese proverbs are published in books associated with different subject matters. However, in this study, the researcher has selected and collected a total of nine Assamese proverbs which are mostly related to health care of an individual.

Results and Discussion

Following are the important proverbs which are directly related to health care management. The meanings and interpretation of these Assamese proverbs have been discussed below and it is pertinent to mention that the below mention proverbs have been marked as **P-1, P-2.....** and so on. (**P-1: Proverb No 1**)

(P- 1)

Deha thakilehe beha

(Only a healthy body allows you to perform well in all affairs of your life.)

This proverb means that only a physically healthy person can engage in commercial/economic activities. Health is compared to wealth and money because only a healthy person can have the will to do something and achieve success in life. On the other hand, when we are unhealthy and sick, we cannot concentrate well on our duties. We become compelled to spend our time and money on regaining lost health. Thus, our expenditure will be more on our health concerns. So, appropriate care should be taken for our health to perform our activities well.

Health is wealth. Good health is the key to happiness. We must follow a great quote in health by Mahatma Gandhi: “health is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.” This Assamese proverb warns us to be cautious and conscious about our health. It

sensitises us to remain free from diseases and to stay healthy. Therefore, remaining alert and taking proper care of our health is of utmost importance in managing our health. This Assamese proverb teaches an individual to take proper care of his health as a healthy person can work hard to prosper in life and thus brings financial success. Likewise, the owner and all the employees of a business organisation must strive for health because it is only their good health that will permit them to prove their efficiency.

(P- 2)

Bachi khaba, jaagi huba

(Be vigilant anywhere and at any time.)

This proverb advises that before performing any task, a person must proceed carefully, consciously and reasonably to succeed in that particular task. Similarly, before eating anything, we must always be careful and moderate as overeating harms our health and body. It is also essential to eat healthy foods and avoid unhealthy ones. This proverb teaches us the importance of healthy, hygienic foods to prevent human diseases. Therefore, this proverb suggests eating adequate food to remain healthy. Also, it instructs to maintain alertness during the day and night. These are the prerequisites for a quality lifestyle.

(P-3)

Una bhate duna bal, adhik bhate rakhatal

(Balanced eating habit makes a healthy body, whereas overeating makes a body a storehouse of disease.)

“*Una vat*” means less rice and “*duna bal*” means double strength. It is very important to maintain a balanced diet to remain healthy. Gluttony is injurious to health. Whatever a person eats, he must not eat full stomach and keep a portion of his stomach empty to sustain good health. A person should fill half of his stomach with food, one part to be filled with water and the other part; he should be kept empty to remain healthy. This Assamese proverb is related to handling health management because to remain healthy and strong, it is very important to maintain a balanced diet and to take care of our health by using moderate eatables.

Excess of anything is always bad - this is what this particular proverb suggests. If a man overeats, he will feel lethargic and will have no mood to work. On the other hand, adequate and quality food helps one to remain healthy and productive. Maintaining a limit in eating is necessary to maintain good health and manage our health problems as overeating causes serious damage to our internal organs like the liver and kidneys.

(P-4)

Gaa bhale mon bhal

(A sound mind entirely depends on a sound body/a sound mind is only possible in a healthy.)

This Assamese proverb means that only a healthy person has a sound mind. When a person is healthy, no diseases can hurt him. A healthy person can perform his tasks well than an unhealthy person. The human body and mind are dependent and interrelated with each other. So, we must take appropriate care of our health, especially if we all strictly maintain regular exercise, good eating habits and sound sleep at night. There is a saying that only in a wonderful body, there will be a great mind. So, we all need a healthy body and a sound mind to develop every activity in life.

(P-5)

Alop bemarot nidie owsad, bistor hole hoi maha bipod

(Negligence to any ailment during the initial stage of its occurrence may lead to dire consequences.)

This Assamese proverb warns us to take care of our health and seek medical help at the preliminary stage of any sickness. If proper medicine or treatment is administered at the initial stage, there is less chance of further completion. This proverb tells us always to be conscious of our health even when we think we are healthy. There may be some

underlying health-related issues. This proverb has a strong message, especially for those who do not take proper care of their health. Medicines should be used as early as possible and consulting a doctor is necessary whenever a person suffers from an illness, especially in the present age, when our immune system is not strong due to our poor eating habits and pollution. This proverb has a health management thought which teaches us that appropriate health care should be taken and it is better to prevent diseases than to cure them.

This Assamese proverb makes it clear it is better to take medicines at the earliest stage of any disease so that the disease will not become severe. Therefore, whenever we see any disease symptoms, we should not neglect but consult a doctor immediately.

(P- 6)

Tenga khai nakhai pani, jome manuhe tanatani

(Do not drink water after eating citrus fruits; otherwise, there will be a tug-of-war between men and the god of death.)

This Assamese proverb advises that we should never drink water after eating acidic fruits because it harms our health and body. Acids may penetrate inside our body with water causing severe damage to our internal organs and sensitive tissues. It may eventually become poisonous, resulting in even the death of that particular person. So, it is necessary to avoid it.

It sounds almost over the top that we have a popular saying that warns about eating fruit, but Assam is home to many varieties of citrus fruits, and people love to eat them. People's love for these fruits may pose serious health concerns, that are the premise of this proverb, and it cautions people that they should exercise caution while eating them. A seemingly innocuous fruit may become deadly if we couple it with other elements.

(P-7)

Bhukat bhat piahot pani, tak nakhale bal hoi haani

(To maintain body strength, take adequate food and water at the right time and when needed.)

This is one of the most important Assamese proverbs, which declares that if we do not eat and drink at the right time, we will become weak and lose our strength and stamina. In this busy world, some people remain so busy that they forget to eat timely and suffer later from various health problems. To maintain good health, we must eat and drink when we are hungry and thirsty. We must have a timetable for eating because rice and water provide us with the energy to do day-to-day work. This proverb teaches us that a person should always take his food on time to maintain good health and remain strong.

(P-8)

Sunkale huba, sunkale uthiba, tehe dehor santi paba

(Going to bed early and getting up early in the morning help a man to lead a more successful life in terms of health, wealth and wisdom.)

This proverb emphasises getting up early in the morning and going to sleep early as well. Waking up early, if one does some physical exercises and breathes fresh air, will remain healthy and active for a long period. With a healthy body, a man can work efficiently and have better financial status.

This Assamese proverb indicates the health benefits of sleeping early and waking up early in the morning. A person receives much when he wakes up early. He can do his work on time; he becomes healthier and wiser by waking up early. Therefore, sleeping early and waking up early are particularly important for managing our health well.

(P-9)

Bhara petat fal, khali petat jal

(Take fruit and water during some specific time of the day.)

The Assamese people believed that when your stomach is full, eat fruits; and when your stomach is empty, drink water. After eating food, it is good to eat fruits that help

digestion. At night and in the morning when your stomach is empty, it is good for your health to drink water. This Assamese proverb teaches us that fruits and water are essential to remaining healthy.

The proverb highlights that eating fruits on a full stomach and drinking water on an empty stomach is good for health. Therefore, we should fruit to maintain good health, as fruits provide us with many vitamins and supplements. Similarly, drinking water on an empty stomach is good for our health. Therefore, the maximum health benefit is achieved when we follow this advice.

Various health management thoughts discussed here place importance on maintaining an individual's good health. The suggestions and practices put forward here teach an individual the importance and means of remaining healthy. Good health is the prerequisite for success both in the personal and professional field, and the absence of it will bring failure. The Assamese folk which are very much associated with the Assamese proverbs follow the principles suggested in these proverbs and thus can maintain good health. The study also explains the proverbs' literal meaning as well as their implications in business and organisation management, has been explained.

Findings of the Study

The findings from the Assamese proverbs related to health management are cited as under-

- The proverb 'Only a healthy body allows you to perform well in all affairs of your life' unveils that only a physically healthy person can engage in commercial/economic activities. It has been revealed that remaining alert from various health-related issues and taking proper care of our health is of utmost importance in managing our health. A healthy person can work hard to prosper in life, thus bringing financial success. Likewise, the owner and all the employees of a business organisation must strive for health because it is only their good health that will permit them to prove their efficiency.
- One of the Assamese proverbs, 'Balanced eating habit makes a healthy body whereas overeating makes a body a storehouse of disease', is related to handling health management. The saying stresses that a balanced diet is necessary to remain healthy and strong and to take care of our health by using moderate eatables. Excess of anything is harmful to health. If anyone overeats, they will feel lethargic and unable to work with complete attention. But on the other hand, adequate and quality food helps one to remain healthy.
- It is revealed that a healthy person can perform his task well than an unhealthy person. Without a healthy body, there cannot be a sound mind. So, we must take appropriate care of our health, especially if we all strictly maintain regular exercise, good eating habits and sound sleep at night. A man with a healthy body and mind can work efficiently in his daily life. If the employees of an organisation are enjoying good physical and mental health, they can render their perfect services, which will lead the organisation to the highest level. Similarly, in a business organisation, a physically fit person with a sound mind can contribute to the company's success.
- The proverb 'Negligence to any ailment during the initial stage of its occurrence may lead to dire consequences' advises us to take care of our health and seek medical help at the preliminary stage of any sickness. Proper medicine or treatment at the initial stage reduces the risk of further completion. This proverb has a strong message, especially for those who do not take proper care of their health and suffers a lot. Like with health, if any problem or severe issue emerges in business management, it should be dealt with immediately.

- One of the Assamese proverbs, 'Habits of going to bed early and getting up early in the morning, it helps a man to lead a more successful life in terms of health, wealth and wisdom,' depicts that one should make it a habit of getting up early in the morning and going to sleep early. Waking up early, if one does some physical exercises and breathes fresh air, one will remain healthy and active for a long time.

Health Management Philosophy

The present study deals with the health management philosophy found in these Assamese proverbs and their applicability in the health care of an individual in their personal and professional lives. The philosophy of health care management concerns giving the common people correct health knowledge to reduce risky behaviour and help them to better lives. Some of the Assamese proverbs highlight about the person's personal and professional life. However, some of them have found to be applicable in personal life only. The attributes of Assamese proverbs are to develop healthy attitudes towards health. The rural Assamese folk of Assam are ardent followers of Assamese proverbs which teach them how to maintain good health by following the philosophical ideas lying behind them.

Perfect health is a necessary pre-requisite for personal and professional life. (Source: P-1)

A physically healthy person can engage in any commercial and economic activity. This health management philosophy teaches an individual to take proper care of his health as a healthy person can work hard to prosper in life and thus brings financial success.

When it is said that only a healthy body allows an individual to do his commercial and economic activities well, it stresses an important health philosophy. If we preserve our health, avoid illness and avoid risky behaviour, our engagement with our business activity will be continuous and up to the level of expectation. If the employees of an organisation are enjoying good physical and mental health, they can render their perfect services which will lead the organisation to the highest level. Therefore, the owner and all the employees of a business enterprise should strive for health because it is only their good health that will permit them to prove their efficiency.

Besides being vigilant, one should have moderate eating habits (Source: P-3)

A prominent health philosophy which is put forward by Assamese proverbs gives the idea that by controlling our diet we can remain free from various health-related problems. It is suggested that we should take an adequate amount of food for everybody.

The proverb concerned superficially bears the idea that we should remain awake while we sleep. In reality, the philosophy that lies behind this idea is that one should be vigilant all the time of the day. Success in both personal and professional life also depends on eating habits. It is suggested to develop moderate eating habits to remain healthy. Such a man is never surprised by disasters. One should also select the things properly that he should eat. We must always be careful and moderate as overeating is injurious to our health and body. It is also essential to eat healthy foods and avoid unhealthy ones. The proverb advises that before performing any task, a person must proceed carefully, consciously and reasonably to succeed in that particular task.

A sound mind dwells in a healthy body (Source: P-4)

The philosophy lies here says that only a healthy person has a sound mind. A healthy person can perform his task well than an unhealthy person. Without a healthy body, there cannot be a sound mind.

Lord Buddha said, *"To keep the body in good health is a duty...otherwise we shall not be able to keep the mind strong and clear"*. The Assamese proverb deals with health not only physical and mental health. We know that physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness for living a happy and peaceful life. If the employees of an organisation are enjoying good physical and mental health, they can render their perfect services which will lead the organisation to the highest level. Similarly, in a business

organisation, a physically fit person with a sound mind can contribute enough to the company's success.

Combat a disease at the initial stage before it becomes too big (Source: P-5)

The philosophy of health care urges us to take care of our health and seek medical help at the preliminary stage of any sickness. If proper medicine or treatment is administered at the initial stage, there is less chance of further complications. The proverb has a health management thought which teaches us that appropriate care for health should be taken and it is better to prevent diseases than to cure them. Likewise, if any problem or serious issue emerges in business management, it should be dealt with immediately; otherwise, it will grow bigger and go out of control for the management. Prevention is better than cure. Here we get on a universal idea about healthcare management. It is better to develop the immune system of an individual by taking naturally available food. If one enjoys a strong immunity, he can prevent disease in the days to come. It is better to protect our health beforehand than wait for the diseases to attack and visit the doctor.

Take meals at the appropriate time (Source: P-7)

Another important philosophy put forward by the Assamese proverbs expresses that one should eat and drink at the right time every day. Good health and the right eating habit at the right time is complementary to each other. This philosophy applies to a business organisation also. Doing the right thing at the right time will bring the desired result. If work and timing do not match, the organisation may not achieve the expected result; there should be a schedule to follow regarding the business activities undertaken by a company or an organisation.

Early to rise and early to bed. (Source: P-8)

This health management philosophy stresses the importance of getting up early in the morning and going to sleep early. Waking up early, if one does some physical exercises and breathes fresh air, one will remain healthy and active for a long time. The health management philosophy indicates the health benefits of sleeping early and waking up early in the morning. Therefore, the Assamese folks follow health management principles like sleeping early and waking up early to gain health and wisdom.

Eat fruits on a full stomach and drink water on an empty stomach (Source: P-9))

This principle teaches us that fruits and water is essential to remain healthy. It is seen from this philosophy that eating fruits on a full stomach and drinking water on an empty stomach is good for health.

The health management philosophy brings to light some important health management thoughts and principles ranging from the selection of eatable items, the amount to be taken, the time of taking the food item and also the things to be avoided by the people to maintain a healthy and balanced life. Moreover, by maintaining a good immune system, he or she will be a true service provider for the welfare of society.

Conclusion

Health management is an important part of life management and it is utmost importance nowadays. It is necessary to be health conscious, remain free from diseases, take prevention, maintain cleanliness, and eat healthy foods. Hygiene is needed to manage our health properly. Assamese proverbs give lots of ideas about health management, which are useful for maintaining better health. They teach us to be moderate in eating as overeating is harmful to health. They show the effect of herbal remedies in the matter of health concerns and advise the appropriate care of our health management to stay healthy.

The study highlighted various management thoughts on the health and well-being of the people in institutions and organisations. The basic thoughts which have come out from the present study are about health-care management of an individual in his personal as well as professional life. The performance of healthy employees of an organisation is

likely to be higher and more productive than those who are sick and unhealthy. Just like capital and other necessary resources, the health of the employees in an organisation is of great importance. Here the concept of health does not merely refer to physical health. It reflects psychological and overall well-being. These particular Assamese proverbs help us to understand proper healthcare management. Applying the essence of these proverbs can guide everyone in effectively managing their daily health care.

Furthermore, Assamese proverbs have dealt with ethics and processes of taking food items consumed by the people of Assamese society. For example, these sayings guide the people on when to be eaten and when not, and how much to be eaten and how much not. Although it is not been tested scientifically but widely it is been practiced among the rural people of Assam. Thus, the study addresses management thoughts hidden in the Assamese proverbs.

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