

Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL): Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems with Contemporary Leadership Theory

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Abstract

Leadership in modern-day organisations needs to take into account organisational performance, ethical accountability, and sustainable development, along with other aspects. While theories like transformational, servant, ethical, authentic and spiritual leadership have enriched leadership literature, they have not focused on all aspects at one time but on isolated dimensions. Moreover, principles of leadership in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) have not received enough coverage in management literature. In this context, this paper aims to propose Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) – an integrative conceptual framework based on the principles of Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha. The framework conceptualises DVBL using three interlinked pillars, namely Ethical Governance, Human-Centred Leadership, and Collective Welfare and Purpose, which encompass nine dimensions of leadership and enhance trust, psychological safety, engagement, ethical environment and sustainable performance in organisations. Thus, the framework adds to the extant values-based leadership literature by integrating Indian philosophy with contemporary leadership theories to offer an integrated view of responsible leadership. Theoretically, this paper makes a contribution in developing DVBL as a higher-order leadership construct and laying the groundwork for future studies in the form of the Dharmic Values-Based Leadership Scale (DVBLs).

Keywords: Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL); Indian Knowledge Systems; Dharma; Values-Based Leadership; Ethical Leadership; Sustainable Leadership; Organisational Behaviour.

1. Introduction

Leadership has always been seen as one of the most powerful predictors of organisational success, societal progress, and the sustainability of institutions. During the last century, the field of leadership has progressed from the studies of inherent personality traits to such theories of leadership as behavioural, situational, transformational, authentic, ethical, servant, strategic, and spiritual leadership (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2013). Despite all those theoretical advances, the issue of leadership failures is still prevalent in the public sector, as well as in the private and nonprofit organisations, evidenced by such problems as ethics violations, loss of social trust, scandals, governance failures, staff alienation, and shortsightedness. This fact means that despite the significant theoretical advances in contemporary theories of leadership, which allow better understanding of effective leadership practices and competencies, they fail to address some other aspects, such as morality and values important for sustainable leadership (Ciulla, 2020; Maak & Pless, 2006).ns.

The 21st Century has seen an unmatched combination of globalisation of the economy, disruptions brought about by technology, uncertainty in the environment and rising demands from stakeholders in regard to responsible leadership. Increasingly, there is pressure on leaders not just to deliver performance but also integrity, transparency, inclusion, social responsibility and stewardship (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2022). There have been notable cases of corporate malfunctions, governance breakdowns and ethics failures in organisations, leading to concerns that leadership effectiveness cannot be determined by organisational or strategic achievements alone. It is important for leadership to strike a balance between organisational goals and responsibilities towards the stakeholders and society at large (Brown et al., 2005; Maak & Pless, 2006). This shift in emphasis by modern research on leadership has led to a focus away from leader-centred competencies towards value-based leadership.

Among these diverse perspectives on leadership, ethical leadership has been identified as a significant perspective, involving integrity, equity, transparency, and responsible behaviour (Brown et al., 2005). On the other hand, servant leadership emphasises serving others and building communities (Greenleaf, 1977); authentic leadership is concerned with self-awareness and internalisation of moral values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), while spiritual leadership considers meaning, purposefulness, and intrinsic motivation (Fry, 2003). While these perspectives have greatly enhanced our understanding of leadership, each of them individually touches on a particular aspect of leadership effectiveness and does not offer any integrative approach that would consider

ethics, human development, organisational governance, collective good, and spiritual awareness at the same time. For instance, ethical leadership sets certain standards of proper conduct; however, it offers little to nothing about collective social responsibility, altruism, and developing moral awareness within oneself. Transformational leadership helps in effecting changes in organisations, but it does not deal with justice, self-sacrifice, and the moral responsibility of leaders to society as a whole (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). From this, it is clear that ethics may not be enough to explain sustainable leadership.

It is becoming common knowledge that good leadership should be based not only on ethical principles but also on values that determine the personality, motivations, and relationships between the leaders and the stakeholders (Ciulla, 2020; Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The values-based leadership goes further than just sticking to the code of ethics within the organization by making the leaders behave according to their moral values, inspire trust, collaborate and make sure that society will benefit from their actions in the long term rather than the leaders or the organizations themselves (Copeland, 2014). Values-based leadership focuses on such aspects as authenticity, accountability, empathy, service, and purpose which form organizational culture where people feel safe psychologically, engaged, and perform sustainably.

Although values-based leadership is recognised as an important concept, the predominant theory behind it continues to draw inspiration from Western philosophies. Relatively little effort has been made to study the numerous leadership philosophies found in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which have placed special focus on ethics in governance, duty, dedication, societal harmony, and well-being of individuals (Radhakrishnan, 2008; Sharma, 2000). The ancient literatures of India, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Arthashastra, Panchatantra, and the discourses of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, hold advanced ideas about leadership involving the individual qualities of leadership, ethical responsibility, governance, spirituality, and communal well-being. Instead of considering leadership as an act of wielding power or exercising authority, the Indian tradition regards leadership as Dharma, wherein leaders become the protectors of righteousness and social harmony through self-control and responsibility (Kangle, 1965; Radhakrishnan, 2008).

Some of the core Indian philosophy ideas are: Dharma, which is the righteous duty; Nishkama Karma, which is selfless action without personal motive or desire; Lokasangraha, which is the welfare and unity of society; Tyaga, which is self-sacrifice; Seva, which is service; and Advaita, which is oneness of existence. All together these form a multidimensional view of the leadership that goes beyond organizational effectiveness toward ethical governance, stakeholders' well-being and sustainable development of society (Easwaran, 2007; Vivekananda, 2015). Even though these philosophical ideas and their significance remain strong and applicable, they are largely ignored within leadership literature. While some previous literature discusses individual concepts from Indian philosophy (mostly from the Bhagavad Gita), very few incorporate broader knowledge systems within India into a consistent leadership theory relevant to modern organisations. Instead of competing with existing leadership theories, DVBL will try to enrich and expand them with the integration of nine interrelated leadership dimensions, including Justice, Fairness and Transparency; Inclusion; Accountability; Mentoring; Motivation; Team Spirit Building; Oneness; Sacrifice; and Cause Before Self. These dimensions will represent a value-based approach to leadership that encourages ethical governance, human development, trust, responsibility and performance.

The main contributions of this paper to the existing body of literature on leadership are as follows. The paper brings together various fragmented views expressed in contemporary leadership theories and builds a holistic values-based theory of leadership based on Indian philosophy. Secondly, the paper develops a novel concept of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) by uniting various facets of leadership, such as ethics, spirituality, developmental aspects, and governance, within one theoretical framework. Thirdly, the paper expands the scope of literature on Indian Knowledge Systems by showing how they can be applied to the realm of leadership in modern organisations. Finally, the paper contributes to the empirical research in leadership studies by introducing a Dharmic Values-Based Leadership Scale (DVBLs).

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

Leadership theory has changed substantially over the last hundred years. From theories that concentrated on leaders' traits and behaviour, the concept of leadership has developed into an ethical process involving relationships (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2013). Although all theories have made their contributions towards understanding the efficiency of leadership, the models of leadership which exist currently are fragmented, dealing only with particular aspects and lacking an integrated model of ethical governance, personal development, collective good, and spirituality. This part discusses the development of leadership ideas and the gap that the DVBL model tries to fill.

2.1 Classical Leadership Perspectives

Classical theories of leadership were largely concerned with determining how leadership influences organisational performance based on personal qualities, behaviours, and adaptability of the leader within certain situations. According to the Trait Theory, effective leaders have certain natural abilities like intelligence, self-confidence, and honesty (Galton, 1869; Northouse, 2022). On the other hand, Behavioural Theory looked into leadership behaviours instead of personal qualities and suggested that effective leadership can be learned (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Later, Situational and Contingency Theories stated that being an effective leader means adjusting one's leadership style according to the followers' readiness and situation (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Such theories laid down the basics of leadership studies, stressing the significance of personal qualities, behaviours, and flexibility of the leader. Nevertheless, classical theories mainly concentrate on managerial efficiency and lack concern for ethics, stakeholders, or social obligations of a leader (Yukl, 2013).

2.2 Contemporary Leadership Perspectives

The current leadership theories have begun to emphasise the value-oriented nature of the process of leadership beyond organisational performance. Transformational leadership is all about transformation through empowerment and vision of followers (Bass, 1985), whereas servant leadership is focused on the development of followers and serving others (Greenleaf, 1977). Integrity, justice and ethical decision-making become the key aspects of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005), and self-awareness and authenticity – those of authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

While transformational leadership is all about visions, servant leadership emphasises service, ethical leadership stresses ethics, authentic leadership emphasises awareness, spiritual leadership concentrates on significance, and inclusive leadership highlights inclusion. Therefore, current literature on leadership does not have any single theory that incorporates ethical governance, accountability, mentorship, welfare of all, service to others without expecting anything in return, and spiritual awareness. This fragmented body of theory necessitates an integrative leadership theory that brings together these different theories, along with some philosophies that have stood the test of time.

2.3 Leadership in Indian Knowledge Systems

Though leadership theories have been mostly developed in Western management thought, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) can be viewed as a good philosophical base for the concept of leadership that is based on ethics and social responsibility. Leadership is not seen as the act of exercising power but rather as performing the duties according to Dharma for the welfare of individuals and society (Radhakrishnan, 2008; Sharma, 2000). These concepts are found throughout ancient writings in the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Arthashastra, where the concepts of justice, responsibility, service, self-restraint, and collective well-being are always linked to leadership.

Rather than analysing all the writings separately, the current study tries to synthesise the leadership ideas in these writings in order to identify six interrelated themes that form the philosophical foundation of the new DVBL model.

Table 1. Leadership Themes in Indian Knowledge Systems

Theme	Primary Sources	Leadership Values
Dharma	Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata	Ethical duty, moral responsibility
Justice	Arthashastra, Mahabharata	Fairness, accountability, governance
Service (Seva)	Vivekananda, Gandhi	Compassion, servant leadership
Sacrifice (Tyaga)	Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita	Selflessness, mission before self
Oneness (Advaita)	Upanishads	Inclusiveness, empathy, unity
Collective Welfare (Lokasangraha)	Rig Veda, Bhagavad Gita	Social responsibility, sustainable development

All these themes, when taken together, depict leadership as a multi-faceted activity that goes way beyond mere organisational effectiveness. Ethical leadership is ensured by virtue of Dharma, while justice focuses on leadership with justice and accountable governance. Seva and Tyaga, on the other hand, make leaders realise that service to others is important and that leaders should place collective interest above their own selfish motives, while Advaita encourages inclusiveness and respect through human connectedness.

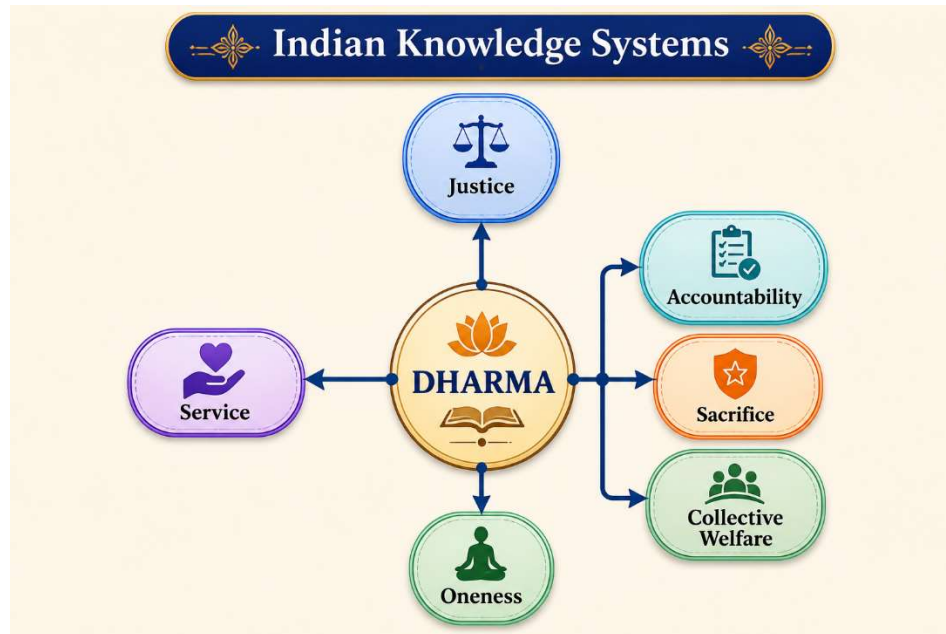


Figure 1. Leadership Themes from Indian Knowledge Systems

The concept of Lokasangraha places leadership at the centre of bringing about social well-being and social development rather than mere organisational achievements (Kangle, 1965; Radhakrishnan, 2008). Current models of leadership do not incorporate the aspects of ethical leadership, selfless service, accountability, collective well-being, and spirituality. The Indian Knowledge Systems, with their synthesis of these timeless values, thus serve as an excellent philosophical base for the proposed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) model.

2.4 Research Gap

Even though the leadership theory has progressed significantly since its inception, the current theoretical framework suffers from conceptual disintegration as each of them tends to focus on particular leadership dimensions like leadership traits, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and inclusive leadership. Despite the fact that all the above-mentioned perspectives have contributed to leadership theory considerably, there is no leadership theory which encompasses all of the above-mentioned dimensions like ethical governance, accountability, mentorship, selfless serving, common good, and spirituality. Moreover, although the Indian Knowledge System provides many philosophically rich leadership perspectives through various leadership terms such as Dharma, Nishkama Karma, Lokasangraha, Seva, and Tyaga, they have been studied independently and lack presence in modern leadership literature. The need of the hour is an integrative conceptual framework, which would incorporate modern leadership theories in conjunction with the values contained in Indian philosophy. This article attempts to fill this gap by proposing Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL).

3. Conceptual Development of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL)

3.1 Theoretical Foundation

This DVBL model, theoretically, is based on three basic concepts of IKS, namely Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha. All three concepts combined give a normative base to the process of leadership as an ethical, goal-oriented and socially responsible phenomenon. In contrast to many current theories about leadership that emphasize leader's behavior, organisational efficiency and leader-follower relationship, these concepts widen the scope of leadership to include issues of morality, stakeholder well-being and sustainable development of society (Radhakrishnan, 2008; Sharma, 2000). In the context of responsible leadership, these concepts should not be seen as religious doctrines but rather as universal values.

Dharma, often defined as righteousness and duty, serves as the moral base of this framework. Being used in organisational leadership, Dharma implies justice, integrity, transparency and accountability in decision-making. The leader who acts in accordance with Dharma seeks to achieve balance between the organisation's aims and the legitimate interests of its employees and other stakeholders, and makes sure that his decisions are ethically justified (Kangle, 1965; Radhakrishnan, 2008). Therefore, Dharma makes leadership a kind of stewardship and exercise of authority that is done fairly and responsibly.

Nishkama Karma, which implies selfless actions not motivated by any selfish benefits, does not discourage achievement, but rather motivates a person to seek organisational goals with commitment and integrity, putting the collective goal higher than personal interests (Easwaran, 2007). Contemporary organisations can benefit from this principle, since it adds values like mentoring, employee development, serving and commitment to transformational and servant leadership approaches. As Nishkama Karma encourages people to act purposefully rather than personally, it increases organisational trust, employee engagement and ethics. Lokasangraha means the welfare and harmony of the society and enlarges the purposes of leadership beyond the organisational effectiveness to include collective well-being and sustainable value creation. This principle emphasises the values of inclusiveness, collaboration, social responsibility and stakeholder orientation. It encourages leaders to understand that organisational success cannot be separated from the well-being of its employees and communities (Radhakrishnan, 2008). Thus, the Lokasangraha principle is close to the modern discussions of responsible leadership and sustainability.

Dharma, Nishkama Karma and Lokasangraha – do not operate independently of each other but in fact are complementary to each other. Dharma is about creating the ethical basis of leadership; Nishkama Karma influences the nature and the actions of leaders by being selfless in their intentions, whereas Lokasangraha refers to the larger objective of leadership, that is, of bringing about collective well-being and sustainable development. The convergence of these three concepts creates the conceptual framework on which the newly developed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) framework operates. It combines the concepts of ethical governance, human-centred leadership and social responsibility within one framework, thus extending the existing theories of leadership.

3.2 Proposed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) Framework

Developing from these theoretical backgrounds, this research suggests Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) as an integrated leadership approach that integrates leadership theories of today with the time-honoured values of Indian Knowledge Systems. The proposed leadership approach is made up of nine dimensions of leadership, which include justice, fairness and transparency, inclusion, accountability, mentoring, motivation, team spirit building, oneness, sacrifice, and cause before self. Instead of behaving independently of each other, these dimensions together form the behaviour of the leader in promoting ethics, employee development, trust, collaboration, and sustainable performance. Thus, DVBL can be seen as a higher-order leadership construct where the ideas of dharma, nishkama karma, and lokasangraha are operationalized as leadership values and organizational results.

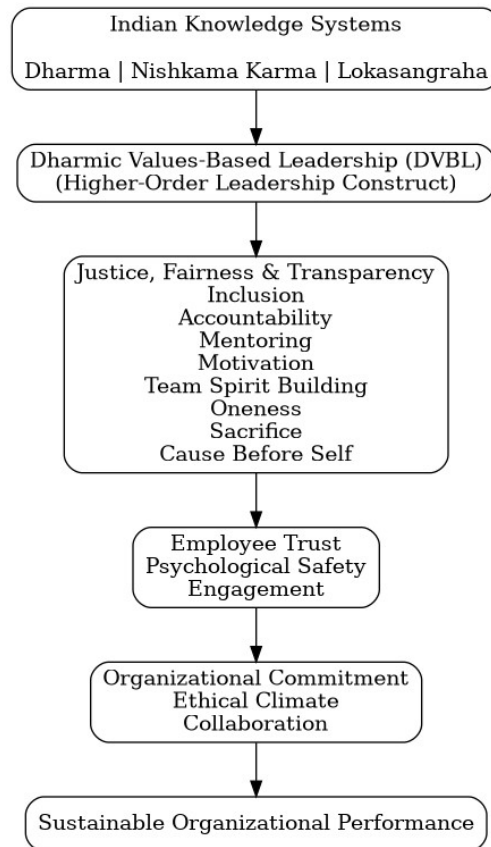


Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Framework of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL)

Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual architecture of the proposed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) framework. The model positions **Dharma**, **Nishkama Karma**, and **Lokasangraha** as the philosophical foundations of DVBL, which is conceptualized as a higher-order leadership construct comprising nine interrelated dimensions.

3.3 Dimensions of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership

The proposed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) model is an implementation of the Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha philosophy that results in nine interrelated aspects of leadership. The dimensions do not operate separately from one another; instead, they are grouped into three complementary pillars: Ethical Governance, Human-Centered Leadership, and Collective Wellbeing and Purpose.

3.3.1 Ethical Governance

The first pillar, Ethical Governance, rests on the principle of Dharma and revolves around the ideas of righteousness, justice, and responsible leadership. It includes the following elements: Justice, Fairness and Transparency, Accountability and Inclusion. The elements of justice and fairness are aimed at fostering impartial decision-making and building organisational trust. Moreover, accountability guarantees that the leaders will be responsible for their decisions and organisational outcomes. Finally, inclusion is a means for extending ethical governance through fostering a culture where all opinions and points of view are considered and where employees are allowed to make a contribution to decision-making. Overall, the set of the above-mentioned elements complements contemporary theories of Ethical, Authentic and Inclusive Leadership (Brown et al., 2005; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Carmeli et al., 2010).

3.3.2 Human-Centred Leadership

The second pillar, Human-Centred Leadership, stems from the principle of Nishkama Karma and stands for selfless actions performed in pursuit of an idea beyond any kind of gain. It consists of Mentoring, Motivation and Team Spirit Building. While mentoring implies training future leaders through mentorship and transfer of knowledge and skills, motivation refers to the ability to inspire subordinates through promoting a meaningful purpose and commitment to it. Team spirit is an element aimed at fostering collaboration. Altogether, those elements can be associated with the theories of Transformational, Servant and Spiritual Leadership as they emphasise follower development and empowerment (Bass, 1985; Greenleaf, 1977; Fry, 2003).

3.3.3 Collective Welfare and Purpose

The third pillar of the framework is Collective Welfare and Purpose, which is based on the concept of Lokasangraha that recognises leadership as an instrument to ensure societal wellbeing and sustainability. The third pillar is comprised of such dimensions as Oneness, Sacrifice, and Cause Before Self. The oneness dimension involves empathy, interconnectivity, and mutual respect within organisations, whereas sacrifice is associated with the desire to choose the organisation's interests and ethics over one's own benefits. Cause Before Self supports the philosophy of mission-based leadership when leaders' actions and efforts correspond to organisational goals and purposes. The dimensions of the third pillar go beyond contemporary leadership theories and introduce the idea of integrating stakeholders' welfare, sustainability, and organisational purpose into leadership practices (Maak & Pless, 2006; Radhakrishnan, 2008).

Table 1. Dimensions of the Proposed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) Framework

Pillar	Dimensions	Philosophical Basis	Contemporary Leadership Linkage	Expected Organisational Outcomes
Ethical Governance	Justice, Fairness & Transparency; Accountability; Inclusion	Dharma	Ethical, Authentic, Inclusive Leadership	Trust, ethical climate, transparency, institutional credibility
Human-Centred Leadership	Mentoring; Motivation; Team Spirit Building	Nishkama Karma	Transformational, Servant, Spiritual Leadership	Employee engagement, learning, collaboration, innovation
Collective Welfare and Purpose	Oneness; Sacrifice; Cause Before Self	Lokasangraha	Responsible, Spiritual and Purpose-driven Leadership	Organizational commitment, stakeholder welfare, resilience, sustainable performance

4. Integrating Dharmic Values-Based Leadership with Contemporary Leadership Theories

Leadership theories in contemporary times have made substantial contributions to leadership studies with a focus on concepts such as vision, ethics, service, authenticity, spirituality, and inclusion. But these theories focus mostly on particular aspects of leadership and exist independently as different theoretical paradigms. As a result, they offer little integration between concepts like ethical governance, stakeholders' responsibilities, general welfare, and selfless leadership in one framework (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2013). The concept of DVBL is not an alternative to the leadership theories; it builds upon the strengths of these theories and goes beyond them based on the philosophy of Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha. Table 2 summarises the distinctive contribution of DVBL relative to established leadership theories.

Table 2. Integration of DVBL with Contemporary Leadership Theories

Leadership Theory	Primary Strength	Identified Limitation	DVBL Contribution
Transformational Leadership	Vision, inspiration, and change	Limited emphasis on justice and governance	Integrates Dharma through justice, accountability, and ethical stewardship
Servant Leadership	Service and follower development	Limited focus on institutional accountability	Combines service with ethical governance and transparency
Ethical Leadership	Integrity and moral conduct	Limited societal and spiritual orientation	Extends ethics through Lokasangraha , Oneness, and collective welfare
Authentic Leadership	Self-awareness and transparency	Limited stakeholder and societal perspective	Broadens authenticity through duty, responsibility, and public welfare
Spiritual Leadership	Purpose and intrinsic motivation	Limited governance orientation	Integrates spirituality with justice, accountability, and organizational responsibility
Inclusive Leadership	Diversity and participation	Focused primarily on workplace inclusion	Expands inclusion through Oneness , shared purpose, and stakeholder harmony

As can be seen in Table 2 below, DVBL is an integrated higher-order leadership theory that captures the benefits of modern leadership theories and overcomes their deficiencies. With such leadership values as ethical governance (Dharma), selfless work (Nishkama Karma), and collective benefit (Lokasangraha) built into one framework, DVBL provides a wider leadership perspective that ensures not only organizational efficiency, but also development of employees, trust from stakeholders, and sustainable impact on society. The integrative nature of DVBL is its main theoretical contribution and may be empirically validated in the future.

5. Proposed Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The suggested Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) framework sees leadership as a higher-order concept that encompasses ethical governance, human-centred leadership, and collective welfare. Based on the principles of Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha, the DVBL framework suggests that leadership impacts organizations' performance through a series of psychological and behavioral processes. Leadership behaviors involving justice, accountability, inclusion, mentoring, and purpose are expected to build trust among employees, increase psychological safety and engagement and organizational commitment, and create an ethical organizational culture and sustainable organizational performance in the end.

As indicated in modern studies on leadership, trust is one of the first outcomes of ethical leadership behavior (Brown et al., 2005). The development of trust allows creating conditions where employees are psychologically secure enough to share their ideas, cooperate and make decisions for the organization (Edmondson, 2019). Enhanced psychological security fosters further engagement and commitment among employees and makes them perform actions that go beyond what is expected from them by default. All these factors positively influence the ethical climate of the organization, which functions as a key intermediate variable connecting leadership behavior and the success of the organization (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2013). Thus, the ethical climate can be considered as the organizational outcome mediating DVBL's effect on performance



Figure 3. Proposed Conceptual Model of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL)

Research Propositions

Based on the proposed conceptual model, the following propositions are formulated for future empirical research:

P1. Dharmic Values-Based Leadership has a positive impact on employee trust by virtue of ethical governance, justice and accountability.

P2. The positive influence of employee trust on psychological safety helps employees actively and collaboratively contribute to the organization.

P3. Psychological safety positively impacts employee engagement and organizational commitment which, in turn, increases motivation and organizational citizenship of employees.

P4. Dharmic Values-Based Leadership has a positive effect on the development of an ethical organizational climate by virtue of justice, inclusivity, accountability and collective well-being.

P5. Ethical organizational climate mediates the relationship between Dharmic Values-Based Leadership and sustainable organizational performance.

P6. Dharmic Values-Based Leadership has a positive impact on sustainable organizational performance through trust, commitment, ethical governance and stakeholder-based leadership.

The proposed conceptual model forms the foundation for future empirical research and validation of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) framework. Future research may measure the nine leadership dimensions through construction of Dharmic Values-Based Leadership Scale (DVBLS) and empirically validate the above propositions using structural equation modeling technique. Such empirical validation will help establish the reliability and validity of DVBL as an effective modern leadership framework.

6. Implications, Future Research, and Conclusion

6.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The concept of DVBL provides an additional contribution to the field of leadership because it incorporates into the leadership theory the philosophical concepts of Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha. Existing leadership frameworks tend to focus on the analysis of some separate dimensions of leadership including ethics, service, authenticity, transformational influence etc. However, DVBL provides a more holistic approach incorporating ethical governance, human-oriented leadership and welfare of society into a single conceptual model. Thus, DVBL is an important contribution to leadership literature as it expands the scope of leadership research making it multidimensional taking into account the needs of organizations, their stakeholders, and societal development.

On the practical side, DVBL provides the theoretical basis for value-based leadership which could be used in various types of organizations. Business organizations could use DVBL in order to develop ethical governance, enhance trust between employer and employees, cooperation and sustainability. The public administration could benefit from DVBL through transparent governance, accountability, and citizen-oriented leadership. DVBL can help in promoting compassionate leadership in healthcare organizations, teamwork and ethical decision making. In educational institutions DVBL will help to build mentoring, create inclusive environment and academic leadership. Armed forces can use DVBL to promote the values of sacrifice, discipline, teamwork and mission-oriented leadership. NGOs can find benefits of DVBL in their service orientation and mission-oriented leadership.

6.2 Future Research

Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) represents a robust basis for future empirical research and theoretical investigations. First and foremost, it is necessary to develop and validate a scale measuring the DVBL, i.e., a Dharmic Values-Based Leadership Scale (DVBLS). Following the standard procedure, future research should conduct a reliability and validity testing of the proposed scale, including the investigation of the construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Next, it is required to empirically test the proposed conceptual model with the use of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) or some other advanced methodological approach. In particular, it is required to empirically verify the proposed relationships between DVBL, employee trust, psychological safety, employee engagement, organizational commitment, ethical climate, and sustainable organizational performance.

It is also necessary to compare the developed Dharmic Values-Based Leadership framework with established leadership theories, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, and spiritual leadership. This type of research could provide information about the potential incremental theoretical contribution of DVBL and allow for comparing the predictive power of DVBL and other existing leadership theories in terms of their capacity to explain leadership effectiveness and organizational performance.

Since the Dharmic Values-Based Leadership concept is derived from the Indian Knowledge Systems, it is also required to conduct a cross-cultural validation research and examine the applicability of DVBL to different countries and organizations. In this way, researchers would be able to assess the universal validity of the proposed framework. Finally, conducting longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of DVBL would be also useful.

6.3 Conclusion

Even though leadership studies have made considerable progress over the past several decades, shifting from traditional theories based on traits or behaviors to newer models emphasizing values, ethics, authenticity, spirituality, service, and inclusion, most of the current approaches to leadership suffer from the same problem as previous approaches. They still focus on specific leadership traits or dimensions and thus do not provide a comprehensive approach that would incorporate all essential features of leadership in the modern world and help to address the challenges of the modern era. In times of rapidly developing technologies, stakeholders' activism, governance failures, environmental changes, and increasing expectations concerning business ethics, organizations need new leadership theories that will take into account the issues of ethical responsibility and sustainability and promote development of both people and communities.

In order to meet these challenges, the present paper introduced Dharmic Values-Based Leadership (DVBL) as a new theoretical framework that integrates ancient philosophical principles of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The proposed framework relies on such notions as Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha and represents leadership as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes the three dimensions – ethical governance, human-centered leadership, and collective welfare. Contrary to traditional leadership theories that consider behavioral and relational constructs separately, DVBL provides a holistic perspective by integrating nine different leadership dimensions – Justice, Fairness and Transparency, Inclusion, Accountability, Mentoring, Motivation, Team Spirit Building, Oneness, Sacrifice, and Cause Before Self. As a whole, these dimensions highlight the notion that leadership involves not only the capacity to influence people but also a greater responsibility for creating an ethical, inclusive, and sustainable organization that contributes to the benefit of the society.

Thus, one of the contributions of this paper is in proving that Indian philosophy provides substantial theoretical input for contemporary leadership studies. Even though such notions as Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha are mentioned in management studies sometimes, they are either considered separately or explained from a philosophical or religious point of view. This work is important for the development of leadership theories because it integrates all of these notions into a single framework that can be applied in practice. In this way, values-based leadership is extended with a culturally-based but universally applicable perspective. Thus, DVBL demonstrates that ethical governance, selfless service, stakeholder responsibility, and collective welfare are not alternative philosophies but different aspects of responsible leadership.

DVBL provides a conceptual framework that extends the contemporary leadership theory by suggesting the mechanisms of how DVBL influences organizational outcomes. Particularly, the suggested framework argues that leadership behaviors based on Dharmic values result in high levels of trust and psychological safety among employees, in their engagement and commitment to the organization, as well as in the creation of an ethical organizational climate. Positive organizational factors mentioned above lead to sustainable organizational performance through increasing collaboration, innovation, responsible decision making, and stakeholder relations. In this way, the presented model defines a theoretical link between values-based leadership and both employee and organizational outcomes that may serve as a basis for future empirical research.

DVBL can be useful for various types of organizations operating in an increasingly complicated environment with the need for social responsibility. In particular, businesses may use the proposed framework in order to foster ethical governance, transparency, employee engagement, and value creation. For public organizations, the DVBL can be used to increase accountability, citizen-centered governance, and public trust. The healthcare organizations may use DVBL for increasing compassion, responsibility, and teamwork among medical workers. Educational institutions may use DVBL to encourage mentoring, inclusion, and responsible academic leadership, and for defense organizations and armed forces, DVBL is in line with the principles of sacrifice, duty, discipline, and mission-oriented leadership. NGOs may use DVBL for increasing service orientation, stakeholder engagement, and community development.

This study contends that leadership studies of the future should move towards increased convergence between current management theories and alternative knowledge systems able to meet the demands of contemporary society. Through the integration of the core tenets of Dharma, Nishkama Karma, and Lokasangraha, the newly designed DVBL approach can be considered an appropriate contribution to leadership theory as it extends previous works by combining these tenets into one coherent framework. This framework sees leadership as a process that involves ethical governance, selfless leadership, well-being of stakeholders, and creation of sustainable value, thus bridging the gap between ancient philosophy and modern organizations. Considering the need for responsible leaders in contemporary organizations, DVBL can serve as a promising basis for development of both leadership theory and practice. Given further empirical support in the future, this approach may develop into a global values-based leadership approach.

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