

# A Perspective of Leadership Sutra in Indian Business

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 15 Jul 2024; Received in revised form: 09 Aug 2024; Accepted: 17 Aug 2024; Available online: 23 Aug 2024</p> <p>©2024 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>).</p> <p><b>Keywords</b>— Leadership, Mythological Principals, Karma, Business Sutra.</p>	<p><i>Leadership Sutra and Indian Approach to Power by Devdutt Pattanaik provides a unique perspective to management by integrating insight from Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist theories. Despite his innovative approach, some areas that remain underexplored by him. This paper identifies a potential gap in Pattanaik’s works, particularly in the empirical validation of his concept, applicability across different cultural contexts, and integration with contemporary leadership theories. Moreover, this research work demonstrates the ancient narratives that can enhance the effectiveness of leadership and organizational culture.</i></p>

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Indian economy and mythology, the concept of leadership is deeply rooted in the idea of dharma, or righteous duty. Leaders are expected to not only possess knowledge and skills but also to act with integrity and selflessness for the greater good of society [1, 2]. This perspective emphasizes the importance of ethical decision-making, service to others, and humility in leadership roles [3].

Leaders in the Indian economy are seen as stewards who have a responsibility towards their employees, customers, and society as a whole. They are expected to lead by example, inspire others through their actions, and create a positive impact on the community. By understanding the role of leadership in the Indian economy, through this behaviour leaders can cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning in their work while contributing towards sustainable growth and prosperity for all [4, 5].

In Indian mythology, leaders are often portrayed as individuals who possess qualities such as wisdom, courage, and selflessness [6]. One of the most revered

figures in Indian mythology is Lord Krishna, who is considered the epitome of a charismatic and visionary leader. Through his teachings in the Bhagavad Gita, he imparts valuable lessons on duty, righteousness, and leadership to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra [7, 8, 9].

Similarly, the Ramayana showcases Lord Rama as a just and compassionate leader who always puts the welfare of his subjects above his desires. His unwavering dedication to truth and righteousness serves as a guiding light for leaders in navigating complex challenges [10].

Devdutt Pattanaik's "The Leadership Sutra" (2016) is derived from his earlier work, "Business Sutra" and examines leadership through the lens of Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist mythologies. Pattanaik's approach contrasts Western leadership theories by emphasizing the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of power, represented by Shakti and Durga, respectively. Shakti symbolizes internal motivation, while Durga represents external power and societal status [11].

Pattanaik highlights the importance of recognizing and balancing these forces within leadership practices. He argues that understanding mythological symbols and narratives can provide deep insights into human behaviour and organizational dynamics. The book is divided into four sections—Significance, Property, Rules, and Stability—each addressing different facets of leadership and power dynamics [12].

Despite the rich content, there is a paucity of empirical research examining the practical implications of Pattanaik's theories. Most existing literature focuses on Western leadership models [13, 14, 15], leaving a significant gap in understanding how non-Western paradigms can be applied in global contexts.

While Pattanaik's theories are compelling, there is a lack of empirical studies validating the application of mythological principles in contemporary organizational settings. Research could focus on case studies or experimental designs to test the effectiveness of these principles in diverse business environments.

## II. APPLYING LEADERSHIP SUTRAS FROM INDIAN MYTHOLOGY TO MODERN BUSINESS PRACTICES

In Indian mythology, leaders are often portrayed as wise and just individuals who possess the ability to inspire and guide their followers akin to success. Drawing from these ancient teachings, modern business practices can benefit greatly from adopting leadership sutras rooted in Indian philosophy. For example, the concept of "dharma," or duty, can be applied to business leaders who prioritize ethical decision-making and serving the greater good of their employees and society.

Similarly, the idea of "karma" emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions and understanding that every choice has consequences. By incorporating these principles into their leadership style, modern business leaders can create a more positive and sustainable work environment that fosters growth and success for all stakeholders involved.

## III. EYE ON LEADERSHIP SUTRA

In the landscape of leadership, various models and philosophies guide how individuals lead organizations and influence people. Conventional Western models, largely shaped by industrial-age principles, emphasize a systematic, results-oriented approach. Meanwhile, Devdutt Pattanaik's "The Art of Leadership Sutra" offers an alternative rooted in ancient Indian mythology, focusing on holistic, ethical, and culturally resonant leadership. This article proposes that research should investigate how leaders who adopt these mythological principles perform in real-world scenarios compared to those who follow conventional Western models.

## IV. CONVENTIONAL WESTERN LEADERSHIP MODELS

Western leadership models often derive from a blend of military, industrial, and corporate practices. These models emphasize traits such as decisiveness, strategic thinking, efficiency, and a strong focus on results. Influential theories include:

a) **Trait Theory:** Suggests that certain inherent characteristics, such as charisma and decisiveness, make effective leaders.

b) **Behavioural Theory:** Focuses on the actions of leaders and how their behavior influences group performance.

c) **Contingency Theory:** Proposes that the effectiveness of a leadership style is contingent on the situation.

d) **Transformational Leadership:** Emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and transforming their followers by aligning organizational goals with personal values.

These models, while effective in various contexts, often prioritize performance metrics and productivity over cultural and ethical considerations.

## V. MYTHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN LEADERSHIP

Devdutt Pattanaik's leadership principles draw from ancient Indian mythology, presenting an alternative that is deeply embedded in cultural narratives and

ethical frameworks. Key elements of this approach include:

**a) Dharma:** Emphasizes duty, righteousness, and ethical responsibility, urging leaders to align their actions with a higher moral purpose.

**b) Empathy and Self-Awareness:** Encourages leaders to develop a deep understanding of themselves and others, fostering empathy and emotional intelligence.

**c) Storytelling:** Utilizes myths and stories as tools for conveying values, inspiring teams, and navigating complex situations.

**d) Holistic Perspective:** Promotes a balanced approach that considers the well-being of all stakeholders, including employees, communities, and the environment.

These principles advocate for a leadership style that is not only effective but also humane and culturally sensitive.

## VI. THE CASE FOR COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

To understand the impact of adopting mythological principles versus conventional Western models, comparative research is essential. Such research could explore several dimensions:

**a) Performance Metrics:** Evaluate the organizational performance of leaders who follow each model, examining key indicators such as profitability, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

**b) Employee Engagement and Well-being:** Investigate how different leadership styles affect employee morale, engagement, and overall well-being.

**c) Cultural Resonance:** Assess how culturally resonant leadership impacts the organization, particularly in diverse or multicultural settings.

**d) Ethical Decision-Making:** Analyze how leaders from each model approach ethical dilemmas and their long-term implications for organizational integrity and trust.

## VII. PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Effective leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of the Indian economy. Drawing inspiration from ancient Indian mythology, where leaders were

revered for their wisdom, courage, and integrity, modern-day leaders can learn valuable lessons in guiding their organizations towards success. Just as Lord Rama exemplified ethical leadership by upholding dharma and righteousness. Contemporary leaders must prioritize transparency, accountability, and inclusivity to foster sustainable growth.

In a rapidly evolving global economy, visionary leaders who possess a deep understanding of market dynamics and technological advancements are essential for driving innovation and competitiveness. By harnessing the power of collaboration and empowering their teams to think creatively and adapt to change, leaders can navigate challenges and seize opportunities that propel the Indian economy towards prosperity.

Several companies, particularly in India, have adopted principles from Indian mythology and philosophies akin to those outlined in Devdutt Pattanaik's "Business Sutra" to shape their leadership and organizational strategies. Here are a few notable examples:

### 7.1. Tata Group

The Tata Group, one of India's largest and most respected conglomerates, embodies principles reminiscent of Indian mythology, emphasizing ethical conduct, social responsibility, and a holistic approach to business. The group's leadership often speaks about Dharma (duty) and the importance of ethical practices in business. Their commitment to philanthropy and social welfare reflects the mythological principle of Lokasamgraha (welfare of the world).

### 7.2. Infosys

A global leader in technology services, was co-founded by N. R. Narayana Murthy, who has often highlighted values such as integrity, fairness, and respect for individuals. These values align with the mythological concept of Dharma and the focus on ethical responsibility. Infosys' leadership philosophy emphasizes the well-being of employees and stakeholders, which mirrors the holistic perspective found in Indian mythology.

### 7.3. Wipro

Wipro, another major player in the IT and consulting sector, has incorporated principles that resonate with Indian mythological teachings. Azim Premji, the

chairman, has been a strong advocate for ethical leadership and corporate responsibility. Wipro's sustainability initiatives and focus on community development are reflections of the Indian ethos of social responsibility and Dharma.

#### **7.4. Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL)**

HUL, a subsidiary of Unilever, operates with a keen focus on sustainability and ethical business practices. Their initiatives, such as Project Shakti, which empowers rural women, reflect the mythological principles of empathy, empowerment, and community welfare. HUL's leadership often emphasizes the importance of doing business with a purpose, aligning with mythological narratives that stress the greater good.

#### **7.5. Mahindra Group**

The Mahindra Group, under the leadership of Anand Mahindra, has embraced a philosophy that integrates business success with social responsibility. The group's initiatives in sustainable development, rural empowerment, and ethical governance resonate with the mythological principles of Dharma and Lokasamgraha. Their approach to leadership and business strategy often reflects a balance between achieving economic goals and contributing to societal well-being.

#### **7.6. ICICI Bank**

ICICI Bank has adopted several leadership and organizational practices inspired by Indian philosophical traditions. The bank's focus on ethical banking, customer-centric policies, and community initiatives reflects principles from Indian mythology. Their leadership training programs often include elements of self-awareness and ethical decision-making, aligning with the mythological emphasis on holistic and responsible leadership.

#### **7.7. Vedanta Resources**

Vedanta, a natural resources company, has integrated aspects of Indian mythology into its corporate philosophy. Their commitment to sustainable development and community welfare reflects the mythological principle of living in harmony with nature and society. The company's initiatives in education, healthcare, and environmental conservation embody the ethos of Dharma and Lokasamgraha.

### **VIII. KEY TAKEAWAYS**

These companies demonstrate that integrating mythological principles into modern business practices can lead to a more ethical, holistic, and sustainable approach to leadership and organizational management. By drawing on the rich cultural heritage of Indian mythology, these businesses not only achieve commercial success but also contribute positively to society, embodying the timeless values of duty, empathy, and holistic well-being. This approach can serve as a model for organizations worldwide, highlighting the enduring relevance of ancient wisdom in contemporary business contexts.

### **IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Understanding the relative effectiveness of mythological principles and conventional Western models can have profound implications for leadership development programs. It could lead to a more inclusive and diversified approach to leadership training, integrating the best of both worlds. For instance, combining the strategic rigor of Western models with the ethical and cultural sensitivity of mythological principles could produce leaders who are not only capable but also compassionate and culturally aware.

### **X. CONCLUSION**

The exploration of how leaders who adopt mythological principles perform in real-world scenarios compared to those following conventional Western models is a promising field of research. By investigating the nuances and impacts of these different approaches, scholars and practitioners can gain valuable insights into the art of leadership. Such research has the potential to redefine leadership paradigms, fostering a new generation of leaders who are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world with wisdom, empathy, and ethical integrity. The ultimate goal is to cultivate leaders who can not only drive organizational success but also contribute positively to society, embodying the timeless wisdom encapsulated in ancient myths and the practical effectiveness of modern strategies.

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