



## **50. LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM INDIAN SCRIPTURES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

**Rashmi**

Assistant Professor, Jharkhand Rai University, Ranchi

### **Abstract**

*With the contemporary corporate climate demanding transformational organizational leaders, the importance of transformational leadership has been a subject of extensive literature over the past 20 years. This is not only due to the numerous studies in this field but also because they have led to a broader understanding that transformational leadership is crucial for organizational growth and development. The quality of an organization is determined by its leaders and their leadership. Interestingly, the Indian Scriptures contain some of the essential components of leadership. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of leadership in the Indian Scriptures, shedding light on their Practical relevance to core management practices. The modern management concepts of leadership, duty, self-motivation, focus, selfless action, coordination, decision-making, planning, teamwork, and communication are all intricately described in the Indian Scriptures. This study aims to uncover the profound influence of the Indian Scriptures on leadership, identifying this influence and analyzing how they have contributed to the development of key management thoughts that are now widely recognized as the cornerstone of managerial success in the modern world.*

### **Introduction**

India, one of the world's oldest civilizations, with a recorded history spanning over 5000 years. India and Indians have made important contributions to the globe in a variety of fields of knowledge. Many managerial teachings in ancient Indian classics such as the Valmiki Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Vedas, the Puranas, and so on can be applied in modern contexts. Chanakya's books, like other ancient Indian classics, offer excellent management ideas that can be applied to modern management.

### **Literature Review**

**Hitesh Sharma (2020)** shows that Kautilya is aware that complex systems must be developed for the State to operate as intended. He is unambiguous regarding organizational traits, human aspects, and leadership needs of an organization. He emphasizes that the foundation of leadership is the followers' acceptance of a leader's decisions and actions. Because followers follow a visible leader, he also criticizes autocratic behavior.

**As Balakrishnan Muniapan (2008)** eloquently puts it, the Arthashastra was written with the aim of governing a nation or kingdom. In this work, only five of Kautilya's sutras, or aphorisms, about managing a kingdom are explained in relation to organizational management. The sutra system, a



unique method that has been created and applied for many thousands of years, is used to teach and understand any body of language. Among the well-known sutras are the Yogasutras of Patanjali and the Kamasutra of Vatsyayana. The sutra system is a tool for discussion and interpretation, ensuring proper comprehension and application. For instance, when the Arthashastra is explained in the context of management, the word "rajya" (state) refers to the company, the "king" or "raja" is the CEO or leader, and the "ministers" or "amatya or mantri" are the supervisors of different divisions, including marketing, operations, finance, and human resources; *kosh* denotes finances; *danda* denotes the administration or managerial system; *durg* denotes security; and *bal* denotes labor force.

**Muniappan et al. (2008)** claimed that a large number of business executives, whether Indian and foreign, are unaware of the benefits Kautilya's Arthashastra may provide to improve their managerial efficacy. They examine the CSR lessons found in Kautilya's Arthashastra and also educate management readers about the presence of other ancient Indian texts, such as the Arthashastra, which offer numerous insightful lessons in effective and efficient corporate administration. The monarch, or leader, and leadership are seen as the most important requirements for the state or organization. According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, a monarch (or CEO in an organizational environment) should not pursue happiness or pleasure for themselves; rather, they should find fulfillment in the well-being of their subjects, which means they must submerge their selves.

**Swagatika Nanda (2016)** studied that even though Western HR practices might not be entirely appropriate for the Indian context, the Bhagavad Gita offers timeless wisdom to improve management effectiveness and leadership quality. It emphasizes self-determination, personality development, and stress management. Krishna's advice to Arjun is an example of transformational leadership, inspiring and meeting individual needs.

**Dhiman S. et al. (2019)** investigate the connection between the Bhagavad Gītā and the leadership. They emphasize the Gītā's teachings on self-awareness, self-mastery, and moral decision-making, among other leadership facets. The authors contend that by offering deep insights into efficient leadership techniques, the Gītā catalyzes organizational change. Through the integration of ideas like *svadharma* (individual obligation) and *karma yoga* (the path of selfless action), leaders can inspire their followers, cultivate personal and organizational growth, and achieve long-term success.

**Rajpurohit (2020)** explores the leadership teachings found in the epic Mahabharata. Ancient Indian epic The Mahabharata offers a complex web of characters and circumstances that shed light on leadership principles. The epic emphasizes the significance of moral principles, honesty, and accountability in leadership. Rajpurohit also highlights the need for strategic thinking and decision-making in leadership, using Arjuna and Bhishma as examples. Through the prism of the



Mahabharata, the study adds to our understanding of leadership and demonstrates the lessons learned from its eternal applicability in modern leadership scenarios.

**Pandey J. K. et al. (2019)** examine how to apply management and administrative concepts in Indian scriptures to current management and administrative issues. The authors contend that essential lessons and directions from ancient Indian scriptures can be effectively applied in modern organizational contexts. The writers identify ethical leadership, holistic management, and the pursuit of societal welfare as essential elements of Indian scriptures by drawing from sources including the Vedas, Upanishads, and Arthashastra. They contend that implementing these ideas into administrative procedures can improve judgment, cultivate amicable working relationships, and support an organization's general viability.

**Ritika (2020)** found that the Bhagavad Gita covers many of the contemporary (Western) management ideas, including vision, leadership, motivation, excellence in work, reaching goals, giving work purpose, decision-making, and planning. One significant distinction between Western management theory and the Bhagavad Gita is that the former frequently addresses issues at the material, external, and peripheral levels, whilst the latter addresses problems at the foundational level of human cognition. The quality of man's activities and their outcomes will automatically increase once his basic thinking is enhanced.

**Prasad L.Kaipa et al. (2014)** state that a leader's most important trait is discrimination, which must be cultivated via regular practice and trial and error. One work where all of these leadership criteria are assessed via decision-making and life experiences is the Mahabharata epic. In an era where technology has become indispensable, chaos reigns, business situations are unpredictable, and quick decisions are required, we need leaders who possess these attributes to save the day and contribute to the company's long-term viability. It also serves as a reminder that uncertainty may not always be resolved by hasty or thoughtless decision-making. The choices must be intelligent and well-considered, taking into account

**Zubin and Venkatand (2009)** assert that transformational leadership improves leadership and examines the connection to Karma Yoga (spoken by Shri Krishna in the epic Mahabharata's Bhagavad-Gita).

**Deepa S. Kumar (2021)** looked into that Making important judgments is basically what leadership entails, and occasionally there are some close calls. Decisions that demand great moral courage and strength must be made. It takes a tightrope walker to be a leader. It's about finding equilibrium in the face of constant possibilities and temptations that can knock someone off balance. One stumbles and falls. Rama was meant to serve as an example in this regard. In the Ramayana, we witness Rama's ability to maintain calm under pressure, and we hardly ever see him reacting to severe provocation. That's the essence of management: leading with objectivity but for the greater good.



**Sharma, J. K. (2017)** examines the value of ancient Indian texts for business knowledge, especially the Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, and Thirukkural. According to the author, these texts provide significant insights on a number of business management topics, such as decision-making, ethics, human resource management, and leadership. The author makes comparisons between the difficulties that people in the past experienced and those that managers confront now by dissecting the personalities and stories in these works. The essay highlights the lessons from these scriptures' practical applicability in modern business contexts, emphasizing how they can help leaders make moral decisions, encourage employee engagement and motivation, and build long-lasting, socially conscious companies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To study the relationship between Indian Sculpture and Leadership.
- To study Indian Sculpture as an Inspiration to Modern Management.

### **Methodology**

This paper is based on secondary data and the qualitative research methodology. The data was collected from various articles, journals and websites etc.

### **LESSONS FROM ARTHSHAstra**

The Arthashastra is an Indian treatise composed by Kautilya, popularly known as Chanakya, who served as Prime Minister during Chandragupta Maurya's reign in India, approximately 2500 years ago. Initially written for kings, this treatise on leadership and administration remains pertinent today. Kautilya reflected on his experiences and created his definitive book, the Arthashastra. The Arthashastra is a practical text that could have only been authored by someone who has applied his espoused strategies.

Lessons from Arthashastra are:

- Sukhasya Mulam Dharmah (The basis of happiness is righteousness or ethics)
- Dharmasya Mulam Arthah (The basis of righteousness or ethics is resources)
- Arthasya Mulam Rajyam (The basis of resources is the kingdom (organization or enterprise))
- Rajya Mulam Indriyajyah (The organization and enterprise are rooted in conquering the senses).
- Indriyajayasya Mulam Vinayah (Conquering organs is rooted in training and discipline).

Aligning organizations with strategic goals has been the attention of researchers and practitioners for decades. A company's purpose and future direction are outlined in its mission and vision



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Email: [asianthinkerjournal@gmail.com](mailto:asianthinkerjournal@gmail.com)

statements, which are essential leadership principles. The vision represents the organization's long-term goals, whereas the mission describes its present goals.

Kautilya's Arthashastra delineates leadership principles that prioritize motivation (Utsah Shakti), purpose (Mantra Shakti), and vision (Prabhu Shakti). It provides advice on communication, crisis management, and strategic alliances—all of which are pertinent to the modern business world. The Arthashastra is a thorough manual on organization, leadership, and government that offers a useful strategy for successful leadership.

- A. Organizational Skills: Kautilya understands that sophisticated machinery must be constructed in order for an organization or the state to function effectively. He is equally clear about an organization's organizational characteristics, human dimensions, and leadership requirements. Kautilya creates a complex organizational structure. Kautilya is clear about the characteristics leaders must have. He describes these characteristics as qualifying criteria for employment as a leader. These attributes are Drudhachitta (concentration), Shilavan (character), Pragna (thinking capacity), Vangmi (communication skills), and Daksha (observation/vigilance). In addition, he emphasizes the skills that a Leader must have. These competencies are the same as those advised by today's management gurus: knowledge, skills, and attitude. In today's globalized environment, the same notion applies when corporations create alliances to protect their regions from external threats such as low-cost imports and the entry of powerful competitors.
- B. Managerial Skills: As Arthashastra means 'the science of economics', it is easy to see that Kautilya directly defined several aspects of modern economic management theories in his book. Arthashastra emphasized the significance of vision, objectives, and motivation, just as it does in modern management. Kautilya advised his Swamy to lead with Prabhu Shakti (vision), Mantra Shakti (purpose), and Utsah Sahkti (inspiration). Kautilya reminds Swamy that his goals for his rule are:
- Kautilya, in his book Arthshatra, mentioned the following rules:
- Acquire power
  - Consolidate what has been acquired
  - Expand what has been acquired
  - Enjoy what has been acquired
- C. Knowledge: Throughout Arthashstra, Kautilya provides some thought-provoking observations that leaders appear to require. Kautilya reminds his Swamy that thorough knowledge of complex human nature is important for the state machinery's effective, efficient, and honest operation. He cautions of two bad human nature attitudes, Pramada (excess) and Alasya (inactivity), which should be avoided. Kautilya believes that





leadership is important here. Here are some of his pearls of wisdom regarding knowledge:

- Small changes in ability can significantly impact results.
- The primary objective of a career is to recognize and build differences that lead to superior performance.
- Knowledge is crucial. Knowledge accumulates. Once it exists, it expands. Every new piece of knowledge exposes linkages to previous areas of knowledge. Each scientific innovation opens up new possibilities that grow and increase.
- Thinking is creative. You can shape your universe by the way you think. People and situations take on the significance you assign to them. You may transform your life by changing your way of thinking. To take control of your life, you must first get control of your thinking.

- D. Attributes of a Leader: According to Kautilya, an ideal monarch exhibits the finest leadership qualities, is intellectual, and has positive personal characteristics. These characteristics are carried not just by the individual through inherent features but also by the will to learn, and a strong focus is placed on adequate instruction. The Arthashastra thinks that discipline can only be ingrained in oneself in two ways: inborn and acquired.
- E. Networking and Alliances: Kautilya emphasizes how crucial it is for leaders to establish strategic relationships, guarantee reciprocal support, and treat each partner according to their own characteristics. Alliances aid in cost reduction, innovation promotion, and external competition management in contemporary company. Businesses establish alliances to safeguard their market share and successfully handle global issues.
- F. Communication: Strategic communication is the delivery of the correct message to the right audience at the right time and with the right impact, using the appropriate means. It implies viably coming to clearly explain to a targeted group of people with specific constraints. Molding the message is essential for achieving critical goals. Kautilya describes different paths by which competitors can be outsmarted by stratagem or defeated by drive and finally sets a world champion before the monarch. Powerful communication has a significant psychological influence and plays an important role in war and peace.
- G. Delegation of Powers: Kautilya speaks insightfully about delegation, decision-making, and subordinate mentoring. He writes with such exceptional understanding about designation that we accept that he prioritizes the benefits of strengthening, which encourages people to work proactively and stay focused on their goals. Kautilya connects strengthening to delegation and focuses on the transfer of power from higher to lower levels of hierarchy.



Kautilya recommends that leaders receive specific training in preparation for their eventual succession. He proposes that instruction be provided in three areas: Arthashastra (economic administration), Nitishastra (foreign affairs), and Dandaniti (political science). The Arthashastra has some pearls of leadership, which are provided below:

- A great leader demonstrates the ability to make decisions and act decisively in the face of failures and hardship.
- Power belongs to the one who wields it most efficiently.
- Leaders are sensitive to their followers' needs, feelings, and motivations.
- Honesty, candor, and straight dealing serve as the foundation of leadership.
- Leaders gain the ability to forecast and foresee the future.
- Self-discipline is the most critical personal attribute for a leader.

### **LESSONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

Leading entails directing others toward a shared objective through performance and morale enhancement, resource efficiency, and production maximization. The Bhagavad Gita provides everlasting guidance for human development and leadership. The success of an organization is significantly impacted by the mindset and actions of its leaders. While ineffective leadership produces subpar results, strong leadership inspires and drives vision. Sri Krishna gave Arjuna the Bhagavad Gita, which contains universal lessons on leadership development, human capital, and spiritual growth.

According to the Bhagavad Gita following are the lessons of leadership:

- Emphasizes the importance of tasks in life.
- Aligning personal and social goals.
- Enhancing internal awareness.

The Bhagavad Gita is extremely useful for leadership. The modern corporate climate under competitive capitalism also resembles a vicious battlefield. Starting a new business requires entrepreneurial drive and bravery. The Bhagavad Gita is all about leadership because it contains the following concepts as leadership guidelines: strategy to realize the planning, vision, teamwork, motivation, self-transcendence, communication, coordination, honesty toward work, utilization of available resources, hard work, clarity, focus, and ethos. The Bhagavad Gita serves as an inspiration to leaders, executives, academics, and entrepreneurs. Modern leaders, executives, and entrepreneurs can benefit from the Bhagavad Gita philosophy,

The Bhagavad Gita offers valuable lessons for managers or leaders, including:

- The universal concept of progress and development.
- A comprehensive instruction of duty, discipline, and commitment.
- Having realistic self-confidence



- Mental and Physical Health
- Willingness and strength
- Improved decision making
- Selfless Action: Understand the true essence of action.
- Stability of mind Man is defined by his beliefs; what he believes determines who he is.
- Change is a law of the universe, so be prepared for it and proceed appropriately.
- Self-motivation and transcendence
- Develop buddhi or your discriminating intelligence.

### **LESSONS FROM MAHABHARATA**

The Mahabharata recounts the conflict between the Pandavas and Kauravas for Hastinapur and focuses on Dharmayudha, or justice for the upright. With Lord Krishna's leadership, moral principles, cooperation, and strategic planning, the Pandavas prevailed despite their lack of riches and influence. Krishna is a thinker and visionary leader who demonstrates important leadership traits including decision-making and crisis management. The Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata offer timeless guidance for contemporary management and leadership techniques.

The lessons of this magnificent scriptures help us understand the following leadership principles:

1. **Technology and Scientific Skills:** Indians have been using technology and expertise from the ancient period of the Mahabharata. The Kauravas built a palace to destroy the Pandavas out of wax, which is a very combustible material. The palace's appearance made it difficult to determine whether it was made up of wax. Even at the Pandavas' palace, perceptions were made to fool intruders to ensure the palace's security. The weaponry utilized in the fight was highly scientific. These historical, and scientific skills and expertise serve as the foundation for modern technology major corporations use. Furthermore, business houses might leverage good infrastructure by developing concepts from history. Technology learned today will undoubtedly produce positive results. Thus, firms must constantly upgrade their technology throughout the expansion phase.
2. **Leadership Skills:** Efficiency and creativity are stifled by centralized leadership. Decentralized leadership should be used by businesses to share duties, foster innovation, and advance professional development. This method helps reach objectives more quickly and boosts productivity. The advantages of shared leadership are contrasted in the Mahabharata with the centralized authority of the Kauravas.
3. **Organizational Structure:** The Pandavas used a decentralized structure with shared leadership, reducing reliance on one person and minimizing risks. This approach led to





their success in the war. Similarly, organizations benefit from collaboration across all management levels for effective goal implementation.

4. **Common Goals and Teamwork:** Group efforts toward shared goals are easier to accomplish than individual ones. The Pandavas won because they put teamwork, shared decision-making, and group goals ahead of the Kauravas' emphasis on individual ambitions. Involving everyone improves skills and increases overall productivity in the workplace.
5. **Commitment and dedication:** The Pandavas won the Mahabharata because of their dedication, integrity, and camaraderie. Yudhishtira confronting Karna and Abhimanyu entering the "Chakravyuh" demonstrate their unwavering resolve in the face of adversity. To succeed, managers should also give top priority to hiring committed and hardworking staff.
6. **Empathetic and effective communication:** Effective communication and empathy are essential for management success. Conflicts can be resolved with composure and civil discourse. The Mahabharata illustrates the need of compassionate communication in handling challenging circumstances when Krishna's sympathetic comments to Gandhari stopped her from condemning Yudhishtira.
7. **Forecasting the future:** The Mahabharata places a strong emphasis on the value of foreseeing potential hazards and taking precautions. It was Krishna's vision that shielded Bhishma from the 'Brahmishra' weapon and rescued the Pandavas from Ashwathama's attack. Proactive planning and preparation at every level are also necessary for effective management.
8. **Calculated Risk:** Taking measured risks without gambling everything is necessary for effective management. The Mahabharata war resulted from the Pandavas' careless gambling, which cost them everything, including Indraprastha and Draupadi. This emphasizes how crucial risk management is to averting crises and company collapses.
9. **Strategic Management:** Effective strategic management is essential to business success. In order to save Arjuna from a fatal curse in the Mahabharata, Krishna gave him strategic advice that led him to chop off Jayadratha's head and let it fall on his father's lap. This emphasizes how important knowledge, problem-solving skills, and strategic planning are to success.
10. **Importance of Quality over Quantity:** Good management strikes a balance between quantity and quality. The Pandavas prioritized quality above quantity, concentrating on morality and ethics. Bhishma emphasized the need of action quality when Duryodhana questioned their losses. The Pandavas' victory under Krishna's leadership was a result of their qualitative strategy, underscoring the importance of quality-driven actions in accomplishing objectives.



11. Right Mentoring: In every challenge, one must seek the advice of mentors. It is usually advisable to select the correct individual for this purpose, who can guide you down the right road. The Pandavas' success was owing to the instruction, continuous touch, and support of Krishna, Bhishma, Vidura, and other dignitaries. Good managers must successfully guide their subordinates to drive organizational progress.

### **LESSONS FROM RAMAYANAS**

The *Ramayana* narrates Lord Rama's life and teachings, with the most famous versions by sage Valmiki and Goswami Tulsidasa. Valmiki's *Ramayana*, written in poetic slokas, offers timeless lessons on dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. It portrays Sri Rama as an ideal king, son, brother, husband, and friend, providing valuable insights on leadership and righteous living.

Lord Rama, honored as *Maryada Purushottam*, exemplified ethical leadership, strong governance, and effective problem-solving. The *Ramayana* teaches modern management principles, strategic planning, and values-driven leadership. Rama emphasized the importance of wise and emotionally intelligent advisors for effective governance. His leadership, rooted in righteousness, led to the victory over Ravana, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil and offering timeless lessons in leadership and teamwork.

**Planning and vision:** Lord Rama's purpose was clear: retrieve his bride, Sita, back from the evil king Ravana. He devised a strategy and gradually worked toward its implementation. Lord Rama knew exactly how he was going to carry out his plan. A competent leader must identify their goals and create plans to achieve them. A successful leader must be able to plan and have a clear vision. Once you have a vision and a plan, you will know how to continue, which is half the battle.

**Building employees' confidence and trusting them:** When Lord Rama and Laxman were kidnapped by the demon Ahiravan, Hanuman made an individual decision to save them. This happened because Lord Rama trusted Lord Hanuman to make vital decisions. This had given him the confidence to make such daring decisions. It is impossible for a supervisor to oversee everything in a workplace, and there are occasions when an employee must handle some circumstances on his own. A competent leader prepares their people to handle difficult situations on their own and depends on them when necessary.

**Motivate the employees:** Motivation is a crucial component. Motivation drives everyone to behave in the desired manner in order to achieve business goals. Without it, employees would never be committed to give their all and strive for common goals. Lord Rama has an army to take on Ravana. The army was composed of many tribes with few skilled troops. However, Lord Rama motivated them to the point where they were ready to battle the demons.

**Adaptability and using the available resources efficiently:** Lord Rama organized an army, traveled to Lanka without a magnificent vehicle, and vanquished Ravana. He thus acclimated to an entirely new environment and exploited it to his advantage in rescuing his wife, Sita. Every



leader must understand how to make optimum use of given resources. In such difficult times, a leader's capacity to maximize the utilization of existing resources is critical.

**Making employees feel valued:** In Ramayana, Ravana's younger brother, Vibhishana, understands he is on the wrong side of the fight and wishes to join Lord Rama's side. Before deciding to let him stay with him, Lord Rama convened a special council of elders and sought their feedback, making them feel respected. A good leader must also provide people the opportunity to speak up and feel respected in the workplace.

**Keep patience (*Dheeraj dhareu kuavsar jani*):** Do not lose your intelligence or patience in a difficult situation. Courage and patience are essential when dealing with adversity. The lesson included concepts, behaviors, and successful communication. Human ties are vital in life. Shri Ram was always skilled at connecting with people. People of all ages can connect with him. Always approach circumstances with a positive attitude.

**Team Work:** The Ramayana emphasizes the value of teamwork. Lord Rama was able to fulfill his objectives with the assistance of his allies, Hanuman and the Monkey Army. They worked together and used their skills to overcome their weaknesses. Similarly, teamwork is critical to attaining organizational goals in the corporate world. A team that works well together can attain success.

**Ethics and Values:** The Ramayana emphasizes the significance of ethics and values. Lord Rama represents characteristics like honesty, integrity, and loyalty. These principles are critical for developing trust among employees, consumers, and partners. Similarly, in the corporate sector, principles like honesty and integrity are crucial to developing a strong corporate culture and a great brand image.

## CONCLUSION

The Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, Mahabharata, and Ramayana are only a few examples of ancient Indian literature that provides insightful advice for improving contemporary leadership techniques. In order to achieve world peace and sustainability, these writings encourage moral leadership, congruent spirituality, and responsible management. By combining traditional lessons with contemporary management techniques like TQM and CSR, they promote self-awareness, empathy, and moral decision-making. By following these guidelines, leaders may motivate groups, handle difficulties tactfully, and foster a cooperative and peaceful workplace.

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