

**This book is exclusively available only on website
www.dharmakarma.co.in**

DHARMA AND KARMA OF BUSINESS

**Dharmic Business Model: Wisdom from Advaita Vedanta,
Puranas, Ramayan, and Mahabharat**



DR. DEBASISHA MISHRA

DR. DEBASISHA MISHRA



Dr Debasisha Mishra is a Senior Faculty member at IIM Shillong in the Strategic Management area. He has been an innovative teacher and researcher. He has introduced the course “Management Learning from Upanishads and Indian Mythology”, which discusses the learning from ancient Indian Scriptures, including Vedas, Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagavatam, Siva Purana, Vishnu Purana, etc. This book captures the essence of the subject. He also teaches the course “Chanakya Arthashastra” for management students and plans to publish a book on the topic soon.

He views that the Indian approach to management is neglected in the current management curriculum, and there is too much imposed learning from Western society. Our society is losing much knowledge hidden in ancient literature that remains relevant after thousands of years. Learning from texts of Sanatan Dharma is eternal and not affected by Time and Space. Dr Mishra’s courses have received a roaring response from students of all batches.

Dr Mishra holds a Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering from N.I.T., Rourkela, a Master of Technology in Industrial Management and Engineering from IIT, Kanpur, and a Ph.D. in Industrial & Systems Engineering from IIT, Kharagpur, with a specific research focus on Software Project Management in the Global Scenario. He used system dynamics simulation to study software team collaboration in a global environment where geographic distance, time zones, and culture separate teams. His research has been widely appreciated and cited by many senior and young researchers.

Dr Mishra has worked with IT giants, including Cognizant Technology Solutions, TCS in India, Visa International, JPMorgan Chase Bank, Oracle, and IBM in the USA. He has been a very successful Project Manager, leading several technically challenging projects. Dr Mishra is a highly successful corporate manager, an avid researcher, a very popular business management teacher, and a strong advocate of Indian Systems of Science, Ethics, and Knowledge. He can be reached on mishradebasisha@gmail.com.

Belief, Business and Their Correlation

1.1. Introduction

Modern management conceptualises business as an economic endeavour centred around exchanging, acquiring, selling, or producing goods and services, with the dual objectives of generating profit and fulfilling consumer needs. Organisations may operate with a profit-oriented approach or function as non-profit organisations pursuing social objectives.

Within the Western management paradigm, a business entity's predominant aim is to maximise shareholder wealth, with some asserting that this is its sole purpose. Alternatively, the stakeholder model suggests that businesses must account for the interests of multiple parties, and emphasises the importance of balancing these varying concerns. Other perspectives, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs—from basic physiological and safety needs, to love, esteem and self-actualisation—propose that businesses should transcend mere profit generation by addressing the higher-level needs of both their promoters and society.

Understanding the deeper human motivations behind business activities is crucial in determining their ultimate purpose, with belief playing a pivotal role in this context. Since religious faith significantly influences an individual's belief system, it is challenging to claim that a business operates entirely independently of religious or spiritual perspectives, despite the notion that it should remain secular.

Belief, fundamentally, is a cognitive framework that individuals accept as accurate without necessarily relying on empirical reasoning. A person's religious background often shapes their belief system, which, in turn, may influence the decision-making processes of an organisation's leadership. However, modern management treats business and belief systems as separate domains, leading many to be taken aback when they find that these two concepts are linked.

Contemporary business theories have conditioned professionals to view these aspects as independent and devoid of mutual influence. Attempts to challenge this perspective may even result in one being perceived as advocating for religious conversion, given that belief systems are mainly equated with faith or spirituality. Nonetheless, recognising the intersection between belief and business is essential, as it enables individuals in the corporate world to reflect on the dissonance between conventional business practices and their convictions, which often leads to imbalances.

By integrating societal and individual belief systems into business models and decision-making frameworks, organisations can cultivate a more holistic and sustainable approach to commerce, ultimately fostering a healthier and more ethical business environment.

1.2. Belief and the Business Connection

Belief is a subjective, intangible concept, or an idea a person holds as valid without underlying logical validation. Belief systems define a person or society, and influence life's big decisions. It is a personal lens through which we make sense of the world.

There are parts to something being true—my truth and your truth. Everyone wants to believe that their truth is the universal truth. We want to think that our truth applies to all and is objective. We hold on firmly to our truth. It determines our self-image and self-worth. Humans are driven by notions of what is true, sound and beautiful; this has established the desire to impose our beliefs on others. A person's belief system sprouts from their culture, experiences, imagination, etc., making it irrational and subjective. The believer is convinced that his beliefs are rational and correct, and those against his beliefs are irrational and wrong.

The believer believes in the objective truth and rejects the concept of myth and its study. What we believe in is within our control and power. We can create our own “correct” realities using our beliefs, but sometimes the fact is the opposite and is beyond our control. It is open to criticism.

When something is criticised and objectified, conflict arises. But it is human nature to desire power. We are bound by our beliefs to guide, direct and give meaning and structure to our lives. In the same way, modern business practices are not entirely “belief-free”, which is often overlooked in Western management. The Western world defines mythology as understanding a society's belief system, which means untrue or irrational ideas in a community.

As bizarre as one might think it is, belief plays a crucial role in business. Belief systems define a business organisation's decisions regarding buyers and sellers, regulators and shareholders, investors and entrepreneurs, employers and employees, vendors and consumers, and so on. So, there is an intrinsic relationship between belief systems and business decisions.

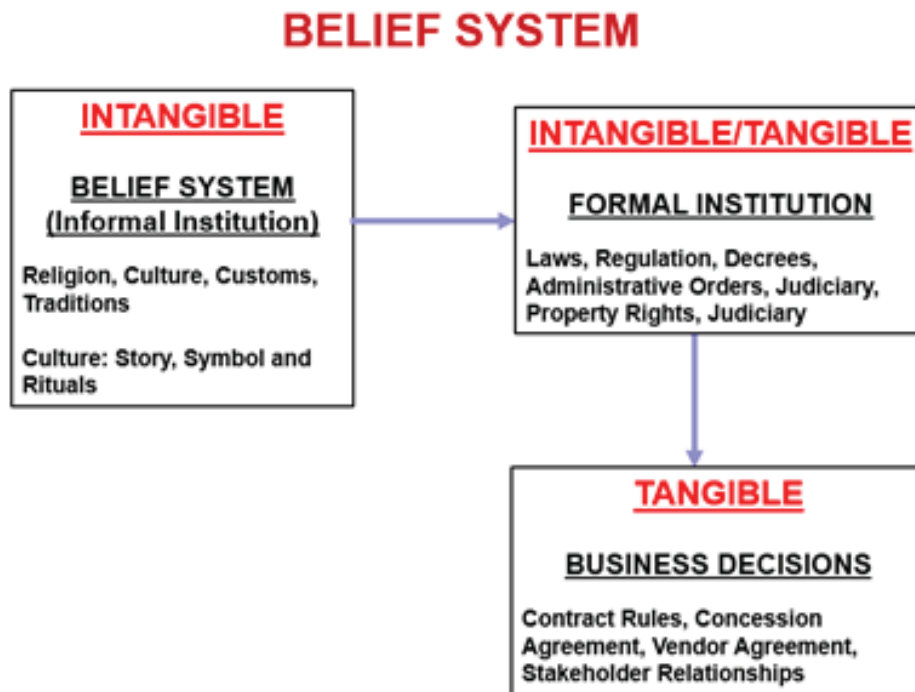


Figure 1: Link Between Business and Belief System

Figure 1 explains the connection between belief systems and businesses pictorially by illustrating the significance of intangible belief systems in business and how they influence entire decision-making frameworks. However, management science prioritises objectivity, emphasising on institutional values developed through logical reasoning. It steers away from belief-based perspectives and dismisses subjective, immeasurable and intangible aspects. In professional settings, individuals are expected to set aside personal beliefs and align with institutional values, maintaining a standardised level of professionalism. Professional conduct demands specific observable behaviours, such as courtesy, to ensure success in corporate environments.

That said, this expected behaviour does not necessarily reflect an individual's convictions. As long as an individual adheres to the established professional norms, their personal opinions and emotions remain inconsequential. Professionals are also expected to keep aspects of their religious or cultural identities separate from workplace interactions, as emotions and individual beliefs are not traditionally considered part of professional environments.

Belief systems, however, shape how different communities perceive and approach life. Since no two societies hold identical views on conducting and analysing business, applying a uniform business management model, rooted in Western ideologies, can create significant imbalances. This approach may inadvertently lead individuals to disregard their cultural perspectives, whether Indian, Chinese, or others. Therefore, understanding diverse cultural belief systems is essential for a more comprehensive and practical approach to business management.

A significant limitation of management science is its lack of emphasis on personal development and individual expression. It often reduces organisations to emotionless, mechanistic structures. Employees within such institutions may experience a loss of individuality as emotional and intellectual growth is not prioritised. Organisational development revolves around financial success and equity-based skills, leaving little room for personal values and opinions. This often results in poor work-life balance, causing individuals to disconnect from their emotional and humane aspects and focus solely on professional advancement. This rigid structure represents one of the most significant shortcomings of traditional management theories.

The subsequent sections will explore the influence of Western thought processes on modern management principles. Then, Chinese business behaviour is analysed based on its belief systems, and lastly, Indian philosophy is examined in contrast to Western and Chinese perspectives.

1.3. Christianity and Modern Management

Management studies are not entirely free from cultural influences and are shaped by the West's distinct worldview, which prioritises goal-setting. In Western thought, success is tied to systematically organising objectives, tasks and people. The emphasis on vision, mission, milestones and targets can be traced back to ancient Greek ideals, such as the pursuit of Elysium—the heroic afterlife—and biblical narratives centred on the Promised Land, a paradise for the faithful.

The discipline of management was primarily developed and institutionalised in the 20th century by North American engineers, military professionals, and financiers, whose perspectives were deeply rooted in the Protestant work ethic—a unique synthesis of Greek philosophy and biblical doctrine. They have internalised and propagated the belief that goal-oriented thinking is universally rational, practical and applicable to all business contexts. However, this assumption does not necessarily align with the



Chapter 2

Why The Western Economic Model Is Failing And India Needs An Indian Economic Model

The last chapter discussed the influence of Christianity on the business model developed by Western society. The West has come up with two economic models, capitalism and communism, based on their philosophy. Although both seem different, there is a distinct similarity between them. Both philosophies are rooted in Christianity, where only material development is stressed, and there is a lack of concern for human development. They try to take society to a “promised land” as suggested in the Bible, without consideration for local cultural ethos. Both consider the worldly development of individuals and society, and ignore their emotional and spiritual needs. Both philosophies are rooted in individualism rather than collectivism, as they lack the propositions to connect humans when it comes to their emotional and spiritual needs.

This concept of individualism, or living life for oneself, is evident in how business and economic models of the West are structured. According to Max Weber, the foundation of such an individualistic society has roots in their value systems, which their religious institutions perpetuate. The concept of individualism arose from the Protestant way of thinking; Protestant communities focused on the individuals rather than the collective church. Such an individualistic point of view led to the emergence of “individual” and “creative thinkers”, essential for entrepreneurship.

These creative individuals have contributed immensely to the material prosperity of their society. The manifestations of such value systems are evident in capitalistic societies such as America, Canada, England, New Zealand and so on. This focus on the individual has been continuously amplified through the years because of their enterprises’ success; hence, this school of thought is becoming increasingly popular, almost a norm. The individualistic movement of Western societies later came to be termed “Methodological Individualism”, which drew from what Weber had to say about individualism, described in the next section.

Individualism: Methodological Individualism is a theoretical perspective capable of explaining every societal phenomenon. In other words, the behaviour and interests of an individual can explain how their social life unravels. This individualistic understanding of social life insists that individual actions drive social structures. It does not deny the importance of social systems but provides the perspective to understand social structures by studying the individual. This perspective has mainly been useful in economic theory. Although this theory does not claim that it can explain everything about an individual without society, there is no concept of a “collective identity” to connect the individuals. The idea of Homo Economicus is presented in Figure 1.

Homo Economicus

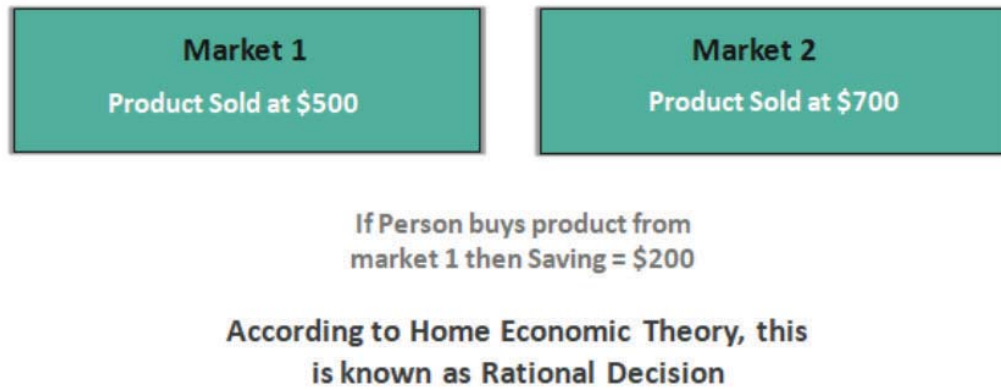


Figure 1: An illustration of Homo Economicus theory as proposed by John Stuart Mill

The Homo Economicus theory assumes humans are rational decision-makers—“the economic man.” John Stuart Mill proposed this model of human behaviour in the 19th century, suggesting that all individuals can make rational decisions. Self-interest is one of the critical assumptions of this theory. It assumes that individuals act in their own interest to maximise individual utility, an assumption that extends the concept and philosophy of individualism. The idea that humans are rational decision-makers who act in their self-interest to maximise utility has led to the evolution of numerous economic theories and approaches, like the Rational Choice theory, the Efficient Market Hypothesis, etc. These ideas are, hence, the foundations upon which neo-classical economics lie. Neo-classical economics now forms the basis for many economic models and policies, and has shaped the business standards extensively in the West.

2.1. Politics and Religion in The West

Polity plays a vital role in how societies develop; it impacts their economic and business activities. Roughly around the 16th to 18th century, a political theory, known as the Divine Right Theory, became prominent in the West. Its evolution was supported by the monarchs and leaders of the religious institutions.

The Divine Right Theory: As per the Divine Right Theory, the king represents God and rules the country. The king has full authority over the country’s citizens as directed by God. This way of thinking originated in Europe and states that no earthly power can overrule the monarch. The political ruler derives their right to rule directly from the will of God. This thought is rooted in the Christian idea that God is the ultimate power and that everything on earth belongs to God. Since the king is given direct authority from God, he owns all the resources and can exercise his authority to rule the people, as he sees fit. This philosophy led to the belief that the king can do no wrong because everything belongs to the king. All resources, such as land, are given to the people temporarily, while they ultimately belong to the king. This belief is reflected in today’s “principle of eminent domain”, a legal concept in which the government can use private property for public use.

This principle continued to inform constitutional law until June 1215, when the Magna Carta was written. An imaginary picture of the Magna Carta is given in Figure 2. The Magna Carta, also known as the “Great Charter”, was written after the reign of King John of England. Its purpose was to limit the king’s power, establish rights to the barons and to protect individual liberties and property rights. Essentially, it was the declaration that the king and his government were not above the law. It sought to prevent the king from exploiting his power and placed limitations on royal authority by establishing law as a power. It paved the way for the protection of public property rights, meaning kings could not seize the people’s land without proper and justified compensation.

In India, however, before the arrival of the Britishers, the kings had no right to take away the people’s property, even by providing compensation, as there was no concept of the Divine Right Theory. The paradigm in India differed from the one in the West, where kings were believed to be appointed by God. The British eventually formulated the Land Acquisition Act to grab lands from Indians to benefit their empire.



Figure 2: The Magna Carta as penned by King John of England (Source: Wikipedia)



The Social Contract Theory: There was opposition to the Divine Right Theory by democratic institutions in various societies, which necessitated a thought process to ensure order in the society without a divine, powerful authority, such as a king. The Social Contract Theory filled this philosophical vacuum by connecting individualistic citizens of society. The Social Contract Theory became a prominent philosophy in politics. According to this theory, whenever humans interact, they do so by forming



You never identify yourself with the shadow cast by your body, or with its reflection, or with the body you can see in a dream or in your imagination. Therefore, you should not identify yourself with this living body either. The appearance of the body is an illusion.

Shankara (788 – 820 A.D.), Viveka Chudamani

Tattvabodha: Who am I?

3.1. UPANISHADS

3.1.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the concept of Tattvabodha, which encapsulates the philosophy of the Upanishads. The Upanishads—ancient Indian scriptures embedded within the concluding parts of the Vedas—form the philosophical bedrock of Hinduism and India’s spiritual tradition. Written between 800 BCE and 200 BCE, these texts explore the profound questions of human existence, the nature of the “self”, and the ultimate reality. While ancient, their teachings remain timeless, providing moral, spiritual and philosophical guidance in the modern world. The principles enshrined in these ancient texts transcend temporal and geographical boundaries, offering universal wisdom on leading a meaningful life. Upanishadic teachings have influenced India’s values, institutions and societal frameworks. Instead of going into details of the Upanishads, we have decided to explain the concept of Tattvabodha, which describes the fundamentals of the Indian thought process and captures the skeleton of the Upanishads. Tattvabodha is very scientific in its approach to explaining the creation of the universe and its existence from a philosophical perspective.

3.2. Historical Context of the Upanishads

3.2.1. Origins and Composition

The Upanishads mark a significant shift from the early ritualistic practices of the Vedas to introspective and philosophical inquiry. Initially transmitted orally through generations, these texts were composed by sages and thinkers who questioned the mechanical performance of rituals and sought deeper, experiential spiritual meaning. They represent the culmination of the spiritual quest of the ancient Indian civilisation, moving from the external to the internal, from ritual to realisation.

Key Upanishads like the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Taittiriya Upanishad*, and *Katha Upanishad* contain dialogues, parables and metaphysical discussions that address the nature of the “Brahman” (the Absolute Reality) and “Atman” (the individual self). These texts formed the philosophical underpinning of Indian thought, influencing diverse schools of philosophy, mysticism and spiritual practice.

3.3. Philosophical Influence

The Upanishads have profoundly influenced Indian philosophy, including systems like *Advaita Vedanta* (non-dualism), *Dvaita* (dualism) and *Vishishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualism). Philosophers like Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and Madhvacharya built their doctrines upon these texts. Shankaracharya, in particular, interpreted the Upanishads as affirming the non-dualistic unity of the soul and the supreme being—a philosophy that inspires spiritual seekers today.

The Upanishads also shaped the ideas of freedom, duty, ethics and governance that corroborate modern India. The notion of spiritual freedom (moksha) found in the Upanishads parallels contemporary democratic values of liberty and personal rights, thereby reinforcing India's cultural and philosophical heritage in its constitutional democracy.

3.4. Core Philosophical Principles of the Upanishads

1. Brahman and Atman

The central teaching of the Upanishads is the unity of “Brahman” (the cosmic reality) and “Atman” (the inner self). According to these texts, realising that one's true self (Atman) is identical to Brahman is the ultimate goal of life. This recognition dissolves the illusion of separateness and engenders inner peace and universal compassion.

“Tat Tvam Asi” (That Thou Art)—Chandogya Upanishad.

This concept urges individuals to transcend superficial identities based on caste, creed and nationality, and urges one to recognise the same divinity in all beings. It promotes universal brotherhood and equanimity, which are critical for social harmony in a pluralistic country like India.

2. Knowledge (Vidya) and Ignorance (Avidya)

The Upanishads emphasise the importance of self-knowledge (vidya) as the path to liberation (moksha) and view ignorance (avidya) as the root cause of suffering and bondage. True knowledge involves understanding the eternal nature of the self, beyond physical existence and temporary pleasures. It is through *vidya* that one transcends the cycle of birth and death.

3. Karma and Rebirth

Actions (karma) and their consequences are integral to the Upanishadic worldview. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth (samsara) continues until one attains knowledge of the self. This belief encourages individuals to live ethically, as they now understand that their actions directly shape their destiny in this life and beyond.

4. Detachment (Vairagya)

The Upanishads advocate detachment from material possessions and transient pleasures, emphasising inner contentment and peace. Detachment does not mean renunciation of life's duties but involves performing one's responsibilities with equanimity, free from selfish desires and attachments. This mental discipline leads to lasting contentment.

5. Ethical Living (Dharma)

A righteous and ethical life is crucial for personal and social harmony. Truthfulness, non-violence, compassion, humility and self-restraint are consistently emphasised. Upholding *dharma* ensures the well-being of the individual and society, reinforcing social justice and moral integrity.

3.5. TATTVABODHA

1. Tattvabodha: Understanding Reality and Enlightenment

Tattvabodha tries to answer the fundamental question of the human mind, i.e., “who am I?” and “what is my relationship with the universe?” The term Tattvabodha is derived from Sanskrit, where *Tattva* means “reality” or “principle,” and *Bodha* signifies “enlightenment” or “awareness.” This concept is central to Vedantic philosophy, aiming to guide seekers towards self-realisation and understanding the ultimate truth. In the context of Sankhya philosophy, Tattvas refer to 24 fundamental cosmic principles that form the universe’s building blocks, including elements like the five senses, mind and intellect. The knowledge of Tattvabodha helps us understand the central theme of the Upanishads.

2. The Qualification of a Student Who Desires to Learn Tattvabodha

Tattvabodha is meant for the seeker of liberation (Mumukshu), and it is the real knowledge of the existing universe. This knowledge is not required for worldly achievements like name, money, pleasure, and so on. Understanding the text can liberate us from death and the birth cycle, allowing us to attain permanent bliss. The fourfold qualification required for a student to understand Tattvabodha’s text is given in Figure 1 and explained below.

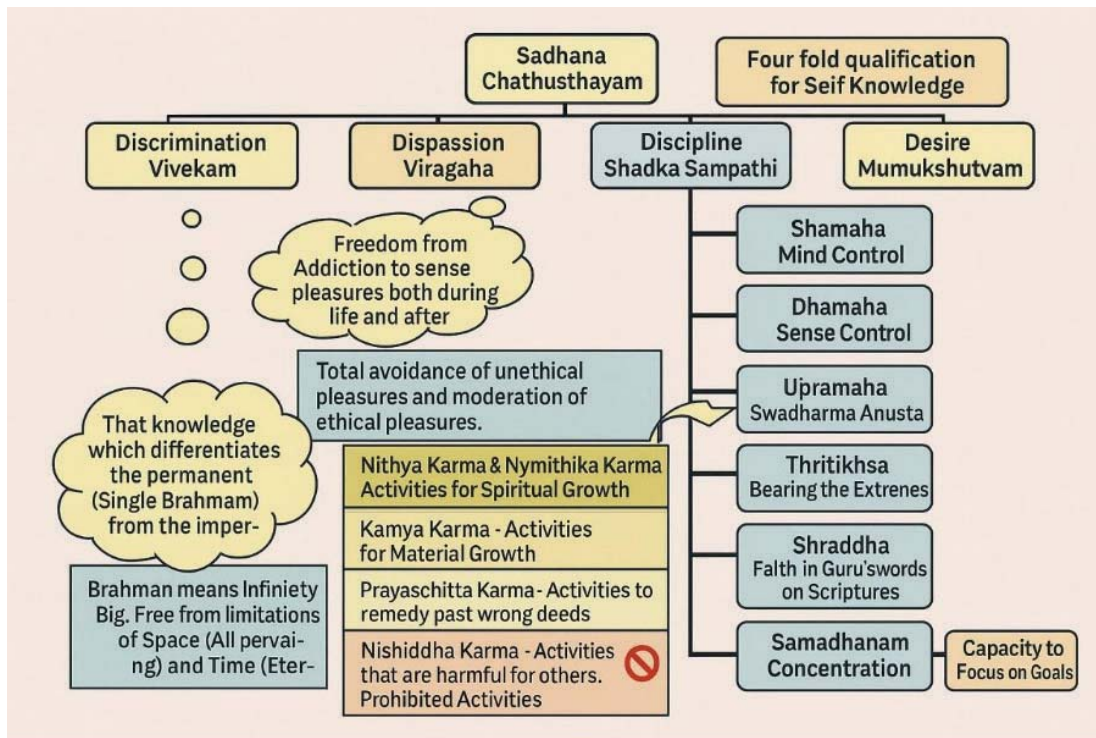


Figure 1: Four-fold Qualifications of a Student for the Study of Tattvabodha

Discrimination: Viveka is the capacity of the intellect to distinguish between the permanent and the impermanent. Reality alone is eternal; everything else is ephemeral. Everything in this world changes except the Brahman or consciousness, which this chapter explains in detail.



SAHASRARA
CROWN CHAKRA



AJNA
THIRD-EYE CHAKRA



VISHUDDHA
THROAT CHAKRA



ANAHATA
HEART CHAKRA



MANIPURA
SOLAR PLEXUS CHAKRA



SWADHISTHANA
SACRAL CHAKRA



MULADHARA
ROOT CHAKRA

Fundamentals of the Chakra System in Management



4.1. Introduction: Discussion on the Chakras and Their Connection to Management

The concept of *chakras*, derived from ancient Indian traditions, refers to the seven primary energy centres in the human body. The word “*chakra*” translates to “wheel” or “disk” in Sanskrit, symbolising the continuous flow of energy that sustains life. Each *chakra* is associated with specific physiological, emotional, and spiritual functions, influencing an individual’s self-perception and their interaction with the world.

Every *chakra* is associated with a single *pancha bhuta*: ether, air, fire, water earth, mind and consciousness. The concept of *pancha phuta*, explained in the last chapter, makes up the fundamental constituents of all bodies: the gross body, subtle body and the causal body. The *chakras* do not exist in the gross body but only in the subtle body in order to express the energy of the corresponding *pancha bhuta* elements. There are seven *chakras* in the subtle body, out of which five represent the *pancha phutas*, one *chakra* represents the mind element, and the last *chakra* represents universal consciousness.

All the *chakras* have specific characteristics like symbol, *yantra*, *beeja mantra*, *tattwa*, musical notes and *gunas*. Table 1 shows the distinctive characteristics of all the *chakras*. As this chapter’s main objective is the management aspect of these *chakras*, a detailed discussion regarding their traits and characteristics is out of scope.

The body has 72,000 *nadis* for the flow of energy or *prana*. There are 14 principal *nadis* in the body. *Sushamna*, *Ida* and *Pingala* are the three main *nadis* for connecting the *chakras* and the flow of the *pancha bhutas* in the body. *Sushamna nadi* starts from the *Muladhara chakra* and connects all the *chakras* in a straight line, all the way to the *Sahasrara chakra*. The *Ida* and *Pingala nadis* represent lunar and solar channels,

respectively. The *Pingala nadi*, or solar channel, represents logical, structured thinking, whereas the *Ida nadi*, or lunar channel, represents intuition and emotion. The location of *nadis* and *chakras* is provided in Figures 1 and 2.

TABLE 1: Characteristics of all the chakras

CHAKRAS	LOTUS SYMBOL	YANTRA	BEEJA MANTRA	TATTWA	MUSICAL NOTES	GUNAS
MULADHARA	4, DEEP RED	YELLOW SQUARE	LAM	EARTH	SA	TAMAS
SVADHISTANA	6, ORANGE RED	SILVER/ WHITE CRESCENT MOON	VAM	WATER	RE	TAMAS
MANIPURA	10, YELLOW	RED INVERTED TRIANGLE	RAM	FIRE	GA	RAJAS
ANAHATA	12, GREEN	SMOKY 6 POINTED STAR	YAM	AIR	MA	RAJAS
VISHUDDHA	16, SKY-BLUE	WHITE CIRCLE	HAM	ETHER	PA	SATWA
AJNA	2, ROYAL BLUE or INDIGO	GREY CIRCLE	OM	MIND	DA	SATWA
SAHASRARA	1000, MULTICOLOUR, PURPLE	BEYOND			SA	

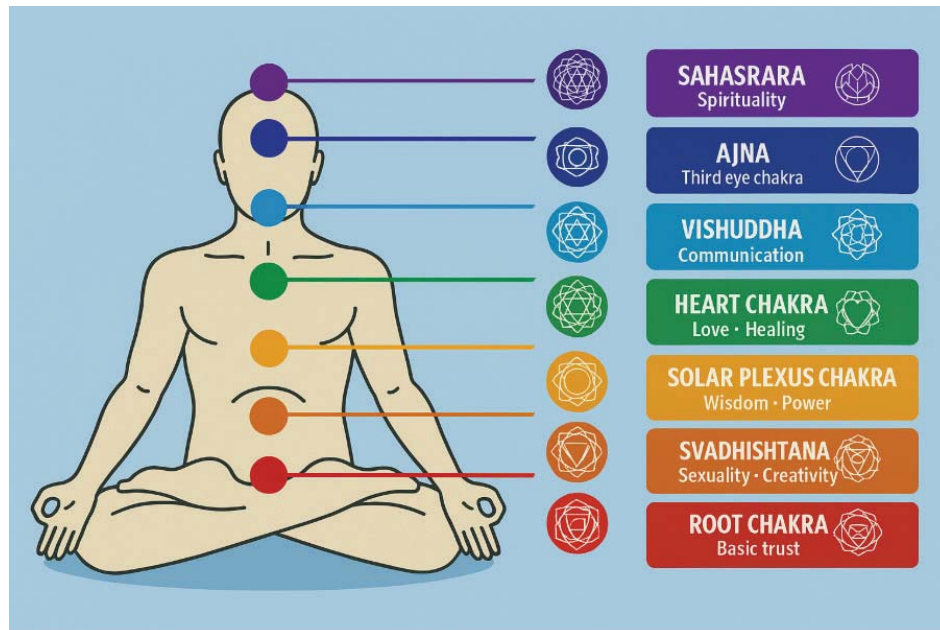


Figure 1: Chakras in the Body

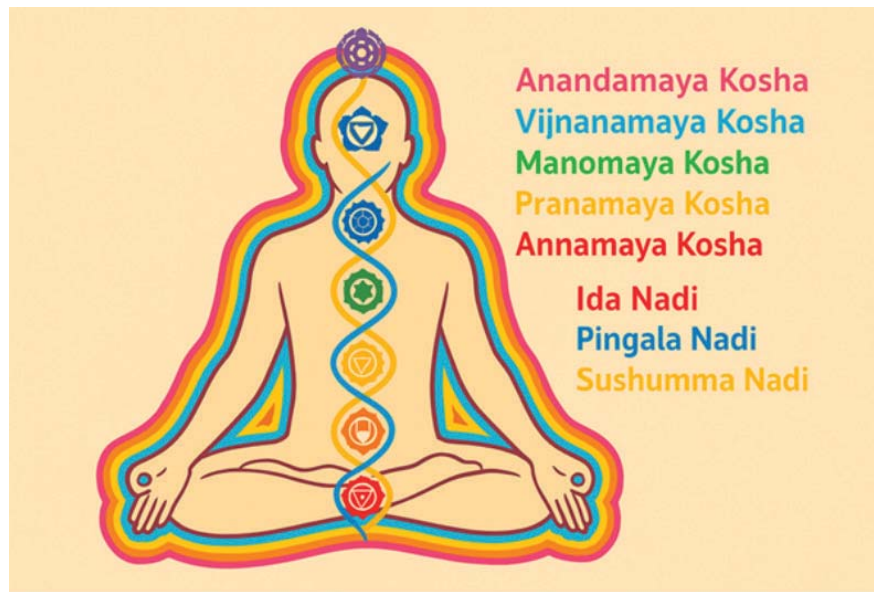


Figure 2: Human Nadis

4.2. The Seven Chakras

In leadership, the *chakras* represent a framework for understanding human behaviour, motivation and potential. Leaders can harness their full capacity to inspire, connect and drive meaningful change by aligning and balancing these energy centres. Below is a description of all *chakras* in the human body with an outline of their respective functions.

4.2.1. Root Chakra (Muladhara)

The Root *Chakra*, or *Muladhara*, is located at the base of the spine and symbolises stability, survival and security. It is the foundation for all higher energy centres, grounding individuals and encouraging physical and emotional well-being. A balanced root *chakra* fosters a sense of safety and confidence in one's environment.

4.2.2. Sacral Chakra (Svadhithana)

The Sacral Chakra, or *Svadhithana*, is positioned in the lower abdomen and governs relationships, creativity and emotional well-being. This *chakra* fuels passion and enhances one's ability to connect with others on an emotional and creative level. A healthy sacral *chakra* promotes joy, adaptability and a fulfilling personal and professional life.

4.2.3. Solar Plexus Chakra (Manipura)

The Solar Plexus Chakra, or *Manipura*, is situated in the upper abdomen and represents personal power, confidence and willpower. It drives ambition and decision-making, empowering individuals to take initiative and lead with authority. When balanced, it fosters self-discipline and a strong sense of purpose.

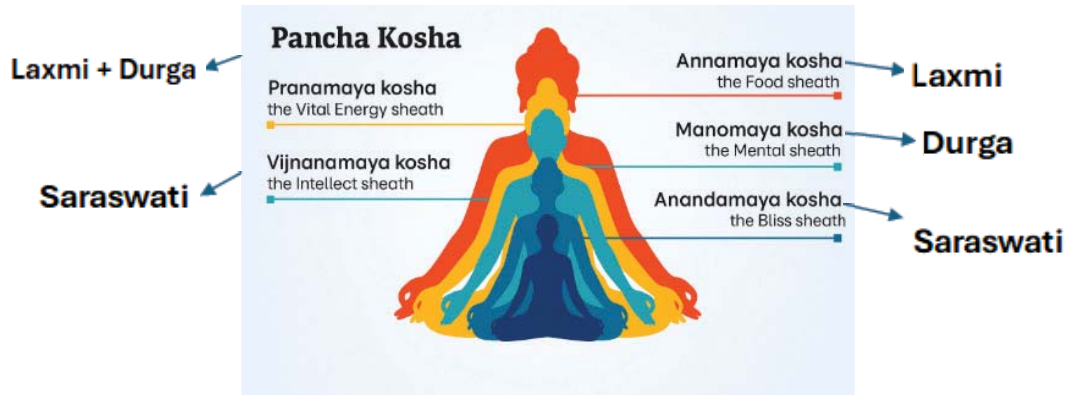
Fundamentals of the Indian System Based on Upanishad Principles

This chapter discusses the fundamentals of the Indian system based on Upanishad principles addressed in Chapters 3 and 4. The first section discusses the five layers of creation based on Tattavabodha and how it can be roughly compared to the association of business to three prominent goddesses in Hinduism, i.e., Laxmi, Durga and Saraswati. There is a considerable resemblance between the sheath theory and Maslow's hierarchy in modern management. The second section discusses the four *purusarthas* in the Indian system. The three *gunas* of nature are discussed in the third section. The caste system is discussed in the fourth and fifth sections. All other sections discuss fundamental aspects of Indian philosophy.

5.1. The Five Sheaths, The Three Goddesses (Laxmi, Durga and Saraswati) & Maslow's Hierarchy

The concept of the five sheaths of the soul is rooted in the Taittiriya Upanishad. The Upanishads' five sheaths (pancha kosha) theory offers a profound framework to understand human existence, which resembles modern management theories like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Both frameworks emphasise the layered progression of human fulfilment, from basic needs to higher spiritual and intellectual pursuits. Integrating the spiritual wisdom of the sheaths with the psychological insights of Maslow's theory creates a holistic model to aid in managing individuals and organisations. The five layers capture the essence of three Indian goddesses: Laxmi, Durga and Saraswati. Figure 1 shows the five layers of creation as per Tattavabodha and Maslow's hierarchy. Maslow's hierarchy can also be derived from the five-sheath theory.

Five Sheaths of the Human Body



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Figure 1: Five Layers of Creation / Maslow's Hierarchy

5.1.1. The Five Sheaths of the Soul

5.1.1.1. Annamaya Kosha (Physical Sheath), Maslow's Physiological Needs and Goddess Laxmi:

This is the outermost layer, representing the physical body composed of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. In management, recognising the importance of physical well-being is crucial. Leaders should ensure their teams have access to proper nutrition, exercise and rest to perform optimally. A healthy body supports a productive and efficient workforce. For instance, Google's wellness programs, which include gym facilities, nutritious meal options and mindfulness training, reflect this principle.

Managers should prioritise creating an environment conducive to physical health by encouraging regular breaks, promoting ergonomic workspace and integrating health initiatives into corporate policies. According to a study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, organisations that invest in employee health programs experience enhanced performance and reduced absenteeism.

The *Annamaya Kosha* represents the physical body, akin to Maslow's physiological needs, which include food, water and shelter. This sheath aligns with the energy of Goddess Lakshmi, symbolising material wealth and sustenance. This implies ensuring that the employer takes care of the basic material needs of employees—fair wages, comfortable working conditions and secure job opportunities are essential for sustaining the workforce's foundational well-being. For example, organisations like the Tata Group emphasise health and nutrition for their employees, reflecting the principle of nurturing the *Annamaya Kosha*. Without addressing these needs, individuals cannot progress to higher levels of fulfilment or productivity.

5.1.1.2. Pranamaya Kosha (Energy Sheath), Maslow's Safety Needs and Goddess Laxmi and Durga: This sheath comprises the life force energy or *prana* that permeates every cell and organ, governing physiological functions such as circulation, digestion and respiration. In a managerial context, understanding the energy flow within an organisation is vital. Managers should foster an environment that promotes positive energy through effective communication, motivation and stress management techniques—ensuring that the organisation's "prana" remains balanced and vibrant. A leader's role here is to manage the organisational "prana" through strategies that boost team morale and ensure smooth, uninterrupted workflows. Practices like team-building activities, stress-relief workshops and cultivating a positive work culture can enhance energy flow. Companies like Zappos have demonstrated the impact of vibrant work environments on employee engagement and satisfaction. Research highlighted in the *International Journal of Stress Management* highlights that stress management initiatives significantly improve overall productivity and reduce workplace burnout.

The *Pranamaya Kosha*, associated with the life force or *prana*, resonates with Maslow's safety needs, encompassing physical safety, financial security and emotional stability. This sheath is connected to Goddess Laxmi and Durga, who embody strength and protection, and ensure their devotees' emotional and physical safety. Managers must create a secure environment that ensures physical safety, job security and financial stability while addressing employees' emotional well-being. Policies like health insurance, mental health support and workplace safety standards help sustain the vitality represented by this sheath. Companies like Tata Steel, known for robust employee welfare programs, embody this principle by ensuring physical and emotional security.

5.1.1.3. Manomaya Kosha (Mental Sheath), Maslow Belongingness Needs and Goddess Durga: This layer encompasses the mind and sensory organs responsible for thoughts, emotions and automatic actions. Effective management requires awareness of the mental states of employees. Managers can cultivate a mentally resilient and focused team by addressing mental health, providing support systems and encouraging mindfulness practices. Effective communication, conflict resolution mechanisms and promoting psychological safety are key strategies here. Companies like Unilever have introduced mindfulness and mental wellness programs, significantly improving employee morale and focus. According to a report in *Psychological Review*, organisations that support mental well-being witness higher employee retention and innovation levels, as employees feel more valued and secure in their roles.

The *Manomaya Kosha* signifies human existence's mental and emotional layers, paralleling Maslow's need for belongingness and love. This layer emphasises interpersonal relationships and emotional connections, protected and empowered by Goddess Durga. In management, this translates to encouraging inclusivity, teamwork and community—organisations should promote open communication, cultural inclusivity and team collaboration to nurture this sheath. Google's culture of inclusivity, where employees feel valued and



Strategy as Choice

6.1. Introduction

According to the Upanishads, all creation is divine and a manifestation of *Brahman*, which is the essence of the universe. Spiritually, all living beings are equal. All gods and goddesses are representations of one spiritual entity. Hinduism has many Gods, unlike the Abrahamic religions, all of which worship a single God. The many Gods in Hinduism represent different aspects of universal consciousness, and worshipping any God with pure intent can liberate you from the cycle of life and death. One God, Hanuman, is worshipped by people who believe in attaining liberation through physical exercise. Another, Saraswati, is the goddess of seeking knowledge.

Hinduism's approach is flexible. The choice of God is based on one's personal characteristics. In Indian thought, every religion is considered divine and a way to realise the ultimate God. The different sects like *Vaishnava*, *Shaiva*, *Shakti*, *Tantra* and so on, coexisted and thrived harmoniously in India without conflict.

All the world's religions found refuge in India during their distress and persecution. Parsis, who were executed in modern-day Iran, found shelter in India and have now become one of the most prosperous communities in the country. Jews faced persecution all over the world in the name of antisemitism, yet they lived and prospered in India until their migration following the establishment of Israel.

Spiritual upliftment is the main *mantra* in Indian society. All the activities in the world, including business, should be done for the spiritual upliftment of humans. “*Udyog*” is the word for “industry” in Sanskrit, and *yoga* is a part of this word. “*Ud*” means upliftment, and “*yoga*”—a way of life. When work becomes “*yoga*” or skilfulness, it is excellence.

In the Indian context, strategy is deeply rooted in the philosophy of *dharma*. Decisions are made based on profitability, alignment with moral values, fulfilment of societal obligations and creation of long-term harmony. The Indian view contrasts starkly with the Western perspective, where strategy often revolves around achieving a competitive edge or maximising financial returns for only the “God” in business, i.e., the shareholders. In Western businesses, strategy is driven by shareholder interests, emphasising profitability, innovation and efficiency. The Western style embraces “one truth” at a time—akin to the missionary approach—focused and singular, for example, pursuing a single best product or process. Markets are perceived as zero-sum games where the success of one means the failure of another.

The theory of *karma* does not allow the exploitation of some stakeholders for the benefit of others. Indian thought suggests that even your competitors are divine and have a place in the business ecosystem. Inspired by scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita, Indian strategies emphasise *seva* (service) over profits. Businesses aim to create societal value while fulfilling their economic goals. Indian businesses embrace the philosophy of coexistence and synergy, which often leads to unique solutions that cater to local needs while adapting to global dynamics.

Indian businesses have long embodied a service-oriented philosophy rooted in the cultural ethos of *seva* (selfless service). This mindset prioritises the welfare of stakeholders and communities over sheer profit-making. Unlike Western strategies that often focus on maximising shareholder returns, Indian businesses strive to balance financial success with social responsibility. This chapter explores key examples of Indian enterprises that have exemplified the service-first approach, emphasising coexistence, sustainability and community empowerment.

6.2. Philosophical Underpinnings of Indian Business

The Indian spirit of service-driven ideals finds its roots in ancient scriptures, particularly the Bhagavad Gita, which emphasises the concept of *Nishkama Karma*—selfless action without attachment to outcomes. This philosophy—deeply embedded in Indian culture—views business as not only a means of personal gain but as a platform to contribute to the greater good. Rather than just profit maximisation, the idea of “*seva*” (service) and coexistence drives Indian business philosophies. Below are a few principles that showcase the essence of Indian philosophy and capture its cultural ethos:

1. The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 78 states – “यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः। तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम॥ (*Yatra yogeshvaraḥ kṛiṣṇo yatra pāṛtho dhanur-dharaḥ, tatra śhrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama*)”

This means, “Wherever there is Krishna, the Lord of *Yoga*, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there also will surely be fortune, victory, prosperity and sound morality”. This verse emphasises the synergy between wisdom (represented by Krishna) and action (represented by Arjuna). The message is clear: Success arises when both knowledge and righteous intent inform the strategy. Indian businesses have historically imbued this by ensuring their strategies are ethically grounded and practically effective.

2. The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Verse 20 states – “कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः। लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि॥ (*karmaṇaiva hi sansiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampaśhyan kartum arhasi*)”

This means, “By performing their stipulated duties, King Janaka and others attained perfection. You should also fulfil your work to set an example for the good of the world”. This verse teaches the principle of *Lokasangraha* (welfare of all). This philosophy encourages leaders to think beyond individual gains and work for the collective good. Modern Indian CEOs like Narayan Murthy have adopted this mindset by underscoring employee welfare and ethical business practices.

3. The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 47, states – “कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन। मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥ (*karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi*)”

This means, “You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never see yourself as the cause of results, and avoid attachment to idleness”. This encourages individuals and organisations to focus on giving their best and working with integrity and diligence rather than being driven solely by rewards. In business, this translates to prioritising the quality of the products, services and customer satisfaction over short-term profits.

4. In the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्), meaning the world is one family, businesses see themselves as part of a larger ecosystem, promoting collaboration rather than competition. This principle emphasises fulfilling a higher purpose, ensuring individual and collective growth. Example: Tata Tea's transformation from a plantation-based company to a worker-owned enterprise illustrates the service-oriented, strategic thinking.
5. Just as it is said in the Bhagavat Geetha, the Upanishads also emphasise selfless action, Nishkama Karma (निष्काम कर्म), and the idea that wealth should circulate for the welfare of society. In alignment with these principles, companies like the Tata Group have integrated philanthropy into their business practices. Through initiatives like the Tata Trusts, they have significantly contributed to healthcare and education, embodying the Upanishadic ideal of utilising wealth for societal benefit. Figure 1 shows Krishna guiding Arjuna on the battlefield of the Mahabharata.



Figure 1: Lord Krishna guiding Arjuna on the battlefield, symbolising selfless action and duty for the welfare of society

The symbolism of Lakshmi represents wealth as a force of harmony and prosperity. She is traditionally depicted as serene and generous, suggesting that the wealth is earned through righteous means (*dharma*) to uplift society. In various Hindu texts, her presence is associated with wisdom (*Vidya Lakshmi*), virtue (*Dharma*)

6.3. Lakshmi and Kubera: The Symbols of Wealth and Ethics

Profit was never a bad word in Indian society. The famous book “Arthashastra” discusses various ways of generating revenue through state administration, and *artha* or wealth, is considered one of the *purusarthas* or desirable things in life. The symbolism of Laxmi (Goddess of Wealth) and Kubera (God of Wealth Custodianship) offers profound insights into Indian philosophy when it comes to wealth creation, accumulation and distribution. According to Indian mythology, while Laxmi signifies wealth and prosperity obtained through ethical and sustainable means, Kubera embodies wealth hoarded or amassed, often leading to negative consequences when acquired unethically. Figure 2 shows the traditional picture of Maa Lakshmi and Lord Kubera.



Figure 2: (from left) Maa Lakshmi and Lord Kubera



Strategy as Cooperation: Economic Models of Temples as Examples

7.1. Introduction

Temples have historically been more than just places of worship; they were and still are a confluence of spirituality, culture and economics. Across civilisations in the Indian subcontinent, temples have exemplified the principle of “Strategy as Cooperation”. They have unified communities in order to achieve shared goals, blending spiritual aspirations with practical initiatives that drive social and economic growth.

Temples are vital in shaping the ethical and spiritual foundations of a community, while strengthening the social fabric. Temples have always been the custodians of *dharma*—the moral and ethical code that sustains life and ensures societal harmony. Through their rituals, teachings and practices, temples reinforce truthfulness, compassion, non-violence and respect for all living beings. They provide a space for individuals to introspect and align themselves with the principles of *dharma*.

You can find the influence of Upanishadic teachings on temple philosophy. The core ideas of *brahman*, *karma* and *moksha* are expressed in temple architecture, rituals and symbolism. Temples are potent agents of community unity and guidance. They serve as gathering places where people from all walks of life come together to worship, celebrate and support one another. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Society needs temples to create “Heaven on Earth”. Lots of mythological stories reinforce this idea. There was an occasion when Narada visited Lord Brahma. During their conversation, Narada complained that all-powerful Gods like Vishnu and Brahma side with the *devas* during their conflict with the *asuras*. Also, *devas* live in luxury in Heaven, whereas the *asuras* live in Hell, the place of suffering and agony. Brahma replied that the *devas* deserve Heaven and would create one wherever they lived. Asuras will always make their living space Hell. Narada was not ready to accept this argument and asked Brahma for proof, to which Brahma obliged.

The next day, Brahma invited both the *devas* and *asuras* for lunch. They were offered a place to sit in different rooms, unaware of each other’s presence. Lunch was served to the *devas* and *asuras* on a table. But Brahma placed one condition before they could consume the delicious food. All their hands were tied with a straight rod. They couldn’t bend their hands, making it impossible for them to eat their own food. So, the *devas* and *asuras* were now in a dilemma and wondered how they could eat the food.

The *asuras* started competing with each other and were in a hurry to eat the food. They tossed the food in the air with their straightened hands and positioned themselves in such a way that the food would fall into their mouths. They destroyed much of it in the process and spilt lots of food on the ground, creating an unsightly environment. It resembled Hell.

On the other hand, the *devas* started a discussion among themselves. The decision came to the conclusion that they needed to feed each other to be able to eat the food. So, they sat across from each other, and each person fed the person sitting in front of them. In this way, they were all able to have a nice lunch and were very satisfied. Hardly any food was wasted.

Both Narada and Brahma were watching the *devas* and the *asuras* from a distance. Brahma explained to Narada that the *devas* cooperated with each other and created Heaven. The *asuras* started competing with each other and created Hell. Similarly, members of society need to cooperate to create heaven. Temples create an ecosystem that enables citizens to help each other voluntarily in order to create a happy society.

7.2. Temple Economics

In April and May 2020, when millions of migrants were walking back home due to the sudden COVID-19 lockdown, a chorus of seculars, as they had in the past, began taking money from *mandirs*. This was surprising because neither the central nor the state government had said they did not have the money.

The above scenario raised the following questions:

1. Where did the migrant **labourers** get the confidence and courage to walk hundreds of kilometres with their families and luggage?
2. Why is money always requested from *dharmic* places, i.e., *mandirs*?

Let's examine each question in detail.

7.2.1. Where Did the Migrant Labourers Get the Confidence to Walk Hundreds of Kilometres with their Families and Luggage?

Tirthyatra is an integral part of Hindu *dharma*. Think of the rough terrain of Amarnath Yatra to Shabrimala, Vaishno Devi to Ganga Sagar and Kanwar Yatra to Pandharpur Wari. A Hindu should walk all the way, carrying some weight, sometimes with their family and sometimes without. Hindus have been doing this since time immemorial. Hindus do not fear walking in their own country. As it is their own country, they do not destroy government or private property to show anger or frustration at the lack of support from the government. Hindus walk, and they know fellow Hindus will help them during their journey. That is how it happened in 2020, too. On the roadside, several Hindus gathered under the auspices of a *mandir* to provide food to the migrant labourers who were walking home. The source of confidence of the migrant workers was their *dharma*, which was enforced through the temples.

7.2.2. Why is Money Always Requested from Dharmic Places, i.e., Mandirs?



Figure 1: An article discussing how religious donations and pilgrimages have remained steady or even increased despite economic downturns

Figure 1 shows that donations to religious places are not affected by the recession. The *mandirs* donated hundreds of crores of rupees to people affected by COVID-19. *Mandirs* have been the centre of economic activities since their formation. Apart from religious bigotry, it was the wealth that always attracted invaders to them. The industry in India was always associated with a temple. Indians believe that the success of every endeavour is a divine blessing and believe in a spiritual connection to material existence. Varanasi, Ujjain, Puskar and Rameshwaram are the world's oldest living cities. Though none of these places have any established industries, they continue to flourish. They are all *dharmic* places.

Despite economic downturns, religious centres continue to see an influx of donations and pilgrims, as evident in the steady rise of contributions to temples such as Sabarimala, Shrinathji and Nathdwara. The article *Religion Remains Untouched by Recession* highlights how temple economies remain resilient, with an increasing number of devotees contributing to these religious centres. At Sabarimala, the number of pilgrims rose from 19.8 million in 2005-06 to 23.2 million in 2010-11, with revenue increasing from ₹1,500 crore to ₹1,900 crore. Similarly, other temples have experienced consistent financial growth, reinforcing the economic significance of religious tourism and donations.

When one searches for "Rust Belt", the internet throws up the name of Detroit. Once a city of modern industry, the hub of car manufacturing, it is today part of the Rust Belt of the USA. As cars became cheaper in Asia, the production shifted to Asian countries, and Detroit became a ghost town and part of the USA's rust belt.

7.3. How Temple Cities Were Created

In ancient India, temples were more than just places of spiritual retreat—they were the nucleus of social, economic and cultural activity. The wealth and resources associated with temples were essential for sustaining cultural activity, like festivals and other celebrations and supporting community welfare, infrastructure and religious continuity. Sourcing funds from temples, historically, therefore, had a



Strategy as Family and Internal Reform

8.1. Defining Strategy as Family and Internal Reform

“Strategy as Family and Internal Reform” draws its foundation from the idea that organisations are not merely profit-driven entities but are akin to families bound by shared values, responsibilities and collective goals. This approach transcends traditional corporate hierarchies by fostering a culture of mutual respect, emotional connection and trust among all stakeholders, including employees, partners and customers. Based on the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्), meaning the world is one family, it is suggested that cooperatives behave similarly.

8.1.1. Core Elements of Strategy as a Family



Organisations that cultivate unity create an inclusive environment where every member feels valued, enhancing collaboration and morale. These organisations build an emotionally secure workplace by respecting employees’ ideas, acknowledging their contributions and addressing their concerns. Rather than encouraging cutthroat competition, the focus shifts to collective

success, with rewards and recognition often centred on team efforts, promoting shared responsibility. Aligning organisational values with actions ensures a cohesive cultural identity rooted in principles such as integrity, fairness and empathy—hallmarks of Indian tradition. Family-owned businesses in India exemplify this approach by blending professional management with core family values, boosting continuity, loyalty and long-term success.

8.2. Internal Reform: Strengthening the Core

Internal reform focuses on continuously improving organisational practices to reflect family-like principles, promoting a more human-centric and inclusive workplace. Transparent communication is pivotal, as it encourages open dialogue across all levels to build trust and break down hierarchical barriers.

Leaders are approachable and act as guiding figures, like family heads who provide clarity and support. Empathy-driven welfare initiatives further strengthen this framework, with programs prioritising

employee well-being, such as mental health support, skill development opportunities and family benefits, showcasing the organisation's commitment to its people.

Conflict resolution is approached collaboratively, with disputes addressed through constructive discussions that value long-term relationships over short-term gains. Akin to Indian traditions, decisions are often made through consensus, reflecting a collective and inclusive approach rather than unilateral authority.

8.3. Importance of Collective Growth in Modern Organisations

Organisations that adopt family-centric principles experience significant benefits, starting with enhanced loyalty and retention. Employees develop a deeper emotional connection to the organisation, leading to reduced turnover and long-term dedication. This unity also strengthens resilience during crises, enabling organisations to recover faster as every member collaborates to overcome challenges.

Such an approach enhances the organisation's reputation, as companies that treat employees, partners and communities like family earn goodwill, attracting top talent and loyal customers. Moreover, aligning organisational goals with societal and environmental well-being cultivates sustainable growth, ensuring success without exploitation and building a legacy of ethical and responsible business practices.

8.4. Western Vs. Indian Philosophical Frameworks

The philosophical frameworks underlying Western and Indian cultures shape their respective management practices, organisational strategies and societal structures. This contrast highlights the divergence between individual-centric and collective-centric approaches and sheds light on how each approach shapes the behaviour and outlook of people within those systems.

8.4.1. Core Principles of Western Thought

Western philosophy, deeply rooted in Greco-Roman traditions and the Enlightenment Era, emphasises individualism, rationality and a structured approach to achieving goals.



Individualism and Autonomy: In the Western mindset, personal goals often precede collective objectives. Individuals are encouraged to prioritise self-advancement and autonomy. The “American Dream” promotes personal success through hard work.

Goal-Oriented Approach: The Western framework is highly task-focused, where measurable targets define success, key performance indicators (KPIs) and timelines. Organisations often emphasise achieving efficiency through procedures, standardisation and data-driven decision-making.

Structured Systems and Predictability: Western organisations have adopted a rigid, rule-based structure that ensures accountability and minimises risk. The “5M Model”—men, money, machinery, material and market—typifies this procedural orientation.

Separation of Personal and Professional Lives: Western management defines clear boundaries between work and personal lives. Relationships in the workplace are often contractual and transactional rather than familial or emotional.

8.4.2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Western Thought

Western thought brings several strengths to organisational practices, including stimulating innovation and creativity by encouraging personal freedom. Its emphasis is on meritocracy, rewarding performance-based achievements and motivating individuals to excel. Additionally, it builds robust systems for governance and accountability, creating transparent and efficient operational frameworks.

However, it also has its limitations. An overemphasis on individual success can diminish team cohesion and collaboration. Strict adherence to rules and order may sometimes stifle flexibility and creativity, particularly in dynamic environments. Moreover, a minimal focus on emotional and cultural factors can weaken employee loyalty and connection, making it challenging to build long-term relationships.

8.4.3. Core Principles of Indian Thought



Indian philosophy, deeply influenced by spiritual texts like the Vedas, Upanishads and epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, revolves around interconnectedness, community and ethical living.

Collectivism and Harmony: The Indian mindset views organisations as extended families. Collective success takes precedence, with individuals working towards shared goals. The concept of “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” (the world is one family) reflects the value placed on inclusivity and cooperation.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Indian systems are inherently flexible, adapting to changing circumstances through resourcefulness and ingenuity. Relationships are valued over rigid adherence to rules, enabling dynamic problem-solving.

Integration of Personal and Professional Lives: Workplace relationships are often familial and deeply personal. Leaders act as mentors or elder figures, fostering loyalty and an emotional connection.

Ethical and Spiritual Focus: Principles of *dharma* (duty) and *karma* (action and its consequences) guide decision-making, ensuring fairness and long-term well-being over short-term gain.

8.4.4. Strengths and Weaknesses of Indian Thought

Indian thought brings valuable strengths to organisational practices, such as building strong interpersonal bonds that facilitate high employee loyalty and trust. It encourages resilience and resourcefulness,



Strategy from Games and Stories

9.1. Introduction

A rich cultural heritage, woven with intricate storytelling and traditional games, serves as a profound medium for imparting moral and social values in India. Rooted in timeless epics, folklore and mythology, Indian story collections like the Panchatantra and Vikram-Betal offer lessons on integrity, resilience and community welfare. Intertwined with traditional games like Mokshapat (Snakes and Ladders) and Pachisi (Ludo's precursor), these narratives shape young minds by instilling essential life skills and fostering ethical awareness.

Traditional Indian games extend beyond entertainment and act as educational tools, emphasising teamwork, patience and strategic thinking. For example, Mokshapat encapsulates the philosophy of *karma* and *dharma*, teaching accountability and perseverance. Similarly, Pachisi reflects battlefield strategy and collaboration, while physical games like Kabaddi build resilience and unity. Children develop a balanced blend of cognitive, emotional and social intelligence by engaging in these activities, facilitating holistic growth.

Storytelling, a communal tradition in India, enriches emotional and ethical development. It cultivates empathy by presenting narratives of courage, sacrifice and wisdom. Stories like “The Crow and the Snake” and “The Lion and the Rabbit” teach resourcefulness and the triumph of intellect in adversity. At the same time, the “Tortoise and the Geese” story underscores the importance of patience and self-control. These tales and games help in connecting children to their cultural roots, reinforcing values that stay with them throughout their lives.

In contrast, Western stories and games often emphasise individualism, ambition and material success. Tales such as “Cinderella” and “The Little Mermaid” inspire self-reliance but may perpetuate consumerism and unrealistic ideals. Despite evolving into symbols of empowerment, iconic figures like Barbie reflect a blend of aspirations and consumerist tendencies, influencing perceptions of success and identity. Western games like “Monopoly” encourage competition.

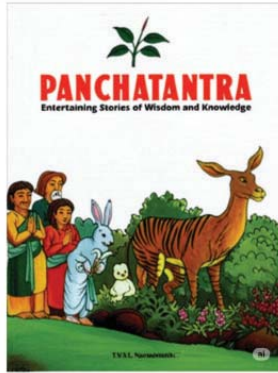
Understanding these cultural distinctions offers valuable insights into how contemporary educational practices are shaped. Reviving Indian traditions in modern formats through digital storytelling, interactive gaming, or educational curricula can reconnect younger generations with their heritage while keeping up with modernisation. With this approach, society can nurture well-rounded individuals with a balanced worldview.

9.2. Indian Stories and Games

Story, symbol and ritual define the culture of a country. India has a rich heritage of storytelling that allows knowledge to be passed down from one generation to another. It is a critical and defining element of the

culture. Storytelling traditions at festivals and special occasions are prominent in India. Puranas, generally narrated in these storytelling sessions, give timeless knowledge about various sciences embedded in stories.

9.2.1. Stories and Their Moral Lessons



India's rich heritage of storytelling and traditional games has profoundly influenced children's moral and social development. These stories serve as educational tools, significantly shaping young minds.

9.2.1.1. The Monkey and the Crocodile



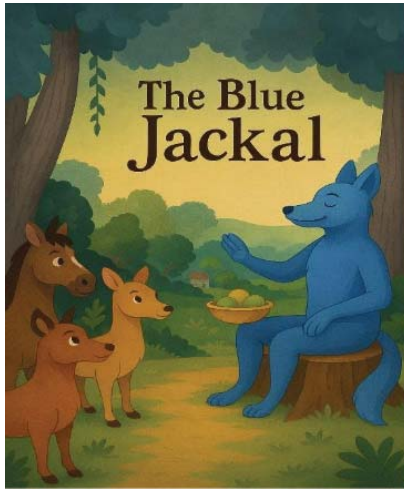
A monkey lived in a tree by the river and shared the tree's sweet fruits with a crocodile, and they became close friends over time. One day, the crocodile told his wife about the monkey and the delicious fruit. The wife assumed that the monkey's heart would be very sweet, considering he consumes sweet fruit daily. The wife, tempted to eat the monkey's heart, convinced the crocodile to invite the monkey home.

As they crossed the river, with the monkey sitting on the crocodile's back, the crocodile revealed his wife's plan. The monkey, thinking quickly, said he had left his heart in the tree. The crocodile took him back, and the monkey immediately climbed to safety and ended their friendship.

The story of "Monkey and the Crocodile" highlights the superiority of wit and intelligence over physical power. Despite being smaller and weaker, the monkey outsmarts the crocodile by thinking quickly and staying calm under pressure. The story demonstrates the importance of intellect in overcoming adversity and making strategic decisions in difficult situations. The story also serves as a cautionary lesson about blind trust. The monkey initially believes in the crocodile's friendship, only to be betrayed under the influence of the crocodile's wife. The story teaches the value of discernment, emphasising that you should trust a worthy candidate in a relationship, and that situations change, and one should be prepared to overcome them.

9.2.1.2. The Blue Jackal

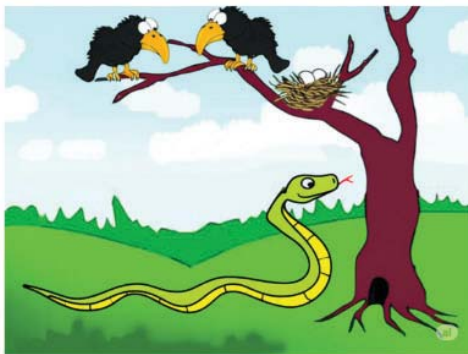
A jackal, running from a group of dogs, accidentally fell into a vat of blue dye. When the jackal emerged, the animals in the jungle were amazed by its unique colour. Taking advantage of this situation, he declared himself a messenger sent by the gods to rule over them. The other animals accepted him as their king,



and he enjoyed a life of luxury. However, one night, he instinctively howled like a jackal. Realising his deception, the animals turned on him and chased him away.

“The Blue Jackal” teaches one the importance of honesty and integrity. The story illustrates that deception, even when initially successful, ultimately leads to downfall. After discovering his true nature, the jackal’s attempt to pose as a divine ruler fails. The story proves that falsehood does not earn trust and respect. Additionally, the tale emphasises self-acceptance, as the jackal’s fate demonstrates the dangers of pretending to be something one is not. Embracing one’s true identity is far more sustainable than seeking power through deceit.

9.2.1.3. The Crow and the Snake



A crow and his mate lived in a tree, but a snake in the hollow below kept eating their eggs. The crows devised a plan. They flew to the palace, stole a valuable necklace from the queen, and dropped it into the snake’s burrow. Following the thief, the palace guards found and killed the snake while retrieving the necklace. The crows’ eggs were safe from then on.

“The Crow and the Snake” highlights the power of intelligence over brute force. Rather than confronting the snake directly, the crows use strategy and resourcefulness to eliminate the threat, proving that wit and planning are more effective than

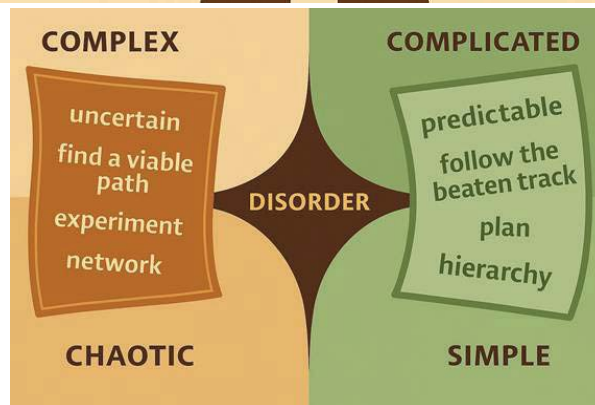
physical strength. The story also underscores the importance of protecting one’s family and possessions. The crows’ efforts in safeguarding their eggs reflect the resilience needed to overcome challenges and secure the well-being of loved ones.

9.2.1.4. The Lion and the Rabbit



A fierce lion terrorised the animals, demanding one of them be sent daily as food. When it was the rabbit’s turn, he deliberately arrived late. The lion was furious, but the rabbit explained that he had been delayed by another, more powerful lion. Surprised, the lion demanded to be taken to his rival. The rabbit led him to a deep well and pointed at the lion’s reflection in the water. The lion, thinking it was his enemy, leapt in and drowned.

“The Lion and the Rabbit” emphasises the value of cleverness in adversity. The rabbit, much smaller



Western and Indian Perspectives Towards Strategic Leadership: An Insight

10.1. Introduction

Broader organisational decisions are taken by the strategic leadership team, which can be influenced by religious beliefs. Strategic management literature is majorly influenced by Western philosophy, which is outward-looking, goal-oriented and logical. It believes in developing universal systematic procedures to solve all business problems, especially through organisational leadership. There is an overwhelming effort to create shareholder value, ignoring cultural and emotional aspects that connect with individual human beings.

The Indian management philosophy believes in considering all stakeholders of the business. Rather than entering into a short-term transaction, it encourages transforming the inner shelf of an employee, which leads to better contribution, respect for other people's viewpoints and collaboration. It places importance on cooperation with your business competitors to create value for society and to serve as many people as possible. Religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, etc. have had a major influence on Indian philosophy. They consider every living being to be a part and parcel of the divine. So, as per Indian belief, the world is a family, and businesses should help every stakeholder realise their divine potential rather than only providing material benefits to shareholders. This chapter has developed a framework to help understand the Indian ethos that applies to the business world. This chapter delves deep into the Indian mind, which can help meaningfully understand India.

10.2. Western and Indian Perspectives for Strategy Formulation

Strategy formulation is dependent on the belief system. There is a distinct difference between the Western and Indian thought systems, which influence decision-making in their respective business environments. Thought processes are influenced by religion. One's core belief plays a central role in formulating strategies and implementing them.

Christianity influences Western society, which combines the catholic and protestant belief systems. Two mythic streams feed the river of what we call Western thought today: the Greek and the biblical. The biblical thought process can be called Abrahamic or Semitic. The Romans propagated the Greek philosophy throughout their empire. The principal difference between catholic and protestant culture is over compliance and defiance, individualism over the collective. Both thought processes are united by the belief in one life. There is always a struggle between faith and compliance.

One among the belief systems that influences the Indian thought process is multiple births (Shvetashvatara Upanishad V.11). As per Hindu philosophy, the subtle body assumes various gross bodies to fulfil its desire and suffer as per the theory of *karma*. There are lots of stories to corroborate the concept. Once,

the Goddess of wealth, Laxmi, pleaded with her husband, lord Vishnu, to help a poor beggar. Vishnu showed his inability to help the beggar, as the beggar had nothing in his *karma*. Finally, Vishnu concedes to his wife's demand and keeps the money under a tree, but it does not draw the beggar's attention. This example shows the power of our actions, which even gods cannot intervene in.

Due to the vast differences in fundamental belief systems, Western and Indian managers embrace different thought processes during strategy formulation. Below is an attempt to outline a few differences in their approach.

10.2.1. One Truth (Absolute Truth) / Everything is a Manifestation of the Single Truth (Relative Truth)

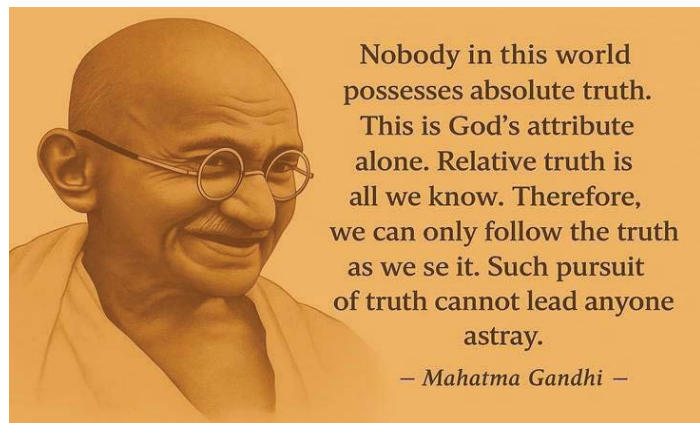
Christians believe in one God, unlike Hindus, who believe in multiple gods. Although there are many gods, the Hindus believe all gods are manifestations of one Supreme Brahman. This underlying thought process is also reflected in business practices. As per the Western management model, the shareholder is the ultimate God of the business. The Indian thought believes in collective good for every stakeholder in business, as everything and everyone is a manifestation of one divinity.

Now, multiple Indian companies have gained success on the global stage. Few researchers have found that many Indian companies are seen to pursue a “social mission” rather than “profit maximisation” as their primary goal. There is a striking interest in benefiting a broader community, including nearby businesses and the welfare of the entire nation. Bharati Airtel, Dr Reddy Labs, ITC, Tata, Hindustan Unilever, etc., are some of the many Indian organisations that take pride in value creation for Indian society rather than striving for profit maximisation as their primary goal. This is fundamentally different from corporate social responsibility as adopted by Western organisations.

Their efforts are to serve the “bottom of the pyramid”, which gives importance to serving poor people rather than making more money (Prahlad, 2004; Prahlad, 2012). In Mission Sunehra Kal (the Golden Tomorrow), an ITC-developed rural initiative to help farmers, profit was a secondary motive (Lakshman, 2009). The initiative included a knowledge portal to help farmers negotiate prices with suppliers, expand their education and create opportunities to support them. Similarly, there are many examples of Indian organisations involved in philanthropic activities. Their approach can potentially enhance the ability to engage and motivate employees through meaningful work. The enhanced focus on the “social mission” can be a powerful motivator that provides a competitive advantage.

As per the Western management model, the primary goal of a business organisation is to maximise shareholder profit, and some would argue that it is the only goal of a contemporary business. However, a “stakeholder” model exists, which argues that companies have many stakeholders and that it is essential to balance their interests.

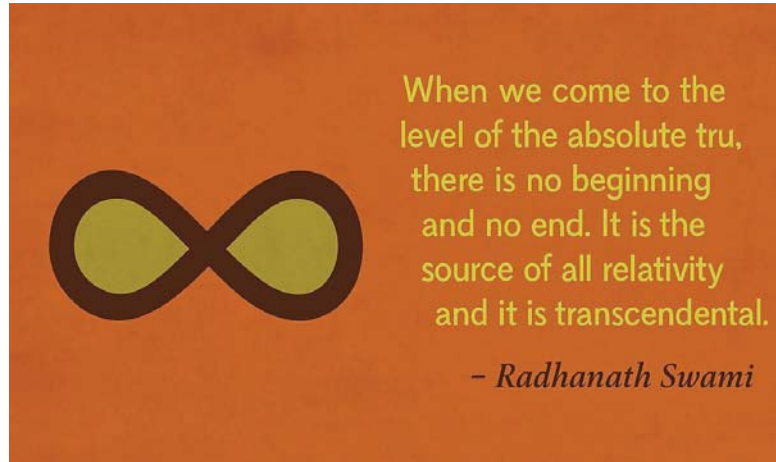
Western management is always comfortable with a single idea, such as CMM, TQM and ERP. One idea gains popularity and slowly



disappears after the industry accepts or rejects it. America has been deeply influenced by Protestant culture and religious individualism. There is a single language in the US currency, which has declared a single religion as the national religion, but it accommodates other religions. The Protestant work culture suggests that “work is worship”, and that religion is something to be practised inside the home, and the state has no right to intervene in it. Although Western philosophy suggests keeping religion away from work, its influence is visible.

10.2.2. Binary Logic/Fuzzy Logic

Western managers try to see everything in black and white and expect similar responses from their subordinates. There is a concept of hell and heaven in life, which is permanent; each story has a hero and a villain. Strategic management literature is built upon methods and processes to fight the competition and win the war.

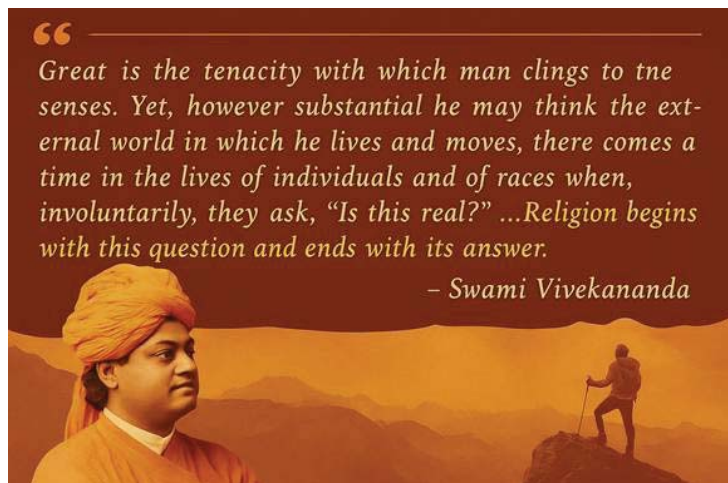


Strategy is derived from the Greek word “strategos”, which means “the art of general” (Grant, 2002). Business is compared with war, which has to be won at all costs. However, Western business models are evolving to cooperate with competitors, to create value for customers and other stakeholders in the business process.

The concept of “conflicting ideas” exists in India, and Indian thought is about extremes, where every possible occurrence is accepted. Everything is the manifestation of a single God, and everyone is a manifestation of the divine. Even a villain like Ravana in the Ramayan is divine, as he was the security person of Lord Vishnu in his previous life. So, an individual’s soul can act well or poorly, depending on the circumstances.

As per the Upanishads, life is a vehicle with two wheels: desire and destiny. Every person’s life oscillates between these two extremes. The story of Savitri in Indian mythology, who fought with destiny to save her husband from the clutches of death, showcases this idea. There is also the story of sage Gautami, who did not intervene with destiny to save her son’s life from a snake bite, although she had the power to bring her son back to life.

All conflicting ideas exist in India, and they are respected. Upanishads postulate



VIVEKANANDA ON CASTE

“But the older I grow, the better I seem to think of these time-honored institutions of India. There was a time when I used to think that many of them were useless and worthless; but the older I grew, the more I seem to feel a diffidence in cursing any one of them, for each one of them is the embodiment of the experience of centuries.”

- Swami Vivekananda
Lectures from Colombo to Almora.



Caste and the Indian Business Model

11.1. Introduction

As a socio-cultural phenomenon, “caste” has been a defining feature of Indian society for centuries. Everyone views caste as a rigid hierarchical system perpetuating inequality and discrimination. But a deeper examination reveals its nuanced roles and contributions to social organisation and economic structures. Prof R Vaidyanathan, in his thought-provoking book “Caste as Social Capital” and the accompanying IndicTalks lecture, challenges the conventional perception of caste. He posits that caste operates as a form of social capital, breeding community trust, collaboration and resilience. These networks have historically provided informal welfare systems, facilitated entrepreneurship and preserved traditional knowledge.

This perspective opens a new dimension to understanding caste, not merely as a relic of oppression but as a dynamic and adaptive system that has shaped India’s socio-economic landscape. Prof Vaidyanathan emphasises that caste, when seen through the lens of social capital, can be a powerful tool for development and community empowerment. However, realising this potential requires addressing historical distortions, systemic inequities and the modern challenges of urbanisation and globalisation.

Vivekananda’s perspective suggests that, rather than dismissing it outright, one should analyse the caste system’s historical role in sustaining social order and division of labour. However, Vivekananda also advocated for reform, emphasising the need to adapt such institutions to modern values of equality and justice, ensuring they serve humanity rather than hinder progress.

This chapter explores the historical context of caste, its evolution and its implications as social capital. It delves into its economic, political and cultural dimensions, culminating in actionable recommendations for leveraging caste networks while promoting inclusivity. The aim is to provide a balanced narrative that acknowledges the system’s complexities while identifying pathways for progress.

11.2. Historical Context of Caste

The caste system’s origins and evolution are deeply intertwined with India’s socio-economic and religious history. From its initial framework as a flexible and functional social order, it transformed under colonial rule into a rigid hierarchy with enduring implications.

11.2.1. Origins and Evolution

The earliest concept of caste, rooted in the *varna* system, categorised society into four broad groups: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (traders and artisans) and Shudras (labourers and service providers). This system was based on *guna* (qualities) and *karma* (actions), allowing individuals to transition across categories. Over time, this idealistic framework gave way to the *jati* system, which organised communities based on occupation and kinship.

The *jati* system was highly localised and decentralised, promoting economic interdependence and community resilience. Artisans, farmers, traders and service providers formed tightly-knit networks that sustained regional economies. Caste also played a significant role in knowledge preservation, with communities specialising in specific trades or crafts and passing down their expertise across generations. This decentralised structure ensured self-reliance and stability in pre-modern Indian societies.

However, the transition from a fluid occupational order to a hereditary and rigid hierarchy began long before colonial interventions. Resource competition, religious orthodoxy and invasions contributed to the stratification and ossification of caste identities. Despite this, many regions maintained a degree of flexibility, with evidence of upward mobility and cross-caste collaboration.

11.2.2. Colonial Disruption and Codification

The British colonial period marked a turning point in the caste system's trajectory. The colonial administration, seeking to govern a vast and diverse population, imposed artificial rigidity on caste identities. The first British census in 1881 classified India's population into broad caste categories, aggregating thousands of *jatis* into hierarchical groups. This codification distorted the dynamic nature of caste, reinforcing divisions and stereotypes.

Colonial economic policies further exacerbated caste-based inequalities. The imposition of land revenue systems displaced traditional land-owning communities, often pushing lower-caste groups into extreme poverty. Artisanal castes, once the backbone of local economies, suffered due to the influx of industrial goods from Britain, leading to widespread unemployment and loss of skills.

Education systems under British rule also contributed to caste disparities. Traditional systems of community-funded education, which provided access to all castes, were dismantled. Resources were redirected towards English-medium schools catering to upper-caste elites, leaving marginalised communities without opportunities for upward mobility. The colonial period thus entrenched caste hierarchies, transforming a flexible and interdependent system into a rigid and divisive framework. These changes created enduring socio-economic disparities that persist to this day.

11.2.3. Post-Independence Efforts and Challenges

The post-independence Indian state recognised caste as a critical factor in addressing historical injustices and ensuring social equity. The framers of the Constitution, led by Dr B R Ambedkar, sought to dismantle caste-based discrimination through legal and policy interventions. Key measures included the abolition of untouchability, reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in education and jobs, and promoting social welfare schemes.

However, implementing these policies faced significant challenges. The lack of updated data, as India's last caste census was conducted in 1931, hindered the effective targeting of resources. Moreover, affirmative action often treated caste as a static identity, ignoring intra-caste disparities and regional variations—the politicisation of caste further complicated efforts, with reservations becoming a controversial issue in electoral politics.

Despite these challenges, caste networks continue to function as informal institutions of governance and welfare, providing support during crises and facilitating economic activities. The following section will

explore caste as a form of social capital, examining its role in facilitating community-driven development and entrepreneurship.

11.3. Caste as Social Capital and its Economic Role

11.3.1. Caste as Social Capital

Social capital refers to the networks, relationships and norms within a society that enable collective action and mutual support. In the context of caste, social capital manifests through tightly knit networks of trust, collaboration and resource-sharing within specific communities. Prof R Vaidyanathan's framework of caste as social capital redefines it from being a purely oppressive system to one that promotes resilience and community-driven progress.

Caste networks, like guilds in medieval Europe, are rooted in occupational specialisation and mutual trust. These networks provide informal safety nets, offering financial assistance, employment opportunities and social support. For example, caste-based associations often step in to fund education, manage crises and even mediate disputes. These mechanisms reduce dependency on external institutions, particularly in regions with weak or inaccessible formal systems. Thus, caste can be seen as an adaptive system that continues to fulfil essential socio-economic functions.

However, leveraging caste as social capital requires addressing its dual nature. While it facilitates intra-community cohesion, it can also perpetuate exclusion and inequality. The challenge lies in preserving the positive aspects of caste networks while dismantling their discriminatory tendencies. This section explores how caste functions as social capital, focusing on its economic contributions and challenges in modern India.

11.3.2. Economic Role of Caste

Caste networks have historically been integral to India's economic framework. They facilitate entrepreneurship, provide informal credit systems and enable the preservation and transfer of specialised skills. These contributions are particularly significant in rural and semi-urban areas, where formal institutions often fall short.

11.3.2.1. Economic Clusters

Economic clusters are geographically concentrated networks of interconnected businesses, suppliers, service providers and associated institutions in a particular industry. These clusters thrive on the synergy created by proximity, enabling cost reduction, efficiency, innovation and competitiveness. Globally recognised examples include Silicon Valley for technology and automotive manufacturing in Detroit. In the Indian context, economic clusters have a unique character, often shaped by social and cultural systems, including caste-based networks. Prominent examples in India include Surat's diamond polishing industry, the knitwear hub in Tiruppur, the brassware industry in Jamnagar and the firecracker industry in Sivakasi. These clusters contribute significantly to exports, employment and regional development.

Caste-based occupational clustering has long influenced India's economic structure. The concept of Vaishyavisation, as discussed by Gupta (2004), explains how trading castes like the Vaishyas, Marwaris and Chettiars have dominated specific industries by leveraging internal networks and hereditary expertise.



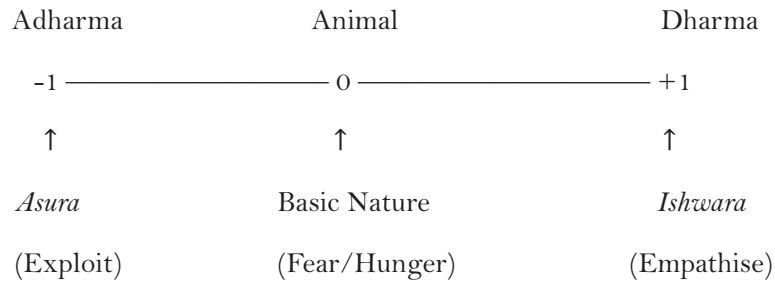
A Discussion on Management Philosophy from Indra and Shiva

12.1. Introduction

Indian mythology, deeply rooted in *dharma*, intertwines moral philosophy with profound scientific wisdom, offering timeless insights into existence. These narratives depict human virtues and flaws and showcase advanced knowledge through symbolic storytelling. For instance, the moon's association with the 27 *nakshatras* reflects precise astronomical mapping. At the same time, the tale of Brihaspati's wife, Tara, illustrates the interplay between planetary movements and lessons on wisdom and relationships. The Samudra Manthan (churning of the ocean) symbolises the eternal quest for balance—both cosmic and chemical—whereas the descent of the Ganga to Earth represents intricate hydrological cycles. Such stories reinforce *dharma* as not merely a moral compass but a principle governing the interconnectedness of life and the cosmos.

In today's organisations, leadership entails navigating complexities and requires a harmonious blend of ethical governance, crisis management and sustainable growth. Drawing parallels from Hindu philosophy, the archetypes of Lord Indra and Lord Shiva offer valuable perspectives. Lord Indra, often depicted as the king of the gods, embodies leadership challenges, including the handling of power, desire and the consequences of his actions. His narratives highlight the importance of responsibility and the potential pitfalls of indulgence. Conversely, Lord Shiva, known as “The Destroyer” or “The Transformer”, exemplifies simplicity, humility, integrity, versatility and authenticity. His ascetic lifestyle and profound wisdom highlight the significance of introspection, reflection, balance and transformation in leadership. By learning from each of these Gods, modern leaders can cultivate a leadership style that drives success and a positive legacy.

12.2. The Concept of Dharma



Indra: (Sometimes Positive and sometimes Negative)

- Above or below animal nature (0) but below pure dharma (+1)
- Shows both deva and asura tendencies
- Fluctuates between self-interest and dharmic duty
- Still bound by fear/hunger, though in elevated form

Shiva: +1

- Complete embodiment of *dharmā*
- Beyond fear/hunger (outgrown)
- Pure empathy/consciousness
- *Ishwara* state (highest divine nature)

In life, we oscillate between Indra and Shiva based on our circumstances, choices and level of awareness. We are Indra when we seek career success, recognition and material security, yet feel threatened by competition or failure. A corporate leader fighting for a promotion, sometimes making self-serving decisions but ensuring team welfare, reflects Indra's fluctuating nature—torn between personal ambition and duty. Similarly, in personal relationships, when we expect that our love and friendship are reciprocated, we act as Indra, attaching ourselves to rewards rather than unconditional giving.

We become Shiva when we transcend fear, ego and desires by embracing selfless action and higher wisdom. A doctor serving in a rural area without expecting wealth or recognition mirrors Shiva's detachment and empathy. A parent who nurtures their child without imposing their expectations on them, but acts purely out of love, embodies Shiva's selfless nature. In leadership, a visionary who makes difficult decisions for the greater good, even at personal cost, walks the path of Shiva.





Lord Indra is often depicted as the king of the gods, embodying qualities such as assertiveness, decisiveness and a focus on immediate results. His leadership style emphasises proactive engagement and the pursuit of desires, reflecting the concept of “*bhoga*” (enjoyment). However, Indra’s narratives also highlight the pitfalls of unchecked ambition and the consequences of overindulgence. For instance, his relentless pursuit of desires often led to conflicts and challenges to his authority, underscoring the importance of balance and self-regulation in leadership. (Figure: Lord Indra on his elephant, Airavat)

Lord Shiva, in contrast, embodies introspection, transformation and a long-term vision. Known as the “Mahadeva” (Great God), Shiva’s leadership is characterised by deep meditation, self-awareness and the ability to destroy to create anew. His narratives emphasise the significance of inner growth, resilience and the transcendence of ego. For example, Shiva’s act of consuming the poison during the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan) to save the world illustrates his willingness to absorb negativity for the greater good, highlighting the virtues of sacrifice and responsibility in leadership. (Figure: Lord Shiva in meditation)

Modern management theories increasingly recognise the value of integrating such ancient wisdom into contemporary practices. Hinduism offers an alternative management paradigm, emphasising a hybrid of individualistic and collective thinking, setting it apart from other cultures. This approach aligns with the need for leaders to balance immediate action with reflective thought, ensuring effective and ethically sound decisions.

12.3. Comparative Analysis of the Pancha Koshas (Five Sheaths) Through the Lens of Indra and Shiva’s Characteristics

As per the Upanishad, the world is a virtual illusion that fulfils the *jiva*’s or living beings’ desires. The concept of the five sheaths is explained in chapter four, and Figure 1 below demonstrates the concept of Shiva and Shakti. The soul is consciousness or Shiva, and the external world is Shakti.

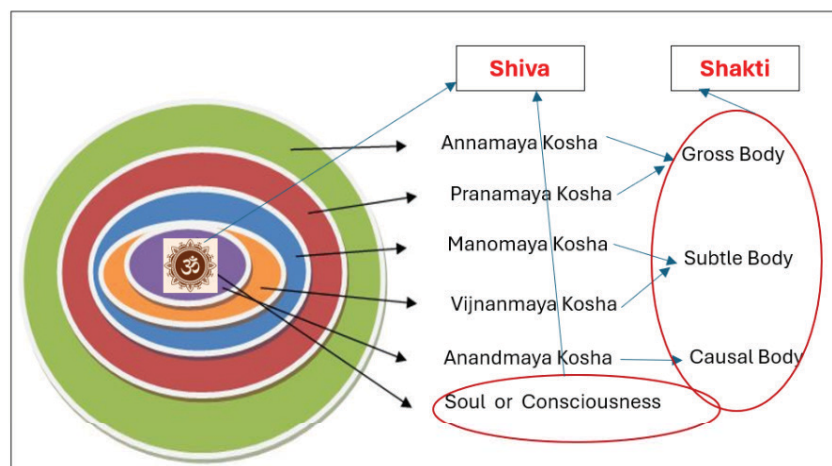


Figure 1: The Concept of Shiva and Shakti



A Comprehensive Discussion on the Dashavatara of Lord Vishnu, with a Focus on the Matsya Avatara

13.1. An Overview of the Dashavatara of Vishnu

The *Dashavatara* are a cornerstone of Hindu mythology, offering deep insights into the cyclical nature of existence and the universal need for balance. Each *avatar* of Vishnu represents a response to the ever-changing dynamics of the cosmos, embodying qualities required to restore equilibrium during times of upheaval. These stories are not merely accounts of divine intervention but also allegories of human struggles, societal transformations and the perpetual evolution of life.

The Sanskrit word “*avatari*” translates to “descent”, signifying the descent of the divine into the mortal world. This divine intervention underscores the Hindu belief in *dharma*—the eternal law of the universe that sustains order and harmony. When *adharma* (chaos and unrighteousness) threatened *dharma*, Vishnu incarnates to restore balance. Each *avatar* corresponds to a specific crisis and offers a tailored resolution, demonstrating the adaptability and responsiveness required in spiritual and worldly contexts. All *avatars* are pictorially represented in Figure 1.

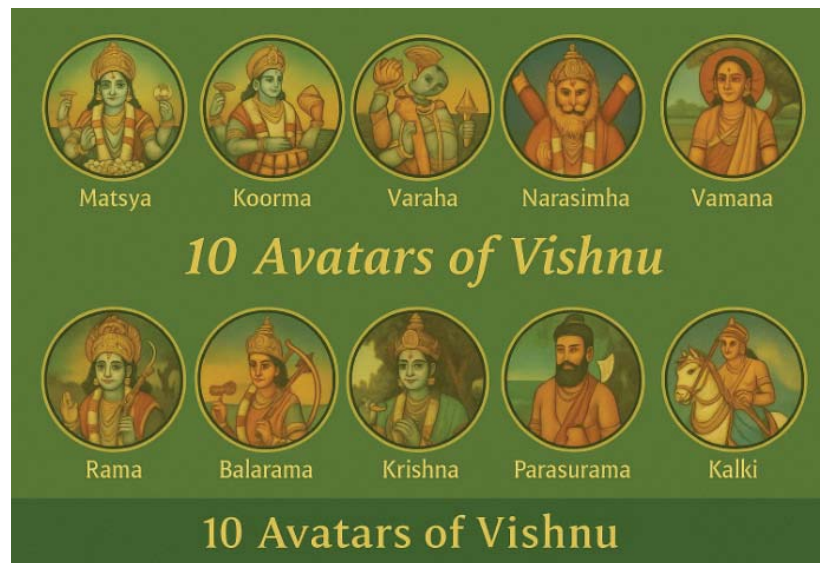


Figure 1: The 10 Avatars (Dashavatara) OF Lord Vishnu

Unlike the linear perspective of history found in many Western traditions, Hindu thought sees time as an endless cycle of creation, preservation and destruction. The *Dashavatara* exemplify this cycle, with each *avatar* addressing a phase of decay or disruption and restoring balance to it. This cyclical view encourages

resilience and long-term thinking, reminding us that every challenge is temporary and the right approach is required to overcome it.

Another profound aspect of the *Dashavatars* is their emphasis on the interconnectedness of all life forms. Vishnu does not always take a human form; his *avatars* include a fish, a tortoise, a boar and even a hybrid man-lion. This diversity of forms reflects the Hindu belief in the unity of existence and that every being, regardless of its shape or size, has a role in the cosmic order. In modern terms, this can be seen as a call for inclusivity and respect for diversity, whether in ecological conservation, social systems or organisational culture.

The *avatars* also address the concepts of justice and leadership. For example, Rama, the seventh *avatar*, is revered as the ideal king and ruler. His story in the Ramayana emphasises the importance of ethical leadership, self-sacrifice and adherence to *dharma*, even in the face of personal loss. Rama's unwavering commitment to duty, fairness and the well-being of his people makes him a timeless role model for leaders in any field. Similarly, Krishna, the eighth *avatar*, represents strategic thinking and emotional intelligence. His role in the Mahabharata and his teachings in the Bhagavad Gita emphasise the importance of understanding human nature, making ethical decisions and balancing personal desires with greater responsibilities.

The *Dashavatars* are not just about divine intervention but also about human potential. Each *avatar* teaches us that challenges are opportunities for growth, transformation and the reaffirmation of values. This is a powerful message for modern life, where rapid changes and uncertainties are constant. Each *avatar* reflects a stage of development, from the survival instincts of Matsya to the intellectual and spiritual enlightenment of Buddha. Organisations, like individuals, must evolve through these stages, learning to adapt to new challenges, embrace diversity and uphold ethical principles. The *Dashavatars* thus serve as a blueprint for navigating the complexities of modern life, offering timeless wisdom for achieving balance, harmony and success.

13.2. Symbolic Relevance of the Dashavatars in Hindu Philosophy

Hindu philosophy portrays Vishnu as the preserver of the universe, a central figure in maintaining cosmic balance. His role complements Brahma, the creator, and Shiva, the destroyer, in the triad of Hindu deities. Vishnu's role as the preserver is crucial, as it ensures the sustenance of life and the upholding of *dharma* (righteousness) amid the natural flux of the universe. Vishnu's preservation is not passive but dynamic, as he intervenes actively whenever the balance between *dharma* (order) and *adharma* (chaos) is



Figure 2: The Manifestation Of Lord Vishnu As 10 Avatars Reflects His Role As A Preserver

disturbed. His intervention comes as the *Dashavatars*, or ten *avatars*, symbolising his commitment to restoring harmony.

The *Dashavatars* encapsulate the philosophical essence of Hindu thought, wherein *dharma* is not a static law but a living principle that evolves with time. Each *avatar* reflects the particular challenges of its era and Vishnu's tailored response to those challenges. For instance, in times of existential crisis, like the great deluge, Vishnu takes the form of Matsya, the fish, to preserve life and knowledge.

The concept of *dharma* is central to understanding Vishnu's *avatars*. *Dharma* is not merely a moral code but a universal principle that sustains life, ethics and social order. It evolves with the needs of the world and adapts to changing circumstances. This adaptability is evident through the *Dashavatars*, where Vishnu's forms range from the simplest (Matsya, the fish) to the most complex (Krishna, the strategist and philosopher). This progression reflects the growth of life and consciousness, mirroring humanity's journey from primal survival to intellectual and spiritual enlightenment.

13.3. Evolutionary Symbolism in the Dashavatars

The *Dashavatars* uniquely align with the evolutionary journey of life and the progression of human society, illustrating the interconnectedness of nature, growth and transformation. This sequence reflects not only biological evolution but also the moral and spiritual advancement of humanity. For example, Vamana (the dwarf) represents the awakening of intellect, while Rama (the ideal king) symbolises ethical governance and the establishment of civilisation. These narratives highlight a profound understanding of life's progression, offering timeless insights into personal and societal growth. Let us briefly explore all the *avatars*.

13.3.1. Matsya (Fish): Life Begins in Water

In Hindu mythology, the fish *avatar*, Matsya, is believed to have saved the sacred Vedas during a great deluge—or flood—guiding humanity to safety. This narrative underscores the importance of preserving knowledge and adapting to crises. Symbolically, Matsya represents the origin of life in water, highlighting adaptability and safeguarding foundational resources in uncertain times.



13.3.2. Kurma (Turtle): Amphibian Life

Kurma, the turtle *avatar*, is associated with the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan), where Lord Vishnu took the form of a tortoise and supported Mount Mandara, used in the churning process. This story emphasises the virtues of patience, resilience and the necessity of a stable foundation for monumental endeavours. Kurma symbolises the transition from aquatic to amphibian life, reflecting the importance of collaboration and perseverance in achieving long-term objectives.





Discussion on Management Philosophy from the Kurma Avatar

14.1. Introduction

Indian mythology has always offered eternal wisdom that cuts beyond cultural and temporal borders with its complex tapestry of tales. The idea of the Dashavatar, the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, is one of its most captivating stories. These avatars are allegories for governance, ethics and leadership, and represent divine intervention during emergencies. As the upholder of cosmic order (dharma), Lord Vishnu assumes several guises to bring about equilibrium, offering essential lessons in flexibility, judgment and social duty. Kurma Avatar is the subject of this chapter. We will also look at its relevance and significance in modern contexts such as strategic governance, management and leadership.

In Hindu philosophy, the idea of *dharma* is malleable and is constantly reinterpreted to meet the requirements of the modern world. Vishnu's *avatars* best exemplify this flexibility, each designed to resolve specific crises in order to bring about equilibrium. The word "*avatar*", which comes from the Sanskrit "*avatarti*" (to descend), refers to the divine coming down to the Earth to deal with turmoil and preserve *dharma*. In contrast to certain religions' monolithic depictions of divinity, Vishnu's *avatars* emphasise adaptability, contextual problem-solving and a pluralistic outlook. These *avatars* show how spirituality and pragmatism can survive by fusing metaphysical principles with workable solutions, as Devdutt Pattanaik emphasises in Seven Secrets of Vishnu.

Vishnu actively participates in worldly activities and is also a detached observer who embodies the duality of participation and detachment. This dynamic offers a comprehensive road map for overcoming individual, societal and organisational obstacles and is compatible with contemporary leadership, ethical and social engagement ideals. Figure 1 provides a pictorial representation of various Vishnu *avatars*.

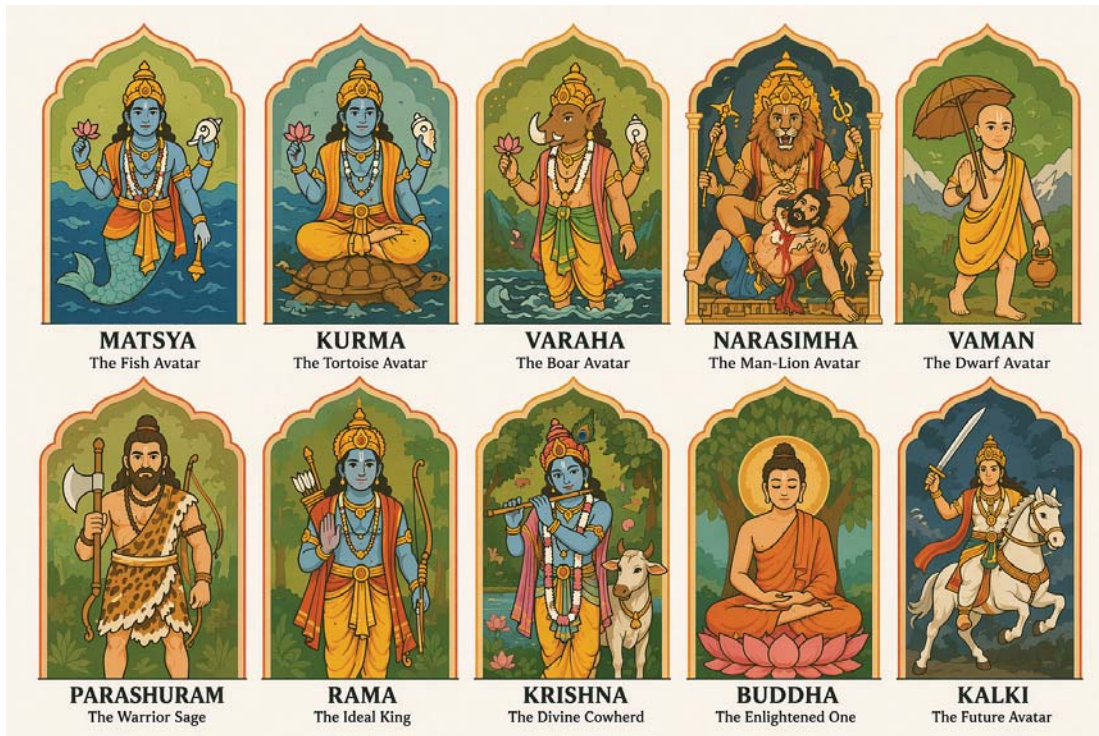


Figure 1: Vishnu Avatara

The characteristics of various *avatars* are provided below.

- Aquatic: Matsya
- Amphibian: Kurma
- Terrestrial: Varaha
- Half Human: Narasimha
- Less Developed Human: Vamana
- Human: Parashurama Brahmana, but behaves like Kshatriya (Brahmachari)
- Human: Ram is born and acts like a Kshatriya (Grihastis)
- Human: Krishna, born as a Kshatriya, but behaves like a Vaishya and Shudra (Grihastis)
- Buddha: Vanaprasthi and Sanyasi
- Future Avatar: Kalki – Sanyasi and Kshatriya, destined to end Kali Yuga

14.2. Kurma Avatar: Mythological Context and Symbolism

14.2.1. Mythological Context

Long ago, the universe's balance rested on Indra, the king of the Gods, who ruled the heavens with power and pride. One day, Sage Durvasa, known for his intense penance and fiery temper, received a divine garland blessed with celestial energy. As he wandered the world, he encountered Indra riding his majestic white elephant, Airavata. Wishing to honour the king of Gods, Durvasa presented him with the sacred garland as depicted in Figure 2.

Indra, blinded by arrogance, casually placed it on Airavata's trunk. Unaware of its significance, the elephant tossed the garland and trampled it. This blatant act of disrespect enraged Durvasa, who cursed Indra in a fit of anger, saying, "Your pride has blinded you to divine gifts. You and your fellow Gods will lose your strength, wealth and the dominion of the heavens."

Almost instantly, the Gods weakened, their radiance faded, and their power crumbled. Seizing the opportunity, the *asuras*, led by their king Bali, overthrew the Gods and claimed the heavens as their own.

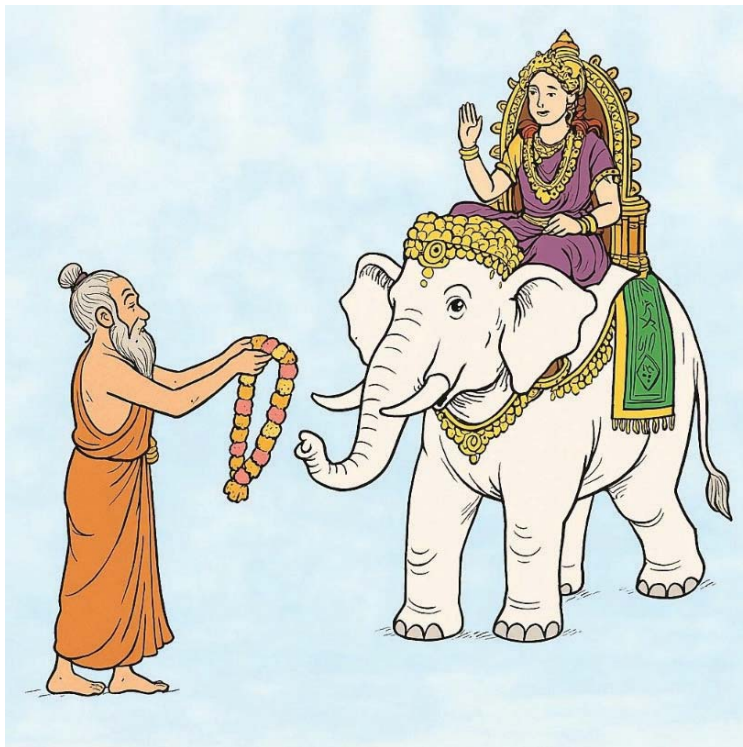


Figure 2: Sage Durvasa Presenting the Sacred Garland

After losing their home and power, the *devas* turned to Lord Vishnu, the preserver of the universe, seeking a way to restore balance. Vishnu, ever compassionate, advised them to propose a temporary truce with the *asuras* and suggest a collaborative effort to churn the ocean of milk, or the *Ksheer Sagar*, to retrieve *amruta*, the nectar of immortality. This nectar would restore their strength and secure their victory.

Following Vishnu's advice, the *devas* approached the *asuras* with the proposal. Tempted by the promise of immortality, the *asuras* agreed, and preparations began. Mount Mandara was chosen as the churning rod, and Vasuki, the king of serpents, became the churning rope. The Gods and demons lined up on either side, ready to churn the *Ksheer Sagar* (Figure 3).



Discussion on Varaha, Narashimha, Vamana and Parasurama Avatars of Lord Vishnu

15.1. Introduction

Indian mythology, with its intricate tapestry of stories, has long provided timeless wisdom that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries. Among its most compelling narratives is the concept of the *Dashavatars*—the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. These *avatars* symbolise divine intervention in times of crisis and serve as allegories for leadership, ethics and governance. As the sustainer of cosmic order (*dharma*), Lord Vishnu takes various forms to restore balance, providing valuable insights into adaptability, decision-making and social responsibility. This chapter focuses on four pivotal avatars—Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana and Parasurama—and examines their significance and relevance in contemporary contexts like leadership, management and ethical governance.

15.2. Context and Relevance of Lord Vishnu's Avatars

The concept of *dharma* in Hindu philosophy is fluid, requiring constant reinterpretation to address the unique challenges of changing times. Vishnu's *avatars* epitomise this adaptability, with each incarnation tailored to address specific crises and restore balance. Unlike monolithic representations of divinity seen in some traditions, Vishnu's *avatars* emphasise flexibility, contextual problem-solving and a pluralistic worldview. Devdutt Pattanaik highlights in *Seven Secrets of Vishnu* that these *avatars* blend metaphysical ideals with practical solutions, demonstrating how spirituality and pragmatism coexist. Vishnu is portrayed as both a detached observer and an active participant in worldly affairs, embodying the duality of engagement and detachment. This dynamic resonates deeply with modern leadership, ethics and societal engagement principles, offering a holistic blueprint for navigating challenges at personal, societal and organisational levels.

15.2.1. Symbolism in Vishnu Avatars

15.2.1.1. Varaha (The Boar)

Varaha, Vishnu's third *avatar*, emerges during cosmic chaos when the demon Hiranyaksha submerges the Earth (Bhudevi) into the primordial ocean. In the form of a boar, Vishnu dives into the depths to rescue and restore the Earth to its rightful place. The *avatar* represents resilience, strength and the courage to confront disorder. The imagery of lifting the Earth on his tusks is an allegory for leadership in crises, emphasising the importance of facing challenges head-on and protecting the resources essential for life and sustainability. Varaha's narrative highlights the leader's role in restoring order and safeguarding stability.

15.2.1.2. Narasimha (The Man-Lion)

The fourth *avatar*, Narasimha, is a paradigm of innovation and justice. Hiranyakashipu, a tyrannical king immune to conventional threats, defies divine law and suppresses his pious son, Prahlada. To honour his promise of protection to Prahlada, Vishnu manifests as Narasimha—a being neither fully man nor animal—to vanquish the tyrant. This *avatar* teaches the importance of creative problem-solving and adaptability, demonstrating how unconventional methods can address unprecedented challenges. Narasimha's triumph over oppression symbolises the victory of justice and equity, inspiring leaders to adopt innovative approaches when traditional frameworks fall short.

15.2.1.3. Vamana (The Dwarf)

Vamana, the fifth *avatar*, exemplifies intellect, humility and strategic foresight. Bali, a benevolent but overambitious king, disrupts cosmic balance with his growing dominance. Vishnu incarnates as a dwarf *brahmin* and uses wit and negotiation to reclaim equilibrium. Vamana restores harmony without force by requesting three paces of land and then expanding to cosmic proportions, covering all realms, thereby showcasing the power of intellect over brute strength. This *avatar* underscores the importance of humility, diplomacy and measured ambition, reflecting the qualities of ethical leadership and strategic resource management.

15.2.1.4. Parasurama (The Warrior Sage)

Parasurama, the sixth *avatar*, critiques the misuse of power by the Kshatriya class, who have strayed from their *dharma*. As a warrior-ascetic wielding an axe, Parasurama embodies the dualities of aggression and discipline. By challenging arrogance and redistributing resources, he enforces justice and equality. This *avatar* symbolises the complexity of leadership, where power comes with responsibility, and accountability must accompany action. Parasurama's narrative emphasises the importance of ethical governance and the need to balance assertiveness with compassion in leadership roles.

15.2.2. Integration with Modern Leadership Principles

The teachings of Vishnu's *avatars* resonate with modern management and leadership practices, bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary challenges. As Devdutt Pattanaik elaborates in *Business Sutra*, these narratives provide frameworks for addressing crises, making ethical decisions and cultivating sustainable leadership.

Narasimha's adaptability mirrors the concept of disruptive innovation in business, where unconventional solutions are necessary to tackle entrenched challenges. Vamana's humility and strategic foresight reflect the importance of sustainable leadership, emphasising intellect, diplomacy and balanced ambition. Parasurama's critique of power misuse resonates with corporate responsibility, advocating for ethical practices and equitable resource management. These *avatars* also highlight the importance of aligning personal values with organisational goals, encouraging a culture of empathy, inclusivity and ethical accountability in leadership.

15.2.3. Broader Significance of the Avatars and Relevance to Management

Beyond leadership, the *avatars* encapsulate the balance between materialism (*Prakriti*) and spirituality (*Purusha*). Vishnu's role as a preserver involves actively engaging with the material world while being anchored in spiritual ideals, offering a nuanced perspective on navigating complex realities. By interpreting these *avatars* as symbols of human virtues and strategies, we uncover lessons applicable across domains—from personal development to societal reforms.

The stories of Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana and Parasurama inspire us to embrace diversity, adapt to changing circumstances, and lead with empathy and purpose. These narratives bridge ancient mythology with contemporary discourse, encouraging a holistic understanding of leadership, ethics, conflict resolution, innovation and social responsibility. This chapter aims to show how the timeless lessons of Vishnu's *avatars* remain profoundly relevant in today's world, providing a robust framework for sustainable and value-driven leadership.

15.3. Varaha Avatar: Rescuing the Earth and Restoring Cosmic Order

The Varaha *Avatar*, the third incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is a compelling tale of divine intervention to restore balance and protect creation. Emerging during the “Satya Yuga”, this *avatar* symbolises resilience, courage and the ability to confront chaos head-on. Taking the form of a colossal boar, Vishnu's Varaha *Avatar* is a narrative rich in dramatic events, profound symbolism and timeless lessons, deeply resonant in spiritual, ecological and leadership contexts.

15.3.1. Varaha's Form: The Intersection of Primal and Divine

The choice of a boar as the form for this *avatar* is deeply symbolic. The boar represents unyielding strength, determination and fearlessness in many cultures. By taking this form, Vishnu embodies these qualities, elevating a terrestrial, primal creature to divine significance. This transformation signifies that even the most mundane or seemingly lowly entities in the natural order have a role in the grand cosmic plan.

Furthermore, Varaha's immense size and radiant form underscore his divine nature. His tusks, traditionally tools for digging and unearthing, serve as metaphors for uncovering hidden truths and restoring balance from the depths of chaos.

15.3.2. The Cosmic Crisis: The Submergence of Earth

The tale begins with the rise of the demon Hiranyaksha, born to the sage Kashyapa and Diti. Hiranyaksha's name translates to “golden-eyed”, reflecting his greed and insatiable desire for power. Through intense penance, Hiranyaksha earned a boon from Lord Brahma that made him nearly invincible—any being created by Brahma could not kill him. This boon emboldened him to unleash a reign of terror across the cosmos, defeating the *devas* (gods), seizing their treasures and spreading chaos.

Hiranyaksha's crowning arrogance was the submergence of Bhudevi (Mother Earth) into the cosmic ocean. Enraged by humanity's reverence for the natural world and its divine protectors, Hiranyaksha dragged Bhudevi into the ocean's depths to disrupt the cosmic balance. This act symbolised unchecked greed overpowering nature and the degradation of harmony essential for life.



Discussion on the Ramayana

16.1. Introduction

The Ramayana, written by Sage Valmiki, is one of the greatest epics ever. Beyond its mythological significance, the Ramayana has been a source of moral, cultural and administrative lessons. Central to this epic is the story of Lord Ram, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, who is the epitome of an ideal man, leader and ruler. His life provides a framework for leadership, governance and ethical decision-making, making the Ramayana an essential guide for navigating challenges in both personal and professional spheres.

At its heart, the Ramayana emphasises *dharma*. However, *dharma* is far more nuanced, encapsulating moral responsibilities, societal obligations and ethical governance. Ram's life manifests as following *dharma*, even under the most trying circumstances. His adherence to truth, compassion for others and ability to lead by example inspire individuals and leaders alike.

Ram's story reflects resilience, humanity and a profound sense of justice. By embracing exile rather than kingship, Ram exemplified selflessness and responsibility. His leadership qualities during his time in the forest—empowering marginalised communities, combating *rakshasas* and fostering inclusivity—demonstrate his commitment to justice and collective progress. These qualities resonate with the principles of ideal leadership and governance even today.

16.2. The Essence of Ramayana and The Ram Avatara

16.2.1. The Story of Ramayana

The Ramayana, spanning over 24,000 verses, narrates the journey of Lord Ram from his childhood in Ayodhya to his eventual return as a victorious king after 14 years of exile. Each chapter offers profound lessons on life, leadership and duty. Figure 1 shows the key events in the Ramayana. We will discuss the journey of Lord Ram based on the title of “*Maryada Purushottama*”, which was given to him during his teenage years after finishing his early education with sage Vasistha.

The epic begins by portraying Ayodhya as a prosperous and harmonious kingdom. Ram, the eldest son of King Dasharatha, is beloved by all and groomed to be the next ruler. However, a series of events led to a dramatic turn when Queen Kaikeyi demanded that Ram be exiled for 14 years so that her son Bharat could ascend the throne. Despite the injustice, Ram honours his father's wishes,

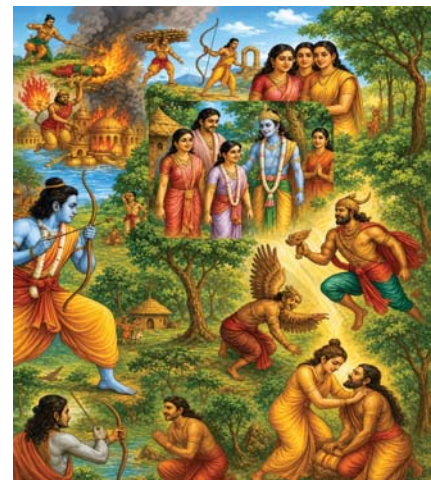


Figure 1: The Sequence Of Events In The Ramayana

demonstrating his commitment to *dharma*. Ram killed many *rakshasas* during his stay in the jungle. The *rakshasas* can be seen as people with the least respect for law, order and social structure.

During his exile, Ram encounters numerous challenges, from battling demons who disturb sages to rescuing Sita after her abduction by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Early in his journey, Sage Vishwamitra provided Ram with comprehensive information about the *rakshasas* who infested the jungle, revealing their precise location across different regions. Armed with this knowledge, Ram systematically confronted and defeated these *rakshasas*, ensuring the sages' safety and restoring peace in the forest.

Ram displays valour, strategic planning and commitment to justice by fighting the demons. This period of exile was not just a time of hardship but an opportunity for Ram to empower marginalised communities. He trained 4,056 tribal people in governance and warfare after the killing of *rakshasas* in that region, enabling them to protect themselves and uphold justice. Lord Ram is credited with establishing many tribes in India. His ability to integrate and train these communities reflects a decentralised leadership approach that emphasised self-reliance and empowerment.

Additionally, Ram believed leaders must experience the hardships of the people they serve to understand their struggles. So, he rejected the idea of governing from an isolated position of privilege. Governance is not merely about expansion, but it is about deepening one's understanding of responsibility. A true ruler prioritises the welfare of others over personal ambitions. As reflected in governance philosophies, growth happens when a leader seeks to uplift the downtrodden, ensuring that justice and inclusivity define the administration rather than conquest.

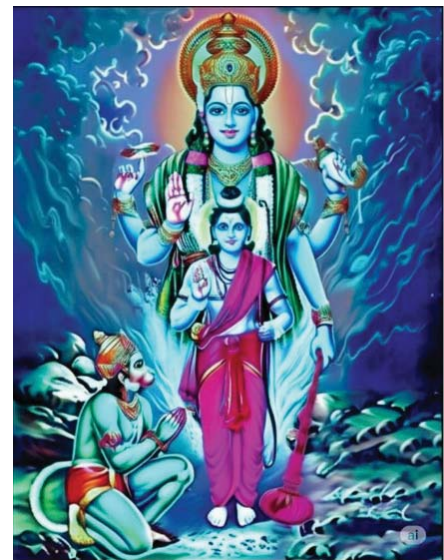
Each event tested Ram's leadership qualities, such as his ability to unite diverse allies, make ethical decisions and lead by example. The eventual battle against Ravana was a culmination of strategic planning, alliances and moral clarity. Ram's victory signified the triumph of good over evil.

Upon his return to Ayodhya, he established the Ram Rajya, an ideal governance model characterised by justice, prosperity and inclusivity. Ram's journey throughout the epic underscores his ability to combine moral ideals with pragmatic action, making him not just a traditional ethical figure but also a fighter for justice who consistently prioritises the welfare of others.

16.2.2. Ram as an Avatara

Ram, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, represents an ideal blend of divinity and humanity, embodying principles that serve as a blueprint for ethical living and governance. His life demonstrates values of humility, integrity and compassion, making him a relatable yet aspirational figure for people of all eras.

From a young age, Ram demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities. All the citizens of Ayodhya wanted Ram to become king, as he was nurtured to take on this role. At age 12 or 13, Ram engaged directly with the citizens, listening to their needs and aspirations. This early interaction familiarised him with the people and showcased his leadership readiness. The people found



him endearing. His ability to make informed decisions, call upon ministers or the army and act decisively highlighted his preparedness as a ruler.

Ram's unique leadership philosophy highlighted empathy and justice. For instance, when questioned by ministers and allies about his choice to embrace exile, Ram expressed that 'Fighting for the protection of others' rights is the greatest work in this world. Justice for others is the highest form of *dharma*, and I see this exile not as a burden but as an opportunity bestowed by the Gods.' When he explained his motives to Bharat, who implored him to return, he said, 'I cannot make decisions sitting in the luxury of the palace. To truly understand the people's pain, I must live among them, share their struggles and fight their battles.'

Ram earned the title of *Maryada Purushottama*, or the "perfect man," by adhering to *dharma* in every role—whether as a son, brother, husband or king. His mastery over his senses (*indriya-nigraha*) and self-control under challenging circumstances demonstrated his fitness as a leader. Yet, Ram was more than an ethical figure; he was a dynamic leader who balanced ideals with pragmatic actions to ensure justice and collective well-being.

The construction of the Ram Setu during the battle against Ravana is a testament to Ram's inclusive and innovative leadership. By involving beings from all walks of life, including a humble squirrel, Ram emphasised the importance of every contribution. His approach to leadership, rooted in inclusivity and resourcefulness, continues to inspire modern leaders navigating complex challenges.

Ram was also a resolute fighter who prioritised justice over convention. His actions during exile demonstrate his proactive and strategic approach to ensuring *dharma*. He killed many *rakshasas* and empowered local leaders like Sugriva and Vibhishana. Ram's decisions were often rooted in pragmatism, as he sought to restore order and righteousness through decisive actions.

This aspect of Ram's personality—being a fighter for justice—sets him apart as a dynamic leader who balances ideals with action. His life illustrates that true leadership is not about passive adherence to values but about using strength and strategy to uphold those values in the real world. The Ramayana emphasises that Ram's divine power was secondary to his human qualities. His journey was marked by challenges that required strategic thinking, emotional resilience and a strong moral compass. This duality of being both a principled warrior and a relatable leader makes Ram a unique *avatara* and an enduring symbol of ideal leadership.

The timeless narratives of the Ramayana offer profound lessons for modern leadership and organisational challenges. At its core, the epic emphasises values such as inclusivity, resourcefulness and empathy, which are critical for navigating today's complex and interconnected world. Ram's collaboration with the Vanaras illustrates the power of leveraging diverse talents to achieve a shared goal. Despite being marginalised, the Vanaras were empowered and integrated into his mission, cultivating a sense of purpose and belonging. Similarly, Ram's resourcefulness is evident in the construction of Ram Setu, where limited resources were used innovatively, ensuring morale and unity among his allies. These examples reflect how ethical, inclusive leadership can overcome adversities while promoting innovation and resilience.



Lord Krishna: Teachings for Modern Management

17.1. Introduction

Leadership in today's dynamic world requires a delicate balance of ethics, adaptability and strategic insight—qualities that Lord Krishna embodied throughout his life. His teachings, as captured in the Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata and Srimad Bhagavatam, offer a timeless framework for leadership and management. Krishna's ability to inspire trust, collaboration and make decisions that harmonise ethical principles with practical realities contributes invaluable lessons for navigating complex organisational challenges.

Krishna's leadership style was inherently situational, demonstrating flexibility in assuming various roles, including mentor, protector, strategist and visionary. His emphasis on the power of communication, rooted in empathy, clarity and strategic intent, provides a transformative approach to cultivating alignment and trust in teams. Krishna's philosophy of inclusivity and his recognition of diversity as a strength highlight his unparalleled ability to unite individuals under a shared vision, creating resilient and innovative teams.

A hallmark of Krishna's teachings is the emphasis on adaptability and resilience in times of uncertainty. His ability to remain composed, adjust strategies and inspire others during crises is a blueprint for managers during today's ever-changing challenges. Equally significant are his principles of *karma yoga*, *jnana yoga* and *bhakti yoga*, which offer leaders a holistic approach to ethical decision-making, continuous learning and purpose-driven action.

Incorporating Krishna's principles into modern leadership practices helps leaders achieve organisational goals and build inclusive, harmonious and resilient organisations. His life underscores that leadership is not merely about driving results but also about inspiring others, encouraging well-being and creating a lasting legacy grounded in values and collective success.

17.2. Overview of Lord Krishna as a Leader and Strategist

Lord Krishna is celebrated not only as a divine figure in Indian mythology but also as an exemplary leader and strategist. His life and actions reflect an unparalleled ability to guide individuals and groups through complex situations. As the charioteer and mentor of Arjuna during the Kurukshetra War, Krishna demonstrated exceptional situational leadership, empowering Arjuna to act decisively amidst moral dilemmas. His strategies, diplomacy with the Kauravas and his methods of rallying the Pandavas underscore a balance between pragmatism and ethical action.

Krishna's role as a statesman is equally significant. As the ruler of Dwarka, he showcased foresight by establishing a prosperous and secure city. His ability to unite diverse factions under a common cause is a model for building cohesive, purpose-driven teams in modern organisations.

17.2.1. Krishna's Life: A Contextual Overview

17.2.1.1. Early Life and Education

Born in Mathura to Vasudeva and Devaki, Krishna's early life was marked by adversity. To protect him from King Kansa's tyranny, he was moved to Gokul secretly, where Nanda and Yashoda raised him. Krishna's childhood in Vrindavan was filled with playful yet profound episodes, such as subduing the serpent Kaliya and lifting the Govardhan Hill. These incidents highlight his divine nature, problem-solving abilities and protective instincts towards his community.



His education under Sage Sandipani prepared him for his future roles. Krishna mastered various arts, scriptures and military skills, equipping him with the knowledge and tactical expertise needed for his leadership journey. His formative years exemplify the importance of nurturing talent and building foundational skills for future challenges, paralleling the role of early education and training that is necessary for shaping organisational leaders.

17.2.1.2. Major Episodes: Vrindavan, Mathura and Dwarka

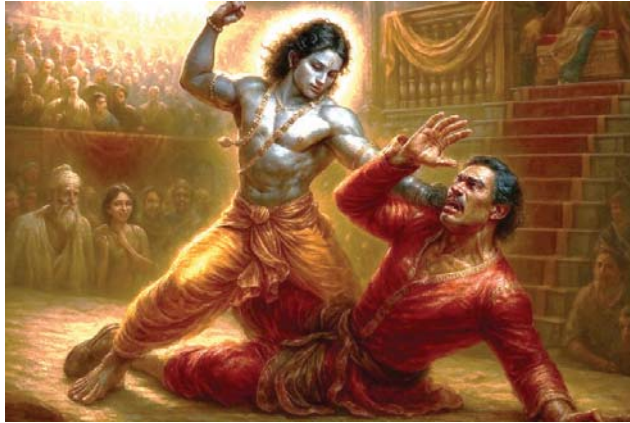
Krishna's life can be divided into three key phases, each reflecting different aspects of leadership and the life cycles of an organisation. His early years in Vrindavan symbolise creativity, community building and trust. Through his playful interactions with the *gopis* and his triumphs over adversities such as Putana and Kaliya, Krishna exemplifies the importance of having strong relationships and protecting the community from external threats. This phase emphasises the role of a leader in enabling community bonds and promoting collective well-being.

As Krishna makes his way to Mathura, his leadership takes on a more strategic and transformative role. His return and the subsequent defeat of Kansa mark a critical phase of realignment and justice. By overthrowing a tyrant, Krishna restores stability, demonstrating that leadership often requires making difficult yet necessary decisions to drive change and establish order. This stage highlights the importance of courage, strategy and decisive action during trying times.



The final phase of Krishna's leadership unfolds in Dwarka, where he establishes a prosperous and secure city. This reflects his vision, long-term planning and ability to create sustainable systems. Dwarka became a hub of innovation and resilience, showcasing the success of his leadership in building a thriving and well-organised society. This phase emphasises the importance of foresight, adaptability and institutional strength in ensuring lasting success.

17.2.2. Contextual Relevance to Organisational Life Cycles



The phases of Krishna's life provide a framework to understand organisational dynamics and leadership evolution. Vrindavan represents the startup phase, where creativity, relationship-building and resourcefulness are paramount. Just as Krishna nurtured bonds and safeguarded his community, early-stage organisations must focus on building trust, cultivating innovation and resilience.

As the organisation grows, it enters the Mathura phase, characterised by expansion, conflict resolution and structural realignment. Krishna's strategic action of overthrowing

Kansa mirrors the challenges businesses face in navigating competition, consolidating their position and making tough decisions to ensure stability and progress.

Finally, Dwarka symbolises the maturity phase, where the focus shifts to sustainability, long-term impact and adapting to external challenges. Krishna's establishment of a prosperous and secure city reflects how organisations need to build resilient systems, maintain ethical leadership and leave a lasting legacy.

17.2.3. Krishna as a Strategic Leader in the Mahabharata

The Mahabharata portrays Krishna as a masterful strategist, particularly during the Kurukshetra War. As Arjuna's charioteer, Krishna refrained from direct combat but played a pivotal role in orchestrating the Pandavas' victory. His decision to guide rather than command reflects a nuanced understanding of leadership, where leaders need to empower others to make informed decisions while they offer guidance during critical moments.

One of Krishna's strategic moves was the creation of alliances. Krishna ensured

