

# Shivaji Maharaj: An Indian Management Legend

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## Abstract

In history lot of Kings ruled India, but we are remembering very few of them. One Such king was Shivaji Maharaj. In medieval India, where Kings were not answerable for welfare of masses, where life of ordinary man had oppressed and demoralized, Shivaji Maharaj established a State where King was caretaker of ordinary persons. He roused the unrevealed capacities of youth. He created self-confidence and made them realize that it was noble to fight against the alien forces of bigotry and intolerance to preserve their cherished values of life. Shivaji Maharaj's enemies were well equipped, well-armed and with ample resources. However, Shivaji Maharaj with his handful of resources and brave, loyal Maratha people defeated his mighty enemies. Success story of Shivaji Maharaj revealed application of various modern management techniques, applied by Shivaji Maharaj in his struggle for establishment of Swaraj (homeland).

**Keywords:** Shivaji Maharaj, loyal Maratha, Swaraj, Modern Management Techniques

## Introduction

Medieval India was occupied by Mughals. Mughal Empire in India was founded by Babar in 1526. Later on it was extended & strengthened by Akbar. When Aurangzeb ascended the throne in 1658 it was extended from Kabul (now capital city of Afghanistan) to borders of Assam. In the south it was extended to river Bhima. On the other bank of river Bhima, there was Bahmani Empire. This empire ruled Deccan about 150 years and later on split into five states. Out of five states, nearly two-thirds of present Maharashtra was under the rulers of Admadnagar (Nizamshahi) and South Konkan, districts of present Western Maharashtra were under the rulers of Bijapur (Adilshahi).

Rulers in medieval India had only two tasks – maintaining an army and collection of taxes. Army was required to assert the ruler's right to suppress internal revolts, protect boundaries from external enemy, and if possible to extend the boundaries. Taxes were imposed to defray the cost of maintaining the army and ruler's living and luxury. The practice of assigning fiefs (jagirs) freed the ruler from

the tedious work of collection of taxes. Therefore, in medieval India the states were administered by jagirdars and watandars by hereditary. They were the persons who were responsible for collection of State taxes. By hook or crook they had to remit the revenue to the King and that led to oppression of people. By paying annul remittance to King, jagirdars enjoyed full freedom on the area under their control. That arrangement was beneficial to jagirdar, his officials like Deshmukh, Kulkarni, Patil etc. and King also but was resulted in the pitiable condition of masses. In other words, rulers were not responsible for welfare of the common man.

It was really surprising to note that, although the rulers and their stalwarts are handful of people, mostly of foreign extraction, they ruled on overwhelmingly Hindu population. They were cruel & used their religion to maintain their dominance. The Hindus had hardly any say in the governance of state and as such socially & culturally they were depressed. Due to the persecution & suppression of hundreds of years, Hindus accepted that the Muslims were rulers and Hindus were supposed to obey their regime.

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That was the political & social scenario of India, when Shivaji Maharaj started his struggle for Swaraj (homeland). Of course, his struggle for freedom was quite unequal because of prosperous, well established and well equipped opponents like Mughal Empire and Adilshahi. Initially, when he marched towards his goals, he had to struggle with many Hindu jagirdars because their interests were maintained in existing system of feudality.

### **Shivaji Maharaj's struggle for freedom**

Shivaji Maharaj was born in 1630 and was a son of Shahajiraje Bhosale. Adilshah of Bijapur granted fief (jagir) to Shahajiraje in Pune region. He, later on conferred this fief on Shivaji Maharaj as his agent under supervision of his trusted person namely, Dadoji Konddev. Shivaji Maharaj and his mother Jijabai took charge of the jagir at Pune by the end of 1640. The jagir comprised of Pune, Indapur, Supa and Chakanparganas (regions) excluding the forts of Kondana, Purandar, Torna etc., because the forts are under the control of officers directly appointed by Bijapur Government. It means, from the childhood, Shivaji Maharaj was associated with the administrative work of fief (jagir).

Shivaji Maharaj's mother Jijabai played vital role in development of Shivaji Maharaj. Under her guidance, he grew up, full of firm faith and devotion. Stories from Puranas, Ramayana & Mahabharata sprang up his devotion to his faith. The atmosphere of Pune jagir and adjacent Sahyadri hills bred in him a deep sense of independence. The terrain of Western Maharashtra, Sahyadri range of hills, narrow valleys, hurdles in movement of big army, huge rainfall..... All those provided an ideal setting for defensive struggle. Shivaji Maharaj had noted all these plus points in his continuous visits to different places in his jagir. He, later on came in contact with the young generation in the jagir. It was hardy, energetic and liberty loving. They might have discussed on various issues and exchanged thoughts. He roused the unrevealed capacities of young persons. He created in them self-confidence. He made them realize that it was noble to fight against the alien forces of bigotry and intolerance to preserve their cherished values of life. Shivaji Maharaj magnetized all who came into contact with him. He knew how to stir their hearts.

Shivaji Maharaj had understood the importance of the forts for the security of fief. Without forts, his possessions in the plains would always be futile. Shivaji Maharaj realized the fact that the essence of the whole kingdom is forts. However, forts in the fief are directly controlled by Bijapur and garrisoned properly.

He got the golden opportunity to capture forts when Muhammad Adilshah of Bijapur faced severe illness in 1646. Because of illness there was disorder in Bijapur court. There was absence of law and order in different regions of Bijapur. Under these circumstances, Shivaji

Maharaj captured the forts of Torana and Murumbgad. On seizure, Shivaji Maharaj started strengthening the forts. He then seized the fort of Kondhana peacefully by some diplomatic move. Extreme rapidity of movements was an important characteristic of his army. In fact many times Shivaji Maharaj's enemies were taken by surprise who thought him to be far off when he fell upon them.

The capture of forts like Torana and Kondana must have shocked the Bijapur. However, Shivaji Maharaj was very alert. He abruptly expanded his territory by bringing his control, the almost inaccessible Javli Valley region of Chandrarao More. Later on, the well planned killing of Afzalkhan on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1659, and massive destruction of Afzalkhan's army, enabled Shivaji Maharaj to expand his territory towards Panhala (Kolhapur) & towards Goa in Konkan.

Now the Bijapur felt the gravity of situation and they organized new army under the command of Siddi Jauhar. As Jauhar's army approached Panhala, Shivaji Maharaj's army made an attempt to divert them by a raid to the very gates of Bijapur. But the Panhala was tightly sieged by Jauhar. From March 1660 Shivaji Maharaj had been besieged by Jauhar at Panhala. He had hoped that with the advent of the rainy season, Jauhar would raise the siege. But undeterred by the rains Siddi Jauhar tightened the siege of the fort. While Shivaji Maharaj was busy resisting Jauhar at Paanhala, Shaistakhan, the Mughal Viceroy of Deccan, was marching from the Aurangabad to Pune to put down Shivji and annex Shivaji Maharaj's dominions. In fact the Adilshah himself had invited the Mughal army on loss of Panhala. In view of this, Shivaji Maharaj quietly slipped out of Panhala on the night of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1660 and went to Vishalgad. Siddi Jauhar stunned but his army came up in pursuit. Shivaji Maharaj left Baji Prabhu at the pass of Gajapur and went to Vishalgad. Baji Prabhu and his Bandal army fought bravely. Baji Prabhu was killed but he prevented the enemy from ascending the pass till Shivaji Maharaj reached the Vishalgad fort.

In the circumstances, Shivaji Maharaj realized that it was not possible to fight both the enemies at the same time on two fronts. So he decided to take a retreat and Rustam Zaman mediated between Shivaji Maharaj and Adilshah. As per treaty, Shivaji Maharaj returned Panhala fort to Adilshah. Thus Shivaji Maharaj freed himself to concentrate on Mughals.

The Mughals had spread in the area of Pune to Kalyan-Chaul. Shaistakhan was in Pune for three years and he did not show any inclination to leave that region. Pune had become the administrative and military headquarter of Mughals in the Deccan. The physical presence of Mughal army was creating a damaging effect on the people who are loyal to Shivaji Maharaj. But Shivaji Maharaj could not face the Mughal army in the open field. So Shivaji Maharaj decided to attack

Shaistakhan directly in his camp. To a great surprise he did so. On the night of 5<sup>th</sup> April 1663, Shivaji Maharaj with his selected men entered the camp of Shaistakhan and struck at the Khan and his men. In the attack, Shaistakhan's son Abdul Fateh was killed, Shaistakhan himself was wounded, losing his fingers. Forty of Khan's men, six of his wives and a captain killed. After the attack, Shivaji Maharaj escaped with a loss of six lives and forty wounded. The daring of the planning and the execution of attack created great sensation throughout India. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was deeply mortified and in great distress, Shaistakhan left Pune. The contemporary historian Bhimsen wrote that, no Raja had, prior to this, made such a daring attack on the Mughal Generals.

The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, therefore, appointed, Mirza Raja Jaising to put down Shivaji. He arrived at Aurangabad in February 1665. He planned his strategy and decided to isolate Shivaji Maharaj by throwing a ring round his territory, prevent him from breaking out into the Mughal territory, devastate his homeland and capture his forts, because he knows that the forts and rapid movements were the strength of Shivaji Maharaj. He decided to break this strength of Shivaji Maharaj. Mirza Raja Jaising succeeded in doing this. He blocked Shivaji Maharaj's movements and started devastation of his territory by flying columns. He was determined to bring Shivaji Maharaj to surrender. With this determination he created more and more unfavorable military condition to Shivaji Maharaj and thus forced him to surrender. Jaising had imposed very harsh conditions on Shivaji Maharaj. Shivaji Maharaj had no alternative. He had surrendered 23 forts with revenue of four lakh honas (approx. 20 lakh rupees) and only 12 forts with revenue of one lakh honas retained with Shivaji Maharaj on condition of service and loyalty to Mughal Empire. But in this treaty in the month of June 1665 with Jaising, Shivaji Maharaj had asserted that he would not be compelled to accept a manasab (fief) and he would not be required to attend the Mughal Court. However, Aurangzeb had ordered Jaising to send Shivaji Maharaj to Mughal Court. The risk in visiting a deceitful man like Aurangzeb was too great but Jaising had taken the most solemn oath for the safe return of Shivaji Maharaj from the Mughal Court and given orders to his son Ramsingh to escort Shivaji Maharaj at Agra.

Accordingly Shivaji Maharaj had arrived at Agra at Mughal Court on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1666. But the Emperor did not treat Shivaji Maharaj respectfully. In the Court, Shivaji Maharaj had been highly displeased with the treatment he had received so far and his eyes were filled with rage. Aurangzeb noticed it and ordered Ramsingh to ask Shivaji Maharaj what the matter was. When Ramsingh approached him, Shivaji Maharaj exclaimed, "You have seen, your father have seen, your Emperor has seen what a man I am, and yet you have deliberately kept me standing! I cast off your mansab. If you wanted me to stand, you should have done

it with proper thoughts." Then he turned his back to the Emperor and began to walk away violently. Later on many noblemen begun instigating the Emperor against Shivaji Maharaj and Emperor decided to kill Shivaji Maharaj and imposed house arrest. Shivaji Maharaj knew his fate. He started thinking of escape from Agra and designed a plan for escape. In a dramatic scenario, Shivaji Maharaj and his son fled from Agra on 17 August 1666 in spite of tight security of Aurangzeb and reached Rajgad on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1666. But after his return, Shivaji Maharaj had made peace with the Mughals. In fact he was making intense preparations for the future conflicts with the Mughals. He firmly decided to take back all the forts surrendered to Mughals. He did this by 1670.

From very early in his career; Shivaji Maharaj treated himself as sovereign king. But as per customs prevailed in medieval India, the stability of State and prevalence of rule of law in the eyes of common man require legal recognition to the State through a coronation. Therefore, Shivaji Maharaj took the historical decision of crowning himself as a King in 1674. The coronation of Shivaji Maharaj was a landmark in the history of medieval India. By this, Shivaji Maharaj's position was legalized and the institution of monarchy was established in Deccan. After his coronation, Shivaji Maharaj struck coins, started an era – Shivshak - and two emblems showing his independence. He also established his council of eight ministers to assist him in day to day administration. This status enabled Shivaji Maharaj to forge an alliance with the State of Golconda against the Mughals.

After coronation, Shivaji Maharaj was thinking of marching towards South. That thinking was a part of his defense strategy. Before embarking, Shivaji Maharaj made very careful arrangement for the administration of his State. The Peshwa was in charge of the Northern territory, while Southern region was under the control of Annaji Datto, and Central region was administered by Dattaji Trimbak. Rahuji Somnath was asked to stay at Raigad for day to day administration. It means he had entrusted the entire administration to his ministers. That was new style of Administration in medieval monarchy. Ministers kept moving themselves. They kept pressure on Surat and boldly levied contributions in surrounding areas. In the north they plundered Nashik while in the south they looted Hubli. In absence of Shivaji Maharaj, the ministers administered the State efficiently almost for two years and kept pressure on both the enemies.

In his struggle with Bijapur and Moghuls, Shivaji Maharaj had shifted his capital from Rajdad to Raigad to keep a safe distance from his enemies. On the same line of thinking, he had gone to South and extended his boundaries. Shivaji Maharaj's invasion of the Jinji fort was aimed at creating a safe substitute place for administration of his State considering upcoming Mughal campaign. Accordingly he conquered Jinji (now in Tamilnadu) and surrounding region

in May 1677. Shivaji Maharaj himself examined the fort and employed every possible means to strengthen it further. He constructed new ramparts around Jinji, dug ditches, erected towers. Shivaji Maharaj's south campaign lasts for around two years.

Shivaji Maharaj was really a visionary, prophet. He was aware that he would have fight in near future with the Mughal Empire. He wanted to offer a defense in depth which would force their armies to spread out, over-stretch their lines of communication and thus expose them to Maratha counter attacks. Shivaji Maharaj's plan of defense was based on space, hill fortresses and excellent mobility of his light cavalry. This strategy was not fortuitous, it was intentional and the stage was set for upcoming struggle.

### **Letter to Aurangzeb on Jazia**

When Shivaji Maharaj started his struggle, the Mughal Empire had spread throughout India. But they meant the rule of foreign dynasty, served by foreign personnel and blind to the susceptibilities of a vast majority of Hindu population. But Shivaji Maharaj was only one man, who with his limited resources, but believing in the righteousness of his cause and with firm faith in Divine dispensations, threw out a challenge to the Mughal Empire. When Jazia was imposed by Aurangzeb, Shivaji Maharaj in his celebrated letter to Aurangzeb protested: "Your Majesty, In the Quran, God has been described as Rabbul-alamin, the lord of the entire universe and not as Rabbulmusualmin, the lord of the Mussulmins. Any one bearing fanaticism and religious hatred must be said to be acting against the Command of God. To presume to draw lines on these pictures is truly to lay the blame on the Devine Artist." In thus issuing a harsh reply to Aurangzeb for toleration of all religions, not only because of wellbeing of the citizens but because intolerance was an insult to Divinity, Shivchatrapati emerges not only as a great leader of India but also as a great humanitarian.

When intolerance was the custom in medieval India, Shivchatrapati proclaimed the importance of tolerance towards religions for the stability of State. In this modern era where intolerance is spreading and ruining the countries, we must learn good lessons from Shivaji Maharaj who created a newborn empire & also a lesson from Aurangzeb how to lose a prosperous, well developed empire because of religious fanaticism.

This letter of Shivaji Maharaj was of reprimanding of Mughal Empire. How Shivaji Maharaj acquired this courage? Being supreme head of a State, Shivaji Maharaj developed and set various norms for wellbeing of State and for welfare of common man. For this we have to take a review of Shivaji Maharaj's Military & general administrative attributes.

Shivaji Maharaj's Military Administration

In his army, from the Generals to the common soldiers payments were made from exchequer. The military was paid regularly. As done in Bijapur or Mughal empire, Shivaji Maharaj never encouraged the feudal system of giving fiefs (jagir) for the maintenance of troops. By experience, Shivaji Maharaj knew the demerits of allotment of fiefs. He broke the powers of the existing watandars who lived in houses which were as good as fortresses and maintained troops of their own. Shivaji Maharaj prohibited private army of any kind in his State.

Shivaji Maharaj knew that his resources are limited as compare to his enemies, so he planned his strategies in an alternating series of offensive and defensive phases. In the offensive phase he aimed at capturing as many forts as he could before enemy's field army could arrive for rescue. It comprises,

- Surprise attacks, often by nights, on forts which lacked adequate garrisons and supplies with calculated risk.
- Deep raids in enemy territory to distract enemy's attention & to gain finance to maintain the troops.

In the defensive phase, Shivaji Maharaj resorted to an elastic defensive –offensive based on a combination of hill forts and highly mobile cavalry detachments.

Shivaji Maharaj well understood the principle that attack is the best defense. He avoided battles on plain land and made the use of forts to wear down the enemy strength in besieging them. He developed his own plans and dislocates the enemy and compels the enemy to dance to his tune. For example, he compelled Afzalkhan to come to Javali valley for treaty. Such offensive strokes must have boosted the morale of his army even though he was strategically on the defensive phase.

Shivaji Maharaj's army was from the cultivating class of the State. There were Muslims serving in the army and navy. His army was well disciplined. Whatever booty was obtained by the army during the campaigns had to be deposited with the exchequer. Khwafikhan, the Mughal historian notes, "Shivaji Maharaj made a regulation that wherever his army went for plundering, they should do no harm to the mosques, the Book of God or the women. If a Hindu or Muslim women fell into the hands of his men, no one had the courage to look at her with an evil eye and Shivaji Maharaj strove to protect her till her heirs came and rescued her.....Whenever a copy of the sacred Quran came to his hands, he treated it with respect and gave it to some of his Muslim followers. His injunctions upon this point were very strict and anyone who disobeyed them received severe punishment." This praise, by his bitterest critics in the enemy camp speaks about high standard of morality which is practiced by Shivaji Maharaj and his army.

Shivaji Maharaj was equally careful to see that his army



did not harass the farmers and the poor people in the countryside. Addressing his army cantoning in the Chiplun region in Konkan area he instructed: "..... then you will begin to trouble the country. Some will take the grain, bread, wood and vegetables and other things of the cultivators. When you begin to act like this, the poor peasants will begin to run away. Some of them will starve. Then they will think you are worse than the Mughals who overrun the countryside. Then all the curses of the peasants will descend on you. Know this well and behave yourselves..... Whatever anyone wants, it be grain, or grass for cattle or fuel or vegetables, he should buy. ...There is no need to force anybody or to tyrannize over anybody or to quarrel with anybody.....We shall keep ourselves informed frequently, even every day and deal out punishment where necessary." This explains how Shivaji Maharaj was decent towards maintaining the interests of common man.

### Shivaji Maharaj's Civil Administration

As in his army administration, Shivchatrapati was very keen on maintaining discipline in his civil administration. He never tolerated slackness in the performance of officials. He never mixed duty and religion. He once reprimanded Moraya Gosavis of Chinchwad for evasion of customs duties.

Shivaji Maharaj's whole life was devoted to creation of a new State. He, however, did his best to promote trading activities in his State. He encouraged merchants to settle in his State and gave them many concessions. He thought that "Merchants are the ornaments of the kingdom and the glory of the king. They are the cause of the prosperity of the state. All kinds of goods come into state because of merchants. In times of difficulties when debt is required, it is available." However, he gave protection to internal production of goods by imposing heavy duty on external goods. For example, he imposed heavy duty on imported salt. Kalyan, Bhivandi, Rajapur, Vengurla Kolhapur and Karad were good centers of trade in his times.

Revenue from land is fixed at two fifth of the produce in kind per bigha. However, cash rates were also levied in garden lands producing cash crops. But in turn Shivaji Maharaj relieved the cultivators from the extractions of the watandars. Landless peasants were encouraged to take to cultivation on easy terms. Loans were granted to them for purchase of bullocks, seeds and agricultural implements. In years of scarcity, remissions of land revenue were given liberally.

Considering importance of forts, Shivaji Maharaj constructed many forts including Pratapgad, Rajgad, Raigad, and Sindhudurg.

### Shivaji Maharaj's Navy

Shivaji Maharaj was the first Indian ruler who raised a

navy. The Mughals occupied India but they had neglected maintaining a fleet. In 1659, Shivaji Maharaj laid the foundation of his navy by building twenty gallivants in Kalyan and Bhivand with the help of Portuguese technicians. However, Portuguese Captain at Vasai succeeded in inducing them to left the job. This did not stop Shivaji Maharaj from continuing to build warships. Shivaji Maharaj needed a strong naval force to protect his coastline of about hundred kilometers long in the North Konkan. By 1664 this figure rose to fifty. A strong navy was also required to protect merchant ships and ports in order to enhance revenue income derived from maritime trade and customs duty at ports. Shivaji Maharaj's navy made things difficult for the Portuguese and English and the siddis. As per English record, Shivaji Maharaj's navy comprised of about 100 warships headed by three naval commanders namely Daulat Khan, Darya Sarang and Maynak Bhandari.

### Shivaji Maharaj's Legacy

Though he died, the kingdom established by him, was not perished. He had raised the ambitions of Marathas and taught them how to defeat the Moguls. As predicted by Shivaji Maharaj, soon after his death, Aurangzeb personally descended into the battlefield and within few years, annexed the states of Bijapur and Golconda. But Aurangzeb failed miserably in extinguishing Maratha resistance and finally died in frustration in 1707. By about 1760, Shivaji Maharaj's Maratha cavalry having subdued the once mighty Mughals, could water their steeds in the distant Indus.

India of today, in fact, is literally shaped-geographically, politically and culturally also- by the Maratha Kingdom. Thanks to Shivaji Maharaj's interventions, India has not fallen prey to an intolerant, barbaric imposition. As wrote by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the great historian, "States fall, empires break up, dynasties become extinct, but the memory of true Hero as king like Shivaji Maharaj remains an imperishable historic legacy for the entire human race, the pillar of a people's hope, the centre of a world's desire."

To sum up in the inspiring words of Swami Vivekananda, "Is there a greater hero, a greater saint, a greater bhakta and a greater king than Shivaji Maharaj? Shivaji Maharaj was the very embodiment of a born ruler of men as typified in our great Epics. He was the real son of India representing the true consciousness of the nation."

### Application of various management techniques

The success story of Shivaji Maharaj as cited above is a very good example of application of various modern management techniques such as:

- Leadership
- Setting of goals and objectives,
- Team building

- Training
- Planning of activities & strategies
- Rigorous Implementation of planned activities
- Effective utilization of scarce resources
- Division of work
- Rapid movements & timely attacks
- Offensive & defensive war practices
- Grab the opportunity
- Delegation of authority
- Vision and foresight

When overall Maratha community was self complacent with jagirs offered by Mughal Emper or Adilshahi, Shivaji Maharaj was the only person who expressed his passion for independent State. He also knew his fate if he failed. He was not impatient. Initially, he had established law and order in his Pune jagir and thereby increased state revenue and created an atmosphere of happiness, justice and safety. He had studied the strength and weaknesses of his enemies. Side by side he was preparing the minds of youth to join his struggle for freedom. Under his leadership, training was imparted to enthusiastic youth. When he got golden opportunity, he had captured the forts in his jagir and strengthened them for future encounters. In spite of continuous grabbing of Bijapur territory, Shivaji Maharaj was humbly pretended fealty to Bijapur, stating that he was ready to pay a stipulated sum annually, provided his possession of territory should not be questioned !

As a result of this, mighty army of Afzalkhan came to put down Shivaji Maharaj. Well planned killing of Afzalkhan and his army, Shivaji Maharaj's quite slip from Panhala, obstacles created at the pass of Gajapur, supreme sacrifice of baji Prabhu Deshapande, escape from Agra, the capital city of Mughal Empire..... all these events revealed the characteristics of Shivaji Maharaj. It was a result of good anticipation, good division of work, offensive and defensive war practices and rapid movements of army and courage.

## Conclusion

Shivaji Maharaj proved that, in spite of handful of resources of wealth and men you have, you could tussle with mighty enemies and fulfill your vision, if you apply various techniques such as leadership, goal setting, team building, division of work, and proper utilization of scarce resources, efficient and timely movements of activities and retreat if required and last but not least the delegation of authority. When Shivaji Maharaj had embarked on south campaign, he had delegated his swaraj to his four ministers. And they proved very efficient in handling the activities almost for two years in absence of Shivaji Maharaj. The act of division of work and delegation of authority had proved its importance when Shivaji died in 1680 and mighty army of Aurangzeb came to put down Maratha power. Aurangzeb failed miserably in extinguishing Maratha resistance and

finally died in frustration in 1707.

Today we recognize these tools as modern management techniques and principles and rely on that to solve our modern complex crises.

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