

Impact of *Vedic* Worldview and *Gunas* on Transformational Leadership

Aditi Kejriwal and Venkat R Krishnan

Executive Summary

Thought processes, implicit assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes of leaders can be meaningfully studied only if they are interwoven into a composite whole by a cultural thread wherefrom they emanate. This study explores the personality traits and worldview of transformational leaders from an Indian cultural perspective. Indian philosophy provides a framework to help understand a person's mental make-up. It offers the *Guna* theory, also called the tri-dimensional personality theory, to explain differences across individuals. The *Vedic* texts also outline concepts like *Karma* (cause-effect chain or the basic law governing all actions) and *Maya* (existing bundle of inexplicable contradictions of the world) which help in comprehending a person's worldview. Only through a clear understanding of the leader's worldview can we unravel the secrets of transformational leadership and try enhancing it.

This paper reports an experiment conducted to observe the impact of the different *Gunas* and the *Vedic* worldview on the magnitude of transformational leadership. There are three *Gunas*: *Sattva* (awareness), *Rajas* (dynamism), and *Tamas* (inertness). *Gunas* are fundamental ingredients or constituents in every being and each being is composed of all the three *Gunas*. When one of the three *Gunas* is dominant in a person, that person is characterized by that *Guna*. The *Gunas* were manipulated by portraying a political leader as being high on one or two of the *Gunas*. The *Vedic* worldview (operationalized as an understanding of *Maya* and belief in *Karma*) was manipulated by portraying the leader as having or not having such a worldview. The outcome variable was transformational leadership as perceived by the participants.

The sample consisted of 140 students, 97 males and 43 females, aged between 16 and 20 years, from a prominent school in eastern India. A 3 x 2 + 1 factorial design was used where *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Sattva-Rajas* combinations were crossed with *Vedic* worldview (yes or no) to produce six cells, *Tamas* being the seventh cell. A 47-item multi-factor leadership questionnaire was used to capture the five factors of transformational leadership as perceived by the participants:

- attributed charisma
- idealized influence
- inspirational leadership
- intellectual stimulation
- individualized consideration.

The mean of the five factors formed the transformational leadership score. The results of analyses of variance indicate the following:

- *Sattva* and *Vedic* worldview separately enhance transformational leadership whereas *Tamas* reduces it. *Sattva-Rajas* combination also enhances transformational leadership but the effect is not more than the effect of *Sattva* alone.
- *Sattva* and *Vedic* worldview together do not enhance transformational leadership more than what *Sattva* alone does.

The paper concludes with a discussion on what the organizations can do for enhancing transformational leadership by using the *Guna* framework and by reinforcing the *Vedic* worldview which are summarized as follows:

- Design training programmes to develop *Sattva* and reduce *Tamas*.
- Build team-orientation and self-sacrifice for directing energies towards superordinate goals.
- Base organizational policies on a competency framework built around *Sattva* and a *Vedic* orientation. ♡

KEY WORDS

Transformational Leadership

Gunas

Vedic Worldview

Pygmalion Effect

Altruism

Charisma, which is a primary aspect of transformational leadership, is perhaps the most marvelled at and the most researched concept in the history of leadership. However, its true nature is still intriguing the researchers. Many authors believe that charisma is a purely perceptual phenomenon. However, there are others like House, Spangler and Woycke (1991) who believe that there is something called pure charisma arising out of the actual behaviour and personal example of the leader. Bass (1998) outlined the basic personality traits that a charismatic or transformational leader should possess. However, thought processes, implicit assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs cannot be studied unless they are interwoven into a composite whole by a cultural thread wherefrom they emanate. In this study, we explore the personality traits and the worldview of transformational leaders from an Indian cultural perspective.

Indian philosophy provides a composite framework to aid the understanding of the mental make-up of a person. It offers the *Guna* theory, which has also been called the tri-dimensional personality theory, to explain differences across individuals. The *Vedic* texts also outline concepts like *Karma* (cause-effect chain) and *Maya* (inexplicable contradictions), which help in comprehending a person's worldview. While *Karma* is the basic law governing actions, *Maya* represents the existing bundle of contradictions of the world. It is only through a thorough understanding of the leader's worldview that we can unravel the secrets of transformational leadership and try enhancing it.

In this paper, we report an experiment that we conducted to observe the impact of the different *Gunas* and the presence or absence of the *Vedic* worldview on the magnitude of transformational leadership exhibited by the leader. There are three *Gunas*—*Sattva* (awareness), *Rajas* (dynamism), and *Tamas* (inertness). *Gunas* are the fundamental constituents of every being and each being is composed of all the three *Gunas*. When one of the three *Gunas* is dominant in a person, that person is said to be characterized by that *Guna*. We manipulated the *Gunas* by portraying a political leader as being high on one or two of the *Gunas* and the *Vedic* worldview (*Karma* and *Maya* combined) by portraying the political leader as having or not having such a worldview. The outcome variable was transformational leadership.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Transformational Leadership

Leadership can be transactional or transformational (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership can move the followers to exceed the expected performance and is thus far superior to the exchange relationship professed by transactional leadership. Burns (1978) argues: "Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Leaders address themselves to followers' wants, needs, and other motivations, as well as to their own, and thus may serve as an independent force in changing the make-up of the followers' motive base through gratifying their motives" (Burns, 1978).

Factors of Transformational Leadership

Bass (1985), building on Burns' (1978) framework, identified the following transformational leadership factors: charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Charisma refers to the leader's ability to articulate a captivating vision, transmit a sense of mission, generate determination in the accomplishment of goals, and encourage higher order effort on the part of the followers. It makes the followers have complete trust and confidence in the leader. The charismatic factor could be further split into idealized influence attributed (or attributed charisma) and idealized influence behaviour (or behavioural charisma) (Bass and Avolio, 1991). Inspiration involves the leaders' use of emotional appeal, communication of vivid, persuasive images, and provision of examples to enhance the followers' confidence and motivation to pursue elevated goals. Intellectual stimulation represents the leader's ability to suggest novel and creative ideas that challenge and refocus the followers' conceptualization, comprehension, and discernment of the nature of problems and their solutions. Individualized consideration refers to the leader's developmental and individualistic orientation towards the followers. The leader mentors and coaches the followers on an individual basis to help them significantly alter their abilities and motivation (Bass, 1998). Though Bass (1985) considered charisma to be one of the four factors of transformational leadership, authors have been using the two terms — charismatic leadership and transformational leadership — interchangeably.

Dispositional Aspects

Leaders are truly transformational when they increase the awareness of what is right, good, important, and beautiful; when they help elevate the followers' needs of achievement and self-actualization; and when they foster in the followers higher moral maturity (Burns, 1978). Whatever the transformational leaders do is with utmost commitment, involvement, and loyalty (Bass, 1998). They take advantage of the Pygmalion effect for raising the followers' self-esteem and enthusiasm. Under such leadership, followers find meaning and satisfaction transcending their self-interests. They are also inspired to exert higher order effort for enhanced performance and effectiveness. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) further highlighted the significance of altruism for leadership. They argued that charismatic leadership is essentially transformational in nature directed at self-transformation of the leader and of the followers towards higher things.

Not only are transformational leaders altruistic, they also foster higher levels of morality in their followers. The transformational leader of Burns (1978) was essentially moral. Later, other authors also accepted that morality is what gives authenticity to transformational leaders (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). Self-obsessed and immoral leaders are termed as pseudo-transformational. Banerji and Krishnan (2000) found that inspirational leadership was negatively related to the leader's preference for bribery and favouritism, and intellectual stimulation was negatively related to preference for bribery.

Transformational leaders have been found to be high on emotional quotient. Barling, Slater and Kelloway (2000) found that three factors of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspiration, and individualized consideration) were positively related to a leader's emotional intelligence. Sosik and Megerian (1999) found a particularly high correlation between self-awareness and transformational leadership; transformational leaders demonstrated self-determination, far-sightedness, and a strong conviction in their beliefs. Transformational leaders have a clear vision and seldom lose sight of their goals. They are hence unaffected by short-term gains which may contribute only to moral misery in the end. To be effectively transformational, leaders need to have an ability to rise above what their followers see as their immediate needs and appropriate reactions (Bass, 1998).

Transformational leaders thrive on crisis (House,

Spangler and Woycke, 1991). Periods of stress and turbulence are found to bring out the best in transformational leaders. Several authors have also linked transformational leadership to the innovation and change process (Bass, 1998). Conger and Kanungo (1998), in their stage model, portrayed how a leader critically evaluates the *status quo* and then acts as an agent of change, formulates challenging goals, and builds trust in them thus taking the followers to a higher level. Howell and Higgins (1990) found that champions of technological change are more transformational than non-champions are. Ross and Offermann (1997) found that higher levels of need for change, self-confidence, and dominance predicted transformational leadership. Again, higher levels of nurturance, pragmatism, and feminine attributes and lower levels of masculine attributes, criticalness, and aggression were associated with transformational leadership. Judge and Bono (2000) studied the Big Five personality traits and found that extraversion and agreeableness enhanced transformational leadership. House, Spangler and Woycke (1991) used archival data on the US presidents to demonstrate the positive relationship of charisma with need for power and activity inhibition and negative relationship with need for achievement. The need for power and influence is unusually high in transformational leaders; without them, they cannot develop the necessary persuasive skills to influence others nor would they derive satisfaction from their leadership role.

The Three *Gunas*

In this study, we examine the personality traits that enhance or reduce the transformational characteristics in a leader through the *Guna* framework drawn from the *Sankhya* school of Indian philosophy. This philosophy states that the entire physical universe, including the human mind, is composed of three basic constituents (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*) termed *Gunas* (Chakraborty, 1987). They are not only the form-giving substances but also act and interact with the environment to find expression as qualities or personality traits. Das (1987) found support for the claim that the three *Gunas* are exclusive of each other. These *Gunas* constituting a unity in trinity coexist and cohere. The *Gunas* might initially vary in their dominance in determining the personality of an individual but gradually the individual's personality mostly settles on one (Das, 1991). A person could thus be *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, or *Tamasic* depending on which

of the three *Gunas* is dominant. Of these, *Sattva* is free from evil, immaculate, flawless, and is expressed in qualities like purity, wisdom, goodness, fineness, bliss, and a love for knowledge. *Rajas* is characterized by egoism, activity, restlessness, assumption of undertakings, craving, passion, lust, greed, and the need for power. *Tamas* is exhibited in sloth, delusion, ignorance, heedlessness, inertia, procrastination, confusion, and perversion in thought and action (Chakraborty, 1987; Krishnananda, 1994).

The dominant *Guna* could be identified along 12 different dimensions. One could be *Sattvic* on one dimension, *Rajasic* on another, and *Tamasic* on yet another. The 12 dimensions and the characteristics of each *Guna* along each of those dimensions are explained in the box (Radhakrishnan, 1948).

Box: Twelve Dimensions of *Guna*

1. **Faith:** The faith of each individual corresponds to his or her temperament. *Sattva* makes one worship gods and thus value all godly tendencies; *Rajas* shows inclination towards power and wealth, and *Tamas* towards ghostly spirits.
2. **Food:** *Sattvic* people like food that increases their vital force, energy, strength, appetite, and health. Such food is juicy, soothing, savoury, fresh, and agreeable. *Rajasic* people prefer food that is violently bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, acidic, and burning. Such food causes pain, bitterness, ill health, and distemper of mind and body. *Tamasic* people take pleasure in food that is stale, tasteless, cold, insipid, putrid, rotten, and impure.
3. **Sacrifice:** *Sattva* dominates when people offer sacrifice willingly as a duty without desire for fruits thereof. *Rajas* inspires sacrifice that is performed for outward show and in the hope of divine reward. Sacrifice that is performed without faith and with complete disregard to scriptural instructions is driven by *Tamas*.
4. **Austerity:** Austerity guided by *Sattva* is three-fold—of body, of mind, and of speech. Austerity of body makes one revere gods and scholars and practice straightforwardness, harmlessness, physical cleanliness, and sexual purity. Austerity of mind withdraws one from sense objects and inspires integrity of motive, serenity, sympathy, and meditation. Austerity of speech inspires spiritual study and use of words that do not hurt others and are true and agreeable. Austerity guided by *Rajas* is practised for ostentation and for gaining praise and honour. It is fleeting and unstable. Austerity driven by *Tamas* is practised with foolish obsessions of torturing oneself or hurting others.
5. **Gift:** Gift given as a matter of duty, without expectation of any return, at a suitable place and time, and to the deserving person is said to be inspired by *Sattva*. Gift that is given either with the hope of receiving in return or with a view of winning merit or grudgingly is driven by *Rajas*. From *Tamas* comes the gift that is given to an unworthy person at the wrong time and place disdainfully, without regard to the feelings of the person who receives it.
6. **Obligatory work:** *Sattva* is dominant when one does obligatory work with a sense of duty, abandoning attachment to the outcomes. *Rajas* makes a person shirk from difficult work from fear of pain or bodily trouble. *Tamas* leads to total abandonment of one's allotted task due to delusion.
7. **Knowledge:** Knowledge guided by *Sattva* enables one to see the underlying oneness in all things despite the superficial diversities. Knowledge guided by *Rajas* makes one see various entities of distinct kinds and many souls in different beings. *Tamas* shrouds all knowledge rendering one incapable of seeing either the different souls or the underlying oneness.
8. **Action:** *Sattva* prompts one to act with non-attachment. *Rajas* makes one act with self-conceit for want of fruits thereof. Such action involves much dissipation of energy. *Tamas* makes one act in delusion without assessing one's capabilities to perform the same and be heedless of harm to others.
9. **Agent:** An agent who is free from attachment, non-egoistic, endued with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected by success or failure is inspired by *Sattva*. Likewise, agents in *Rajas* are passionate, greedy, malignant, impure, and easily elated or dejected. Those under *Tamas* are unsteady, vulgar, arrogant, dishonest, malicious, indolent, despondent, and procrastinating.
10. **Intellect:** People whose intellect is guided by *Sattva* know the path of work and renunciation, right and wrong action, fear and fearlessness, and bondage and liberation. When *Rajas* dominates, the intellect decides erroneously between right and wrong and when the conscience is so thickly wrapped in ignorance that it mistakes wrong for right and sees everything distorted, then it has the nature of *Tamas*.
11. **Determination:** Determination inspired by *Sattva* never wavers. People with this kind of determination gain control over their mind, vital energies, and senses. *Rajas*-inspired determination makes one seek wealth or do duty looking for reward and personal advantage. Determination inspired by *Tamas* is nothing but obstinacy. It makes a person stubbornly refuse to shake off dullness, fear, grief, low spirits or vanity.
12. **Happiness:** *Sattva* drives happiness that is experienced through realization of the ultimate reality. Such happiness may be attained after strict self-schooling and toil; such realization is not easy, but once achieved, it gives deep delight. Happiness in *Rajas* arises from the contact of objects with senses and is short-lived, ultimately graduating into pain. Bred from *Tamas* is brutish contentment in stupor and sloth and obstinate error. Such happiness begins and results in self-delusion.

Kaur and Sinha (1992) aimed at an empirical analysis of the Indian concept of *Guna* and its relationship with some organizationally relevant variables like LMX, work ethic, personal effectiveness, self-actualizing behaviour, organizational effectiveness, and the least preferred coworker. The findings provide general support to Chakraborty's (1987) contention that *Sattva* is superior to *Rajas* and *Rajas* to *Tamas*, in terms of their aid to the mind for a true understanding of facts and events, at least insofar as such understanding may get affected in the organizationally relevant constructs. Das (1987) found that *Sattva* is closer to *Rajas* than to *Tamas* in the hierarchy. Narayanan and Krishnan (2001) measured each of the three *Gunas* along ten dimensions—attribution, leisure, interests, food, praise and criticism, sympathy, right and wrong, motivation to work, working

with determination, and accepting pain. They showed that three *Sattva* dimensions (sympathy, motivation to work, and accepting pain) enhanced transformational leadership and two *Rajas* dimensions (attribution and right and wrong) reduced *Karma-Yoga*.

Transformational leaders take themselves and their followers to higher levels of motivation and moral maturity. They have vision and inspire higher order effort towards elevated goals. They are altruistic, ethically-oriented, and have a very clear sense of what is right and wrong. This indicates a distinct influence of *Sattva* in their personalities. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: *Sattva Guna* would enhance transformational leadership.

Transformational leaders are not only visionaries; they also display a high level of determination and task-orientation. They are always driven by a sense of mission, they communicate high performance expectations, and encourage higher order effort on the part of their followers. They are always at discomfort with the *status quo* and strive to be change agents. They are propelled by a need for power which they use for collective good, i.e., to elevate the followers to a grander level. This attachment to action and passion to excel is characteristic of a person high on *Rajas*. In addition, a person who is balanced, aware, and passionate about work will be able to guide followers in a better way than a person who is balanced but is not passionately task-oriented. Sebastian and Mathew (2002) found that PSI experience (freedom from compulsive action patterns) was positively related to *Sattva* and *Rajas* for females. *Sattva* and *Rajas* might combine to exert beneficial effects. From this, it follows that:

Hypothesis 2: *Sattva-Rajas* combination would enhance transformational leadership.

Hypothesis 3: *Sattva-Rajas* combination would enhance transformational leadership more than what pure *Sattva* would do.

Transformational leadership helps reduce defective reactions like fixed adherence to *status quo*, a too hasty change, defensive avoidance or panic (Bass, 1998). In fact, a person who is veiled by ignorance and non-discrimination cannot take others to higher levels of moral maturity; nor can a person who is overcome by inaction and sloth inspire higher performance. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4: *Tamas Guna* would reduce transformational leadership

Vedic Worldview

An individual's orientation towards work including causality and doership, locus of control, and understanding of self and the environment largely shapes his or her values, beliefs, and thought patterns. These are driven by the ideas impregnating a culture. In the Indian cultural context, a person's mental make-up derives substance from the *Vedas*. In the organizational set-up, the cause-effect chain or theory of *Karma* and the bundle of contradictions or *Maya* are of special significance. In this study, therefore, we operationalized *Vedic* worldview as a belief in *Karma* and an understanding of *Maya*.

Maya

According to *Vedic* philosophy, *Maya* is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us. Time, space, and causation bind the human intellect thus leaving many questions unanswered. Everything around us seems to be contradictory and reasons for the same are beyond human cognition. We, for example, cannot explain the relation of the world to the ultimate reality and this inexplicability is *Maya*. The world has reality for its basis because even the mirage cannot exist without any basis. However, it is unreal in as much as it is not in the same form as the ultimate reality. Radhakrishnan (1930) said that the world is unreal but it is not illusory. The example of rope and snake illustrates this difficulty. We see the rope as the snake as much as we see the ultimate reality as this world. This world does not exist as much as the snake does not exist. Once the illusion of the snake is over, the rope reappears. Similarly, once the illusion of plurality of these innumerable forms and names is over, the world reappears as the reality. The world is not as much negated as is reinterpreted. *Maya* can thus be understood, again, in the infinite expressing itself as the finite world by a gradual deprivation of reality.

Vivekananda (2000, volume 2) explains this inherent inexplicability of *Maya* through more common outcomes like good and evil, life and death, pain and pleasure. He says that we cannot fathom the reason for presence of these extremes. He goes to the extent of saying that the very basis of our being is contradiction and *Maya* is the statement of these contradictions. The *Vedic* worldview is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Pessimism makes us believe that everything is rushing

towards the one goal of destruction. This generates apathy and alienation from work which is characteristic of people high on *Tamas*. Optimism, on the other hand, makes people hanker after pleasures at all costs thus exhibiting *Rajas*. A person who has a *Vedic* worldview understands the inexplicability of certain things and takes them as they are. Such a person admits that this world is a mixture of good and evil, happiness and misery, and that an increase in one would essentially increase the other. This admittance brings patience and balance, as he or she is not carried away by any of the extremes knowing their ephemeral nature. This is characteristic of a person high on *Sattva*.

Doctrine of Karma (Cause-Effect Chain)

According to the doctrine of *Karma*, for every morally determinate thought, word or action, there will be a corresponding *Karmic* compensation, if not in this life, probably in some future life. The cause-effect chain is the counterpart of the physical law of uniformity in the moral world. It results in the conservation of moral energy as energy is focused on doing the work and doing it well and not wasted in bothering about the outcomes (Radhakrishnan, 1929). According to the doctrine of *Karma*, the smallest to the biggest event is an effect with an antecedent cause. An effect seen today must have had a cause yesterday and a cause today must have an effect tomorrow. Our thoughts and actions of today are causes with effects for tomorrow and each cause will have its own separate effect or effects. It is the doer or the thinker who has to ultimately bear the consequences of this cause-effect chain. Even though normally one may not be able to perceive the link in every case, it exists nonetheless. There are collective *Karmas* affecting groups, organizations, and nations as a whole (Chakraborty, 1987).

The cause-effect chain is a blind, unconscious principle governing the whole universe. It is a mechanical law. It is, thus, generally equated to fatalism and is said to engender passivity. However, Radhakrishnan (1929) negates this by claiming that it inspires hope for the future and resignation for the past. Actually, if rightly understood, it does not discourage moral effort. It only says that every act is the inevitable outcome of the preceding conditions and, thus, one can work upon one's present for a better future. This wanting is produced by man's free will or self-determination which over-rides the basic law of cause-effect. The cause-effect chain,

thus, engenders a long-term orientation as it establishes that any action cannot escape the corresponding compensation in the future. Thus, instead of going for short-term and ephemeral gains, a longer-term and more balanced outlook can enhance the overall welfare (Chakraborty, 1995).

Charismatic leaders can deal with complexity and ambiguity well due to their understanding of the environment and by not being carried away by extremes. Krishnan (2001) argued that an understanding of the real nature of this world (theory of *Maya*) would facilitate the emergence of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are committed workers and know how to pass down this commitment to the followers and to enthuse them to perform better than their best. They have empathy and can easily forego short-term benefits for gains in the future. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5: *Vedic* worldview (*Karma* and *Maya*) would enhance transformational leadership.

Theory suggests that a person who is balanced and aware will be able to give a sense of direction to the motives and efforts of the followers, but this effect will be heightened if the leader understands the true nature of this world that is full of contradictions and is thus not carried away by one of the extremes. This, coupled by a belief in the cause-effect chain leading to a longer-term and more ethical orientation towards life, will lead to the leader being even more effective. Therefore, transformational behaviours portrayed by a leader who is balanced will be enhanced if the leader has a *Vedic* worldview. Such a person would be seen as more transformational than a leader who does not have the same worldview. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 6: *Sattva* and *Vedic* worldview would enhance transformational leadership more than what *Sattva* alone would do.

RESEARCH METHOD

In order to test the hypotheses, we conducted an experiment on a sample of 140 students (97 males and 43 females) from a school in eastern India. Sixty of the students were from the 11th standard and the remaining from the 12th standard. The median age of the students was 17.5 years. There were 60 students from the commerce stream, 60 from the science stream, and the remaining 20 from the arts stream. The students were

randomly chosen from their respective classes and assigned in groups of 20 to one of the seven cells (explained later in the section).

Experimental Design

A (3 x 2 + 1) design was used to produce seven different treatments. *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and a combination of *Sattva* and *Rajas* (referred to as *Sattva-Rajas*) were manipulated in the factorial design along with the *Vedic* worldview (*Karma* and *Maya* combined) being present or absent, resulting in a 3 x 2 design and six cells. The seventh cell presented a *Tamasic* leader, as a combination of *Tamas* with *Vedic* worldview is not possible, given that a person cannot be ignorant and at the same time understand *Maya* and the cause-effect chain. The dependent variable was transformational leadership. The distribution of the participants across the seven cells is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

	<i>Sattva</i>	<i>Rajas</i>	<i>Sattva-Rajas</i>	<i>Tamas</i>
<i>Vedic</i> worldview	20	20	20	
No <i>Vedic</i> worldview	20	20	20	20

Manipulations

Gunas and *Vedic* worldview were manipulated by having a female MBA student (named Subhasini referred to as actor henceforth) enact the role of a political leader in Ranchi (Appendix). The objective of the experiment was to measure the perceived transformational leadership of the political leader which was hypothesized to vary depending upon *Gunas* and *Vedic* worldview. Manipulations were introduced by first reading out a description of Subhasini and then by the actor enacting the role as outlined in that description. The background information of Subhasini was common across the seven cells and was read out to participants in all the cells. Separate descriptions of Subhasini were created for *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*, and the *Vedic* worldview, and the relevant descriptions were read out to participants to create the intended manipulations. For example, in the cell that was designed to be having both *Sattva* and *Vedic* worldview, only the descriptions for *Sattva* and *Vedic* worldview were read out. To get the subjects more involved and to provide more scope for the actor to enact the role outlined in the description, the participants were made to play a survival game called 'Lost at Sea.' This game as such had no direct relevance to this study; its only objective was to facilitate interaction between the actor and the participants so that the participants would

be in a better position to rate the transformational leadership of Subhasini. The essence of the game was that the participants were on a treasure hunt. Mid-sea, a fire broke out and the voyagers had to find out ways to escape. The participants were then given a list of 19 items that they had to rank in order of importance. Ranking had to be first done individually and then in groups of five. Subhasini was supposed to facilitate the process. The actor enacted the role of Subhasini as mentioned in the description for that cell and depicted the presence of a *Guna* as per the design along with the presence or not of the *Vedic* worldview. Through her gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, tone of speaking, way of walking, way of responding to the queries raised by different groups in the game as well as the content of her responses, the different *Gunas* (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Sattva-Rajas* or *Tamas*) and the *Vedic* worldview (yes or no) were manipulated. For example, the actor was very calm and was smiling in the *Sattva* cell, was hyperactive, appeared worried, and walked up and down the room in the *Rajas* cell, and was very sleepy and uninterested in the *Tamas* cell.

Procedure

To facilitate even greater scope for interaction between the participants and the actor, the group in each cell was further divided randomly into four subgroups of five each. They were then introduced to the actor who was to enact the role of Subhasini. The relevant descriptions were read out to the participants to tell them what their leader Subhasini was really like. Then, one participant (referred to as representative) from each of the four subgroups was selected at random and was instructed to encourage more discussion within his or her sub-group by suggesting provocative alternatives; this was done simply to prolong discussions and thereby provide more room for the actor to interact with the participants. All queries from the participants were routed through the sub-group representative; this was done to ensure smoother interaction between the participants and the actor. The design of the game was such that the participants were not given all the information in the beginning; the 19 items to be rank-ordered were merely mentioned without providing any further details. The game design facilitated considerable interaction as the teams could get more details about each of the 19 items from the actor through the sub-group representative. How the actor responded and what the responses were

helped in the demonstration of the manipulated variables in each cell. Demonstration of the manipulated variables through personal behaviour by the actor was in addition to the reading out of the relevant descriptions. At the end of the game, the winning team was rewarded (based on team spirit to generate semblance of rationality). Neither this reward nor any outcome of the actual game was used as part of the data analysis in the study, since the only purpose of the game was to enhance the scope for greater interaction between the participants and the actor. The participants were then asked to fill a questionnaire containing 107 items (60 items to test the validity of the manipulation and 47 items to measure the extent to which the participants perceived Subhasini as transformational).

The manipulated variables (*Gun*as and *Vedic* worldview) were checked through scales developed for the study. There were 15 items for *Sattva*, 16 for *Rajas*, and 15 for *Tamas* which were developed based on the 12 dimensions outlined earlier. This difference in numbers can be attributed to certain dimensions that were complex in nature and had to be further sub-divided and to some dimensions that could not be operationalized. Belief in *Karma* (cause-effect chain) was checked through seven items adopted from the salient features outlined by Chakraborty (1987). Understanding of *Maya* was also measured through seven items, each depicting contradicting statements about different aspects of this world. Though *Karma* and *Maya* were checked through two separate 7-item scales, they were manipulated together (yes-*Vedic* when both were present and no-*Vedic* when both were absent). Participants were asked to rate their perceptions concerning the four manipulated variables (three *Gun*as and *Vedic* worldview) in the different cells, the objective being to check if the actor in the different cells was seen by the participants as manipulated. For example, it was checked whether the actor in the “yes-*Sattva* but no-*Vedic* worldview” cell was seen by the participants as being high on *Sattva* and low on *Vedic* worldview. Responses for these were measured along a seven-point Likert’s scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale developed was found to be reliable with the Cronbach alphas being 0.95 for *Sattva*, 0.93 for *Rajas*, 0.90 for *Tamas*, 0.85 for *Maya*, and 0.99 for *Karma*. We used t-tests to see if the cells were seen as designed. Results showed that the five scales (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*, *Maya*, and *Karma*) had significantly higher means in the cells in which they were present than

in the cells in which they were absent. For example, the participants rated the actor as significantly higher on *Vedic* worldview in the yes-*Vedic* cells than in the no-*Vedic* cells. Thus, the manipulations were successful. The actor was successful in coming through with the different *Gun*as in the different cells and in exhibiting or not exhibiting the *Vedic* worldview.

Measures

Bass and Avolio’s (1991) 47-item multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) was used to capture the extent of transformational leadership of Subhasini perceived by the participants. The variable was measured on five factors—attributed charisma, idealized influence, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The Cronbach alphas for the five scales ranged from 0.75 to 0.84. As expected, the five factors were strongly correlated to each other with the Pearson’s correlation coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.81 ($p < 0.001$ for all coefficients). We took the mean of the five factors to create the measure for transformational leadership. It is to be noted that transformational leadership as perceived by the participants was the measured variable. No outcome of the actual transformational leadership was measured in the study.

RESULTS

To test the hypotheses, analyses of variance of transformational leadership across different combinations of the seven cells were performed, results of which have been tabulated in Table 2. The leader was rated as significantly more transformational when she was *Sattvic* than when she was not *Sattvic*, thus supporting Hypothesis 1. Transformational leadership did not vary across *Rajas* and no-*Rajas* cells. However, *Sattva*-*Rajas* combination enhanced ratings of transformational leadership. Thus, Hypothesis 2 also found support. Support for Hypothesis 3 was not found as transformational leadership did not vary across *Sattva*-*Rajas* and *Sattva* cells; the effect of *Sattva*-*Rajas* combination on transformational leadership was not greater than that of *Sattva* in isolation. The leader in the *Tamasic* cell was rated as significantly less transformational than in the non-*Tamasic* cell. Hence, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

The leader who had a *Vedic* worldview was rated as significantly more transformational than the leader who did not have a *Vedic* worldview. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported. When the leader was *Sattvic*, whether

Table 2: Analysis of Variance of Transformational Leadership across Cells

Independent Variable	Yes		No		F
	n	M	n	M	
<i>Sattva</i>	40	2.54	100	2.10	** 11.20
<i>Rajas</i>	40	2.19	100	2.23	0.09
<i>Sattva-Rajas</i>	40	2.63	100	2.06	*** 19.10
<i>Tamas</i>	20	0.83	120	2.46	*** 201.82
<i>Vedic</i> worldview overall	60	2.41	80	2.09	* 6.60
<i>Vedic</i> worldview (yes/no) with only <i>Sattva</i> present	20	2.47	20	2.62	1.87
<i>Vedic</i> worldview (yes/no) with only <i>Rajas</i> present	20	2.10	20	2.29	† 2.96
	<i>Sattva-Rajas</i>		<i>Sattva</i>		
	n	M	n	M	
<i>Sattva-Rajas</i> compared to <i>Sattva</i>	40	2.63	40	2.54	1.38

Note: † = $p < .10$; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$.

she was having a *Vedic* worldview or not did not significantly affect transformational leadership. Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported. Similarly, the leader who was *Rajasic* and had a *Vedic* worldview was not more transformational than the leader who was only *Rajasic*.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study is an attempt to relate *Gunas* and *Vedic* worldview to transformational leadership. Results are encouraging and provide empirical support to the hypothesized impact of *Gunas* and *Vedic* worldview on transformational leadership. *Sattva*, *Sattva-Rajas*, and *Vedic* worldview enhance transformational leadership whereas *Tamas* reduces transformational leadership. The findings, thus, support Chakraborty's (1987) contention that *Sattva* is superior to *Rajas* and *Rajas* to *Tamas*, in terms of their aid to the mind for a true understanding of facts and events.

The study, however, did not obtain any support for the claim that *Rajas* when combined with *Sattva* would enhance transformational leadership more than what *Sattva* alone would do. A plausible explanation for this could be that the task orientation or passion towards one's goals which *Rajas* explains is just task relationship characteristic of transactional leaders and not vision-orientation of transformational leaders. No relation with transformational leadership was seen when the *Gunas* were combined with the *Vedic* worldview. Perhaps, these interaction effects were too complex for the experimental design to capture.

Leadership permeates every facet of corporate life. Employees perform better and are more satisfied with their job and the organization if their superiors are transformational as they feel that their true needs are

taken care of. Bass (1998) also stated that transformational leadership at all levels should be encouraged for it will make considerable difference in the firm's performance at any level. The findings of this study, we hope, would provide some guidance on selecting effective leaders in organizations.

It is often assumed that active and passionate individuals make good leaders. Perhaps, such *Rajasic* people might make only good transactional leaders. For transformational leadership, it is more important to have a *Sattvic* person who is calm and wise. It is only a *Sattvic* person who can reflect calmly about the future and be able to identify the true needs of his/her followers. A dynamic environment would require transformational leaders for an organization to be successful. This means that *Sattvic* leaders, who are likely to be more transformational, would be better equipped to handle a dynamic environment. Similarly, *Rajasic* leaders who are more likely to be transactional leaders would be better able to handle a stable environment. It thus appears that *Sattva* characterized by calmness would be more suitable for a dynamic environment, while *Rajas* characterized by dynamism would be more suitable for a stable environment.

Companies can design training programmes around the *Guna* framework to develop *Sattva* and reduce *Tamas*. They can also encourage *Sattvic* food like fresh juices and fruits considering the subtle implications that diet has on a person's behaviour. Corporate culture can be built around recognizing knowledge as the status mechanism and not power and wealth. More forums for display and sharing of knowledge could be put in place. As teamwork is gaining ground, team-orientation can be built around self-sacrifice for directing one's energies towards superordinate goals of the team. Austerity being

conducive to transformational leadership, *yoga* and meditation sessions can form an integral part of training. Physical cleanliness can be emphasized in work settings.

Critical incidents portraying self-conceit can form the basis of corporate ostracism. Corporates can foster a sense of duty through formal mechanisms and informal systems like recognition and build a culture of cooperation and harmony around committed and loyal employees who will focus all their energies on doing their task rather than wasting them on fire-fighting and cut-throat competition. Companies can give latitude for failures and ingrain true empowerment in the corporate philosophy so that creative juices flow and greater ownership for one's actions can be generated. Companies can also emphasize on enrichment and enlargement of jobs in such a way that employees are attracted by the intrinsic value of the work they do and monetary incentives become secondary. By making the work itself exciting and challenging, companies can imbibe in the employees a sense of duty and intrinsic motivation. Leaders who are aware are not carried away by short-term gains and would be better able to plan and strategize by taking a realistic long-term view of the organization and, thus, lead it to success. Thus, the company strategy can be accordingly programmed with informal mechanisms like legends and corporate folklore fortifying such principles. Routinization of the philosophy should be done properly so that the sentiment percolates to the lowest rung in the hierarchy. All the policies ranging from recruitment and selection on the one hand to exit interviews on the other could be based on a competency framework built around *Sattva* and a *Vedic* orientation. Again, by reducing *Tamas* through negative reinforcements, lack of initiative, procrastination, eschewing of work by employees, and apathy to organizational interests can be checked. Wilful

underperformance and free riding should attract severe action from the management.

CONCLUSION

This study tries to analyse the true nature and make-up of personality traits, beliefs, characteristics, values, and behaviours which define transformational leadership in the Indian cultural setting and finds support for the claim that *Sattva* and presence of a *Vedic* worldview enhance transformational behaviour in a leader whereas *Tamas* reduces the same. However, interaction effects of these constructs need further research. This is a significant departure from the perceptual theories of transformational leadership and emphasizes the control that one can exercise over the magnitude of transformational behaviours nurtured and displayed. This understanding can not only help enhance transformational characteristics but also help reduce the undesired elements directed towards greater overall welfare. The immense significance of personality and worldview as an aid to understanding and enhancing transformational leadership warrants more research across different cultures. Participants in the experiment were students without work experience. Future research could be carried out to test the findings in different organizational settings also. We did not study the implications of gender as students had been randomly chosen and the leader was a female. Results could be different if the actor was a male.

The study being specific to the Indian culture, future research could be directed towards analysing causal relationships of personality and worldview with transformational leadership in different cultural settings. Another area of interest to researchers could be the effect of such beliefs of the leaders on the followers. Research could also focus on whether such personality traits and beliefs follow the falling dominoes or cascading model. ♡

Appendix: Descriptions for the Manipulated Variables (*Gunas* and *Vedic* Worldview)

Sattva (Awareness)

Subhasini has done wonders for Ranchi. She has built bridges, schools, hospitals, etc., and has promoted the NGOs in and around the region. She feels that she has a sense of duty towards Ranchi and her people who have trusted her and elected her to this office. She does not do any service to get anything in return; in fact, she is known to be media shy and eschews publicity. She does not get carried away by material things and can always see the bigger picture. The kind of balance and composure she has in times of peril is worth applauding. No failure can bog her down. Likewise, no success can inflate her ego beyond proportions. Reason and logic are her driving forces and she feels that she can easily sail through any difficult situation with the help of these forces and by

maintaining her cool. She is respected for her knowledge and understanding. She knows what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. She has an infallible belief in God. She is an ardent follower of Lord Shiva. She expresses her deep faith by performing religious sacrifices quite often and that too without any expectations. She practises austerity to the letter. She is very fond of healthy and energy-giving food like fruits, juices, etc. She is honest and kind to everyone who knocks at her door for help. She is known to be impartial in her dealings and favours only those who really deserve. She knows that the ultimate source of happiness is self-realization. She is thus not carried away by sensual pleasures as she knows that their effect is always ephemeral.

Rajas (Dynamism)

Subhasini is passionate about her work and has done wonders for Ranchi. She has built bridges, schools, hospitals, etc. and has promoted the NGOs in and around the region. However, her hunger and greed for power knows no end. Everything that she does is for furthering her political aspirations. She does a careful cost-benefit analysis of each of the alternatives and decides upon that which would give her maximum mileage. She has been successful in amassing fame and now her self-conceit knows no bounds. However, she seems to not understand fully what is good and what is bad for her constituency. She goes on investing in entertainment parks in Ranchi whereas poor infrastructure is causing many problems in the smooth functioning of trade and commerce. She gets easily elated at her success but, in the same way, she cannot take failures easily. She favours only those who can give something in return and this is clearly evident in her granting all the tenders to one particular MNC which seems to have given lots of donations to Subhasini's trust. She feels that money can help sail through any difficulty whatsoever. She tries to eschew any strenuous obligatory work. She believes in all sensual pleasures. She has a luxurious style of living. She is very fond of hot and spicy food, especially Chinese and Italian. She does not seem to understand the nuances of religion well. Her family believes that the violent form of Goddess Kali is the only real power in the universe and that the best form of worship is to feed the Goddess with animal blood and she cherishes the same faith. She performs religious sacrifices quite often mostly to make a show of her immense wealth or to gain favours from the Goddess. She practises austerity in front of others but that is just to rise in their esteem and to be praised.

Tamas (Inertness)

Subhasini has a strange laziness shrouding her. Her favourite pastime is sleeping. She does not even bother to know what is going on in her constituency and every nook and corner of Ranchi speaks of her negligence and apathy. Whenever she is supposed to take any decision, she does it without even worrying about the consequences. Whenever she has to work, she tries to find ways to escape at the best or procrastinate at the worst. When the situation gets out of control, she just gives up and complains that the entire system is hopeless. She is alleged to have been involved in underhand dealings and giving tenders to foreign MNCs which hardly have any merit thus depriving local companies of a chance to have made a difference in the shattering economy of Ranchi. She is notorious for being very haughty and arrogant. A closer look into her personal life also gives strange indications. She feels religion to be a sham. According to her, the most powerful beings are the spirits of the ancestors and it is only appeasing them that can actually make a difference. There are also stories that, just before the

elections, Subhasini went on a fast for 12 full days only to pray that her opponent, who was definitely more deserving than her, is rendered incapable of contesting the elections. Moreover, given her lazy temperament, it is said that she did not observe all the necessary rituals even during the fast. Again, the only thing that Subhasini is most fond of is stale rice, cooked overnight, and she has that everyday.

Vedic Worldview

Maya: Subhasini's reading habits and rich experience in diverse disciplines have made her understand the workings of the world like nobody else. She knows that this world is full of contradictions like happiness and misery, pain and pleasure, wickedness and goodness. This understanding has had a profound effect on Subhasini's life. She is neither carried away by optimism nor bogged down by pessimism. She knows that not all is good in this world and we cannot do much about it, but again, she understands that we are not helpless beings altogether. We can rise above this if we want to. This is clearly reflected in her handling of the law and order system of Ranchi. Knowing fully well that corruption had made deep inroads into the system, she knew that whatever she did, she would not be able to fully clean up the system. However, she did all that was in her hands, and now, a marked difference can be seen in the system. The crime rate has gone down to a considerable extent and people are living in peace.

Karma: Subhasini has this infallible belief in action. She feels that whatever happens has an antecedent cause. She knows that whatever she is today is a result of her actions in the past. She knows fully well that if she resorts to unethical means today, her tomorrow will never be peaceful. She knows that no amount of good that she does to hide her evil deeds will help and that she will be punished for her evil deeds even though she may be rewarded for her good ones at the same time. She knows that not only what we explicitly do but also what we feel today will have implications in the future. She does not believe in shifting the blame onto others. She understands that she and she alone will have to bear the consequences of her actions, good or bad. She smiles away at the ignorance of those who do not understand this cause-effect relationship because she knows that although we may not perceive the hidden links all the time, they still exist. Her deep understanding of the nature of human action has stood her in good stead all through. Whatever she thinks or does is not merely for the present and she carefully analyses the long-term implications of all her actions. She knows that immediate pleasures are ephemeral and following one's duty diligently alone can give long lasting happiness. She is fearful of resorting to unethical means as she knows that she alone has to bear the consequences in the future. ❧

REFERENCES

- Banerji, P and Krishnan, V R (2000). "Ethical Preferences of Transformational Leaders: An Empirical Investigation," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 21(8), 405-413.
- Barling, J; Slater, F and Kelloway, E K (2000). "Transformational Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: An Exploratory Study," *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 21(3), 157-161.
- Bass, B M (1985). *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B M (1998). *Transformational Leadership: Industry, Military, and Educational Impact*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bass, B M and Avolio, B J (1991). *The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: Form 5x*, State University of New York, Binghamton: Center for Leadership Studies.
- Bass, B M and Steidlmeier, P (1999). "Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership Behavior," *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 181-217.
- Burns, J M (1978). *Leadership*, New York: Harper and Row.
- Conger, J A and Kanungo, R N (1998). *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chakraborty, S K (1987). *Managerial Effectiveness and Quality of Work Life: Indian Insights*, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill.
- Chakraborty, S K (1995). *Ethics in Management: Vedantic Perspectives*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Das, R C (1987). "The Gita Typology of Personality: An Inventory," *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 6(1 and 2), 7-12.
- Das, R C (1991). "Standardization of the Gita Inventory of Personality," *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(1 and 2), 47-54.

- House, R J; Spangler, W D and Woycke, J (1991). "Personality and Charisma in the US Presidency: A Psychological Theory of Leader Effectiveness," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(3), 364-396.
- Howell, J M and Higgins, C A (1990). "Champions of Technological Innovation," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(2), 317-341.
- Judge, T A and Bono, J E (2000). "Five-factor Model of Personality and Transformational Leadership," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(5), 751-765.
- Kanungo, R N and Mendonca, M (1996). *Ethical Dimensions of Leadership*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kaur, P and Sinha, A K (1992). "Dimensions of Guna in Organizational Setting," *Vikalpa*, 17(3), 27-32.
- Krishnan, V R (2001). "Can the Indian Worldview Facilitate the Emergence of Transformational Leaders?" *Management and Labour Studies*, 26(4), 237-244.
- Krishnananda, S (1994). *A Short History of Religious and Philosophic Thought in India* (Third Edition), Shivanandanagar: Divine Life Society.
- Narayanan, J and Krishnan, V R (2001). "Basic Nature of Transformational Leaders: Impact on Devotion to Work," Paper presented at the 29th Annual Conference of the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada, London (Ontario).
- Radhakrishnan, S (1929). *Indian Philosophy: Volume 1* (Second Edition), London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Radhakrishnan, S (1930). *Indian Philosophy: Volume 2* (Second Edition), London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Radhakrishnan, S (1948). *The Bhagavad Gita*, London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Ross, S M and Offermann, L R (1997). "Transformational Leaders: Measurement of Personality Attributes and Work Group Performance," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(10), 1078-1086.
- Sebastian, K A and Mathew, V G (2002). "Three Gunas and PSI Experience: A Study of PSI Experience in Relation to Inertia, Activation and Stability," *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 20(2), 44-48.
- Sosik, J J and Megerian, L E (1999). "Understanding Leader Emotional Intelligence and Performance: The Role of Self-other Agreement on Transformational Leadership Perceptions," *Group and Organization Management*, 24(3), 367-390.
- Vivekananda, S (2000). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (9 volumes), Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama. ❧

Aditi Kejriwal is with Hewitt Associates, New Delhi. She has a post-graduate diploma in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations from Xavier Labour Relations Institute, Jamshedpur.
e-mail: aditi.kejriwal@hewitt.com

Venkat R Krishnan is Professor in the Organizational Behaviour Area of Xavier Labour Relations Institute, Jamshedpur. A Ph.D. in Business Administration from Temple University, Philadelphia, USA, his research interests include transformational leadership and Indian philosophy.
e-mail: mail@rkvenkat.com

Every good poem, in fact, is a bridge built from the known, familiar side of life over into the unknown. Science too is always making expeditions into the unknown. But this does not mean that science can supersede poetry. For, poetry enlightens us in a different way from science; it speaks directly to our feelings or imagination. The findings of poetry are no more and no less true than science.

C Day-Lewis

Copyright of Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers is the property of Indian Institute of Management and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.