the panchatantra code

BECOME A SUPER STAR AT WORK

Why should you read this book?

I used to think that hard work and talent were enough to succeed in the corporate world. I was proved wrong by DeceptiveGlow.

But who am I? My name is Siddharth*. I am one of the leaders at DeceptiveGlow today. But when I joined DeceptiveGlow I was just a fresher with lots of dreams. I was from a family which taught me the value of hard work, talent and being ethical. When I joined, I was shocked to see corporate politics, unethical practices and back-biting. My growth stalled. I also didn't want to stoop down to play the dirty politics . I couldn't change the system as all the power was vested with the wrong people. I was very close to losing myself.

Then, I discovered Panchatantra through my mentor Dr. Vishnusharma. With the help of Panchatantra and Dr. Vishnusharma I grew through the organization to become a senior leader. Over this journey I also made sure DeceptiveGlow was one of the most ethical companies in this world. I call this 'Dharmic success'.

I gained a lot of **respect, recognition, growth, power and success** in this process. This book is about what I learnt from Panchatantra and how you can also apply it to your work life as well.

* Siddharth is a fictional character based on real professionals

How to benefit from this book?

1. Take our FREE assessment*
2. Read this book
3. Learn the lessons (26)
4. Work on the workbooks (26)
5. Read and Reflect on 100+ Nitis
6. Practice what you learnt at work
7. Earn respect, recognition, growth , power and dharmic success at work
8. Become a super star at work

* If you haven't taken our FREE Dharmic success assessment, take the assessment by scanning the QR code above.

Why did we write this book?

We have written this book for **talented and hardworking young and mid-career professionals** so that

1. They can become a super star at work.

2. They can play the corporate game and reach their potential with their conscience intact.

3. Good people can also get into powerful positions where they can make a positive difference to the world.

We have tried to create a quality product to the best of our abilities. However, if you find something we have to correct, we apologize for it and we are happy to correct.

Please reach out to storyteller@storydharma.com for any feedback.

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Part I
introduction

What is Panchatantra?

When I was growing up, I used to read Panchatantra stories from Amar Chitra Katha books. And I have been told many stories from the Panchatantra by my grandmother and my mother. All along I had thought Panchatantra was just a collection of moral stories for children. I could not have been more wrong. For you to get most out of this book, you need to first understand what Panchatantra is.

Panchatantra is an ancient Indian Sanskrit text which belongs to a collection of books falling under Nitisastra. 'Niti 'here means that which sustains the worldly life. It covers a lot of topics which helps us optimize our worldly life.

Panchatantra also falls under 'Arthasaastra'. Artha here means money or wealth. Panchatantra provides us with lessons to live well in the world of commercials.

First, Panchatantra is not for children. It was written for Princes to become prudent rulers. We will see why this is so shortly. Therefore, it has lot of lessons for today's professionals as well.

Second, Panchatantra is not a collection of 'moral' stories. It teaches street-smartness. Sometimes it prescribes what we would think unethical. Sometimes it clearly tells us that the world is not just. It doesn't talk about just talent but helps us understand the role of luck in ensuring worldly success.

Third, Panchatantra is not just a collection of 'stories.' Only a third of Panchatantra is made up of stories. The remaining are verses and slokas on life lessons helping us level up in the world of commerce or Artha.

As a side note, although it is not very clear who wrote Panchatantra, the text states a person called Vishnusharma who had created this. Vishnugupta is another name for Chanakya. Is Vishnusharma same as Vishnugupta? Is Vishnusharma a pen name for Vishnugupta? We don't know. There are parallels between some topics covered in Arthasastra written by Chanakya and what Panchatantra covers.

So, reading Panchatantra is as good as getting coached by Chanakya in a fun way.

Is Panchatantra relevant today?

Ok I can clearly see. You say , Sriram, Panchatantra could have been written for Princes to become effective rulers. But how does it make that relevant to today's corporate setting? At best it will have lessons for Kings during ancient times, right?
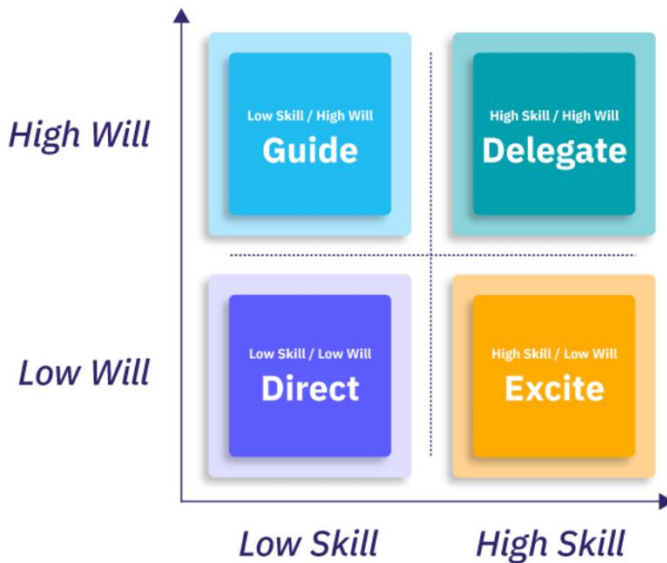
Well, my short answer is that , although society has changed , culture has changed and technology and science has progressed, people haven't changed much. What was true 2500 years ago about human nature still remains the same. Still not convinced?

Let me show you three ideas from Panchatantra which is going to make you nod your head and go wanting for more.

Example #1

If you have been an individual contributor , I am going to let you in on a dirty little secret. The skill-will matrix. If you had attended any leadership program one of the key frameworks they teach is called the 'Skill-Will matrix'. This is how the Skill-will matrix looks.

The Skill Will Matrix

	Low Skill	High Skill
High Will	Low Skill / High Will — **Guide**	High Skill / High Will — **Delegate**
Low Will	Low Skill / Low Will — **Direct**	High Skill / Low Will — **Excite**

Put simply, People in organizations fall under 4 buckets segregated by their level of skill/Competence and by their level of Will/Commitment. As a leader your approach would change for People with high will and low skill vs People with high skill and low will and so on. I am not going to go into whether this is right or whether it works etc. Let us look at a scenario in Panchatantra.

A Jackal (potentially an old employee) which has been exiled from inner power circle of a King (i.e. it doesn't have any power or voice), approaches the lion and questions the Lion about why the Jackal had been outcasted.

The Jackal points out to the Lion.

bhaktaṃ śaktaṃ ca māṃ rājan nāvajñātuṃ tvam arhasi

"I am both <u>competent</u> and <u>committed</u>, you cannot ignore me"

To that the King replies.

Bhavatvevam tāvat, asamarthaḥ samarthaḥ vā

Let it be thus, for the time being, whether one is incompetent or competent."

If you watch closely, the Jackal seems to know the Skill-Will matrix. It says I am competent and committed. One who is competent and Committed cannot be ignored. To that the king , responds with a sly remark about the jackal's competence. It doesn't question its commitment. Typically the Lion should be guiding the Jackal in this case according to the Skill-Will matrix, but it has kept the Jackal at bay.

Another important nuance are the words used by the Jackal and Lion to mean competence. 'Saktam' and 'samartah'. Let us look at how these words are derived in Sanskrit to know the powerful thought process of our ancestors.

Śaktam (शक्तम्) (used by the Jackal)

Root: Derived from the root "śak" (शक्), meaning "to be able" or "to have power."

Meaning: Refers to strength, capability, or power in a general sense. It often emphasizes potential or energy.

It is often used in reference to physical or inherent power.

Samarthaḥ (समर्थः): (used by the lion)

Root: Derived from "sam" (सम्) meaning "together" or "complete," and "artha" (अर्थ) meaning "purpose" or "meaning."

Meaning: Refers to being competent, efficient, or fit for a purpose. It emphasizes proficiency or effectiveness.

It refers to practical capability or expertise, beyond just potential.

Key Difference:

Śaktam highlights raw strength or potential ability (can be latent or active).

Samarthaḥ emphasizes practical competence and efficiency in achieving a purpose.

Analogy

1. A powerful car engine is **śaktam** (it has the strength to run fast).
2. A skilled driver is **samarthaḥ** (he knows how to use that power effectively).

So, the King is able to point out why the Jackal was ousted in the first place. It is not just competence. But effectiveness. The Jackal has the potential, but the King wants fit for purpose or effectiveness. This is one up on Western management ideas.

Ok, let us look at the next example.

<u>Example #2</u>

What do you think are the reasons people leave a manager? If you are a leader/manager think about the last time when people in your team left. If you are an individual contributor, think about why you will leave your manager. Done thinking? Let's see what Panchatantra has to say about this.

The same Jackal we saw earlier is now starting to throw some punches back to the lion. Here's what he states.

asamaiḥ samīyamānaḥ samaiś ca parihīyamāṇa-sat-kāraḥ |
dhuri yo na yujyamānas tribhir artha-patiṃ tyajati bhṛtyaḥ

Explanation

People leave their leaders for 3 reasons

1. Treating equals unequally
2. Treating unequals equally
3. Not employing people to their potential

If you are a leader , this is a very simple framework to retain your employees. If you are an individual contributor , open you eyes and ears and appreciate the difficult balance your managers are trying to get done in the world of 'curve-fitting' appraisals.

OK, we have seen two examples on the 'Skill-will' matrix and retaining employees. Now, let us look at one on 'executing an Idea' or 'Project Management'.

Example 3:

In another episode, the Jackal's idea had gone into a zone where nobody knows what would happen. In short it had not thought about all the consequences of his ideas. There is another Jackal who is his friend and alter-ego who points out this mistake. In this context, Panchatantra offers a brilliant framework to think about execution of Ideas called '*mantragati*' or in short 'The movement or flow of thought, plan, or discourse'.

Panchavidho hi matrah, sa ca

1. *Karmaṇām ārambha upāyaḥ.*
2. *Puruṣadravyasampat*
3. *Deśakālavibhāgaḥ*
4. *Vinipāta Pratikāraḥ*
5. *Kāryasiddhi*

One has to think about these 5 aspects when one is executing something

1. How to start the execution?
2. Who are the People and Material required to execute?
3. When and where should the work happen?
4. What can go wrong? How to mitigate?
5. Attainment of a goal (outcomes)

The Jackal points out risk mitigation or *Vinipāta Pratikāraḥ* as the flaw in the current plan to the other Jackal.

Imagine this. This was written 2500 years ago. If you apply this even today, your endeavours will be successful. I am equally humbled and proud to have been born in such a civilization which has such insight and also having this brought this book to fruition. Now, I am hoping you are convinced on the applicability of lessons from Panchatantra for today's world.

Before we jump into actual lessons, we have to cover a little bit of ground on introducing the Panchatantra, how this book is organized and structured for you to get the maximum benefit from this.

What does the Panchatantra contain?

Earlier, I had mentioned that Panchatantra was written for Princes. We will cover this at length in our first lesson. However, I am providing a short version here to give you more context to understand the structure of Panchatantra. This part is called '*Kathamukha*' in Panchatantra.

Once upon a time, there was a king, who had three sons. All three were dumb. So, he was worried he didn't have any rightful heir. He, then asks his ministers for help. They refuse, afraid to take up such a task. One of his minsters suggests Vishnusharma. Vishnusharma takes up the challenges to make the dumb princes , wise kings in 6 months time. For their sake, he creates the Panchatantra and starts teaching them wisdom through animal stories. This is how Panchatantra was created.

As you would have already noted, it covers a lot of ground from Leadership to Project management. Vishnusharma calls his story-based teaching as 'Saraswati Vinodha' or an innovative experiment in teaching. But what is he teaching? Where does the content come from?

Vishnusharma himself gives us a clue.

Sakalārthaśāstrasāraṃ samālokya Viṣṇuśarmedam Tantraiḥ pañcabhiretacchakāra sumanoharaṃ śāstram

"Having examined the essence of all treatises on polity and wisdom, Vishnu Sharma created this delightful scripture, consisting of five tantras (sections)."

So, the wisdom or the content is coming from all the Arthasaastras at the time of writing 'Panchantantras'. So reading this is as good as reading all arthasaastras. We know one of the 'Arthasaastra' was written by Chanakya. Do we have others? I will leave that exploration to you.

Now, Panchatantra means 'Five tantras' or '5 Strategies'. What are they?

1. **Mitra-bheda**: The Loss of Friends

2. **Mitra-labha**: The Winning of Friends

3. **Kakolookiyam**: On Crows and Owls

4. **Labdhapranasam**: Loss of Gains

5. **Apariksitakarakam**: Ill-Considered Action

In this book, we will be covering the first tantra (Mitra-bhedha). Each tantra consists of a **framing story** which runs along the length of the book. Then there are **shorter stories within the framing story** narrated by characters in the framing story.

There are lessons in the framing story as well as the shorter stories within the framing story. We have picked 26 key lessons from the first book (Mitra Bhedha) , which are applicable for today's modern work place and have presented them in this book. The hacks/ lessons cover '**ways to handle yourself**', '**ways to handle others**' and **'ways to handle your work**'.

We also provide workbooks and nitis (short sound bites) from Panchatantra to help you practice and reflect the lessons at work. You have to scan the QR code to access and download them. As we said, this is a very different type of book. You can gain a lot by just reading through. But, true results will come from doing the workbooks and reading and reflecting on the Nitis.

At this point, you might be thinking , there are so many books which look at Indian wisdom. What's so different about this?

How this book is different?

First, let us start from the source and its application. Typically, authors take a philosophical literature (Bhagavad Gita) or characters from Epics and interpret them to corporate context. This book is different. The source is Panchatantra which is written with leadership and management in mind. And the lessons are not interpreted, they are given verbatim in the core text.

Second, the form of this book is not dry teaching. It is presented as a business story making it easy to read and remember.

Third, this is a Phygital experience. We have an online assessment. You can read this book in physical or digital form, scan QR codes to download workbooks to work on, we have stories presented in Comic form, we have digital trophies you can collect by answering questions and then we have the 100+ nitis collection which are lessons in short poetry form with translation.

Fourth, just as the source , this book doesn't shy away from stating the facts. The lessons in this book will fall under three buckets.

Some lessons, you will say 'I know this' already.

Some lessons, you will say 'It might not work in my Organization'.

Some lessons, you will ask 'Isn't that unethical?'

Some lessons, you will say 'Wow! That's awesome'.

Be rest assured, all of them work. It will make you a successful, no not just successful but a very dangerous and successful version of yourself without compromising on your conscience.

Now, let us start with the framing story of Mitra-Bhedha.