IMPACT OF SATTVA AND RAJAS GUNAS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND KARMA-YOGA

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Relationships between gunas, karma-yoga, and transformational leadership were studied using a sample of 105 pairs of managers and subordinates of a large banking organization in India. Each of the three gunas - sattva, rajas, and tamas - was measured along 10 dimensions: attribution, leisure, interests, food, praise and criticism, sympathy, right and wrong, motivation to work, working with determination, and accepting pain. A scale was developed for this study to measure karma-yoga. Findings show that three sattva dimensions (sympathy, motivation to work, and accepting pain) enhance transformational leadership and two rajas dimensions (attribution, and right and wrong) reduce karma-yoga. Karma-yoga is not related to transformational leadership.

The role of transformational leadership in building greater commitment and causing performance beyond expectations has been established (Bass, 1998). Bass (1997) also argued that there is universality in the transformational leadership paradigm. Universality however, does not preclude the impact of specific thought processes, beliefs, and implicit understandings that are unique to a culture. In this study, we explored transformational leadership and the extent to which the leader is a karma-yogi by using the framework of the three gunas.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) identified two basic types of leadership: the transactional and the transforming or transformational. According to him, most leader-follower relationships tend to be transactional in nature. However, transforming leadership is more potent, although it is more com-

plex. Transforming leaders not only recognize and exploit an existing need or demand of potential followers, but they also look for potential motives in followers, seek to satisfy higher needs, and engage the full person of the follower. Transforming leadership results in mutual stimulation and seeks to convert followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents. It occurs when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation. This happens because of self-directing and self-reinforcing (Bass, 1985).

Bass (1985) identified four factors of transformational leadership. They are charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Charisma is the most important component in the larger concept of transformational leadership. Followers describe their charismatic leaders as those who make everyone enthusiastic about assignments, and who command respect from everyone. Followers have complete faith in charismatic leaders, feel proud to be associated with them, and trust their capacity to overcome any obstacle. Inspirational leadership, the second of the four factors, involves the arousal and heightening of motivation among followers by articulating a realistic vision of the future that can be shared. Intellectual stimulation, the third factor, arouses in followers the awareness of problems and how they may be solved, and stirs the imagination and generates thoughts and insights. The last factor, namely individualized consideration, involves giving personal attention to followers who seem neglected, treating each follower individually, and helping each follower get what he or she wants (Bass, 1998).

Transformational leadership goes beyond the attempts of leaders who seek to satisfy the current needs of followers through transactions or exchange via contingent reward behavior. It motivates others to do more than they originally intended and often more than they thought possible. Studies have found significant and positive relationships between transformational leadership and the amount of effort followers are willing to exert, satisfaction with the leader, ratings of job performance, and perceived effectiveness (Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership could be potentially effective across a variety of situations, though certain contextual factors could facilitate the emergence and impact of transformational leadership (Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001).

Of particular relevance to this study is the personality and characteristics that the leader possesses. The most important personality variable that affects leader behavior is the value system of the leader (Bass, 1985). Burns (1978) saw self-actualizers as potential leaders at all levels, because of their capacity to grow, flexibility, competence, etc., and importantly a capacity to be taught, i.e., lead by being led. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) claimed that altruistic behavior is an important component of leadership that aims at the self-transformation of the leader and transformation of the followers. Charismatic leaders strive to change the status quo (Conger & Kanungo, 1998).

House, Spangler, and Woycke (1991) used archival data on U.S. presidents to demonstrate that charisma was positively related to need for power and activity inhibition, and negatively related to need for achievement. Ross and Offermann (1997) found that transformational leadership was positively related to self-confidence, feminine attributes, pragmatism, and nurturance, and negatively related to criticalness and aggression. Banerji and Krishnan (2000), in a study of transformational leaders' ethical preferences, found that inspirational leadership was negatively related to leader's preference for bribery and favoritism, and intellectual stimulation was negatively related to preference for bribery. Transformational leaders rate themselves high on purpose-in-life, personal efficacy, interpersonal control, and social self-confidence, while subordinates rate transformational leaders high on interpersonal control (Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

Karma-Yoga

"Societies vary in the extent to which they inculcate in their members the importance of work relative to other life roles" (Sinha, 2000, p. 19). The larger societal culture may socialize the members of a society such that they remain dedicated to work without bothering about what they gain from their effort. The culture of India fundamentally differs from many other cultures in one essential aspect related to work. The people who are socialized in this culture consider themselves to be born with duties rather than with rights (Sinha, 1997). Thus, work is a duty to be discharged. We therefore operationalized karma-yoga as doing one's duty and not being attached to the outcomes.

According to the Indian worldview, no one remains even for a moment without doing work. All are made to work under compulsion by their nature. One has a duty to perform one's prescribed activities since performing action is better than renouncing action. The objective of human existence is to transcend nature and this is best done by doing one's duty in a dedicated manner. Therefore, prescribed actions or duties should be performed without too much attachment to the personal gains of work, without interruption, and with complete dedication. It is only by performing action that a person attains the highest satisfaction. Steadfastness in action is required without much thought of the fruit (Chakraborty, 1987; Gambhirananda, 1995). Karma-yoga would ideally mean doing something without seeking anything in return. The implication of this concept for a person is that it enriches the quality of work and the person becomes a self-starter, disciplined, and quality-conscious. Karma-yoga is energy conserving and mind purifying, for it prompts one to work for a cause higher than one's ego (Chakraborty, 1993).

Transformational leaders are fundamentally driven by a larger vision and they have a great zeal to change the existing order of things. They are also role models for others to follow. Therefore, leaders who are very much devoted to their work might be seen as more transformational.

Hypothesis 1. Transformational leadership would be positively re-
lated to leader's karma-yoga.

Gunas of Nature

According to the Indian worldview, everything that exists is a prod-
uct of three fundamental constituents of nature termed gunas. The three
gunas are sattva, rajas, and tamas (Chakraborty, 1987). All elements of
matter, and empirical phenomena, including the mind, are an endless
combination of these three gunas. Every human being will therefore have
the characteristics of all the three gunas at the same time, though one of
the three may be the dominant one. A leader in whom sattva is the most
dominant of the three gunas will exhibit qualities like purity, wisdom,
bliss, serenity, love of knowledge, fineness, goodness, etc. Such a per-
son appreciates more readily that the environment is only the effect,
while human beings are the cause. According to Chakraborty (1987),
such persons also suffer from much lower stress levels. One in whom
the guna of rajas is the most dominant will exhibit egoism, activity, rest-
lessness, passion and its derivatives like lust and greed, and hankering
after things like wealth and power. Such a person is likely to blame exter-
nal factors for his or her own shortcomings. One in whom the guna of
tamas is the most dominant will exhibit bias, heedlessness, inertia, dark-
ness, obstruction, laziness, procrastination, confusion, and perversion
in thought and action (Das, 1991). The three gunas do not work me-
chanically. They constitute a unity in trinity, coexist, and cohere. Kaur
and Sinha (1992) found that the guna of rajas actually consisted of two
factors - rajas positive, and rajas negative.

Transformational leaders exhibit specific personality attributes, and
initial research in the area has been supportive in terms of the attributes
of leaders' intelligence (Atwater & Yammarino, 1993) and abstract orien-
tation (Dubinsky, Yammarino & Jolson, 1995). An enabling personality is
an important predictor of transformational leadership (Ross & Offerman,
1997). An enabling personality is characterized by high degrees of prag-
matism, nurturance, and feminine attributes. Clover (1988) found that
transformational leaders scored significantly higher on measures of femi-
nine attributes, nurturance, and pragmatism and lower on measures of
masculine attributes, dominance, aggression, and criticalness. Transfor-
mational leaders were more flexible, compassionate, insightful, and prag-
matic, and less forceful and tough than their non-transformational coun-
terparts. Being high on calmness and awareness might enhance trans-
formational leadership, but the same may not enhance karma-yoga. The
focus has to be more on reducing passion and dynamism than on en-
hancing calmness and awareness if one wishes to be a karma-yogi. We
therefore hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2. Transformational leadership would be positively re-
lated to the degree of sattva guna.

Hypothesis 3. Karma-yoga would be negatively related to the degree of rajas guna.

METHODOLOGY

The organization in which this study was conducted was a large nationalized bank with branches all over India. The sample consisted of 105 pairs of managers and subordinates. The managers were requested to answer a questionnaire that had two parts. The first part had 10 items for measuring the three gunas (Das, 1991). Each item captures one dimension of the three gunas. The 10 dimensions are: Attribution, leisure, interests, food, praise and criticism, sympathy, right and wrong, motivation to work, working with determination, accepting pain. Each dimension can be measured independently of the other dimensions. An individual would be ideally high on one guna if he or she scores the highest on that guna on all the ten dimensions, but it is quite possible to be high on one guna only with respect to some of the 10 dimensions. For example, it is possible for an individual to be high on sattva with respect to attribution, high on rajas with respect to leisure, and high on tamas with respect to interests. The response to each of the 10 items was recorded on a 10-point forced-choice scale. Ten points were allotted for each item, which had to be distributed among three responses, each response representing one of the three gunas. The items are included in Appendix A. The responses in the Appendix are listed in order of the gunas (sattva, rajas, and tamas), though the order was randomized in the questionnaire distributed to respondents. The second part of the questionnaire had eight items to measure karma-yoga. These items were developed specifically for this study. The items are included in Appendix B. Managers responded to the items on a 5-point scale: 1=Strongly agree; 2=Agree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Disagree; 5=Strongly disagree (Mean=2.25; SD=0.57). The standardized Cronbach coefficient alpha for the eight-item scale was 0.74.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5x of Bass and Avolio (1991) was used in this study to measure transformational leadership. One subordinate of each of the 105 managers was randomly chosen to respond to leadership questions about his or her manager. The Questionnaire had 37 items to measure the four factors of transformational leadership-8 items for charismatic leadership, 10 items each for inspirational leadership and intellectual stimulation, and 9 items for individualized consideration. Subordinates were requested to answer the MLQ by rating how frequently their current immediate supervisors have displayed the behaviors described, using a five-point scale: 1=Not at all; 2=Once in a while; 3=Sometimes; 4=Fairly often; 5=Frequently if not always. The scale reliabilities have been found high in several studies (Den Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997). The standardized Cronbach coefficient alpha for the four scales in our study ranged from 0.81 to 0.87. The mean of the items in each of the four scales was taken as the score for

that factor of transformational leadership. The correlations between the four factors ranged from 0.72 to 0.82 (p < .001 for all). A composite measure of transformational leadership was therefore calculated by taking the mean of the four factors-charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Mean=3.65, and SD=0.71 for transformational leadership).

RESULTS

Transformational leadership and karma-yoga were not significantly correlated to each other (r=0.08, p=0.44). Thus, our Hypothesis 1 was not supported. We tested Hypothesis 2 (effect of sattva guna on transformational leadership) by using regression analysis with the forward-selection technique (Judge, Griffiths, Hill, Lutkepohl & Lee, 1985). The forward-selection technique begins with no variables in the model. For each independent variable (each of the 10 dimensions of sattva guna), it calculates F statistics that reflect the variable's contribution to the model if it is included. The variable that would produce the largest F statistic is added to the model. The evaluation process is repeated with the variables remaining outside the model. Once a variable is entered into the model, it stays. Thus, variables are added one by one to the model so long as the resultant model F statistic continues to remain significant at .05 level. We modeled transformational leadership against the 10 dimensions of sattva guna using the forward option. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Regression Analysis for Predicting Transformational Leadership from Sattva Dimensions

Step	Sattva Dimension	Parameter Estimate	F Value	R^2	Model F
1	Attribution	-0.04	2.66	.03	2.66
2	Attribution	-0.04	†3.85		
	Sympathy	0.04	†3.26	.06	†2.99
3	Attribution	-0.05	*4.16		
	Sympathy	0.04	†2.93		
	Accepting pain	-0.05	2.17	.08	*2.74
4	Attribution	-0.05	*4.16		
	Sympathy	0.04	†2.83		
	Accepting pain	-0.06	†3.37		
	Motivation to work	0.05	†3.28	.11	*2.93
5	Attribution	-0.04	*4.06		
	Sympathy	0.06	†3.68		
	Accepting pain	-0.05	†2.97		
	Motivation to work	0.06	†3.94		
	Leisure	0.04	1.03	.12	*2.55

† = p<0.10. * = p<0.05.

Five dimensions of sattva guna - attribution, leisure, sympathy, motivation to work, and accepting pain-entered the model and together significantly predicted transformational leadership. The parameter estimate of attribution dimension was negative and significant, and the parameter estimate of leisure was not significant. The parameter estimates of the remaining three dimensions-sympathy, accepting pain, and motivation to work-were positive and moderately significant ($p<0.10$). Thus, our Hypothesis 2 obtained only partial and moderate support. We then took the rajas guna and modeled transformational leadership against the 10 dimensions of that guna, using the forward option. The model did not reach significance in the case of rajas guna. The ten dimensions of rajas guna did not predict transformational leadership.

To test our Hypothesis 3, we modeled karma-yoga against the 10 dimensions of rajas guna using the forward option. The results are given in Table 2. Four dimensions of rajas guna-right and wrong, attribution, sympathy, and accepting pain-entered the model and together significantly predicted karma-yoga. The parameter estimates of sympathy and accepting pain were not significant. The parameter estimates of the remaining two dimensions-right and wrong, and attribution-were negative and significant ($p<0.05$). Thus, our Hypothesis 3 obtained only partial support. We then took the sattva guna and modeled karma-yoga against the 10 dimensions of that guna, using the forward option. The model did not reach significance in the case of sattva guna. The ten dimensions of sattva guna did not predict karma-yoga.

Table 2

Regression Analysis for
Predicting Karma-Yoga from Rajas Dimensions

Step	Rajas Dimension	Parameter Estimate	F Value	R^2	Model F
1	Right and wrong	-0.06	*4.62	.05	*4.62
2	Right and wrong	-0.06	*5.23		
	Attribution	-0.04	*4.12	.09	*4.45
3	Right and wrong	-0.06	*4.82		
	Attribution	-0.04	*4.48		
	Sympathy	-0.04	0.82	.10	*3.23
4	Right and wrong	-0.06	*5.04		
	Attribution	-0.04	*4.19		
	Sympathy	-0.03	0.65		
	Accepting pain	-0.02	0.56	.10	*2.55

* = $p<0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study provide preliminary support for the hypothesized relationship between sattva guna and transformational leadership. Since the rajas dimensions do not predict transformational leadership in the regression analysis, it is possible that transformational leadership would have very little to do with normally accepted forms of hectic activity. Leaders who inspire others and taken them to higher levels of motivation need to be calm, balanced, and wise, rather than be full of passion and rajas. Only those who are relatively undisturbed by various events are likely to be seen as charismatic and respected. That transformational leadership is positively related to sattva and not rajas guna is possibly the most significant finding of this study.

The attribution dimension ("I have no grudge against myself or anybody else for my sufferings") of sattva guna predicts transformational leadership negatively. It is possible that not attributing any cause for one's suffering might result in the leader not being motivated to change anything. Dissatisfaction with the status quo is necessary for bringing about a change, and therefore being unaffected by one's suffering could make one less transformational.

Transformational leadership does not seem to have any relationship at all with karma-yoga. A plausible explanation for this is that transformational leaders might have to look at work differently depending on follower needs and environmental factors. Karma-yoga, however, is related to rajas guna negatively, and is not related to sattva guna. The findings overall suggest that those who wish to be both transformational leaders and karma-yogis should increase their sattva while at the same time reducing their rajas.

Limitations

The three basic gunas of nature are difficult to capture. The use of a forced choice scale for measuring a complex construct was a significant limitation. The sattva and tamas gunas are very similar in terms of behavior and the power of the forced scale to discriminate between these two constructs is questionable. Multiple items for each of the 10 dimensions of the three gunas need to be developed. The forced choice scale could also be supplemented with another measure that looks at the gunas as being independent of each other. The construct of karma-yoga could perhaps be operationalized in a more rigorous way by future researchers, using a multiple-factor structure. In addition, a use of a larger sample with multiple follower responses for every leader may have provided a more representative data.

CONCLUSION

We explored the relationship between transformational leadership, karma-yoga, and the three gunas of nature - sattva, rajas, and tamas.

We found support for the claim that sattva guna enhances transformational leadership and rajas guna reduces karma-yoga. Transformational leadership might also not have anything to do with leader's karma-yoga, though the study gives clear pointers for working toward being both a transformational leader and a karma-yogi. This was only a preliminary study of transformational leadership and karma-yoga using the framework of the three gunas. More such studies are needed before we can draw valid inferences about the causes of transformational leadership and karma-yoga.

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Appendix A
Items for Measuring the Three Gunas

1. *Attribution.* (a) I have no grudge against myself or anybody else for my sufferings. (b) I hold myself responsible for my sufferings. (c) I hold others and/or my circumstances responsible for my sufferings.

2. *Leisure.* If I am compelled to choose one from among the follow-ing three alternatives, I would like to spend my leisure hours mostly by (a) Reading books on philosophy and/or religion. (b) Playing games and/or visiting friends. (c) Sleeping or idling away the time.

3. *Interests.* I prefer (a) Visiting places of worship and prayer. (b) Watching physical feats. (c) Witnessing occult practices.

4. *Food.* I prefer (a) Fruits and/or milk preparation. (b) Preparation of meat derived from fresh kills. (c) Preparation of dried fish or tinned meat.

5. *Praise and criticism.* (a) Praise or criticism does not generally affect my work. (b) In my work, I feel encouraged when I am praised and depressed when criticized. (c) Generally I feel no urge to work, no mat-ter whether I am praised or criticized.

6. *Sympathy.* In most cases, I give alms to beggars/sympathize with the poor (a) With a sense of service. (b) With a spirit of rendering help. (c) With an attitude of disgust or indifference.

7. *Right and wrong.* (a) I believe that right and wrong are exclusively moral values. (b) I believe that right and wrong are only social values. (c) Right and wrong practically carry no sense for me.

8. *Motivation to work.* (a) I like to work and in most cases my action is guided by reason. (b) I like to work and in most cases I act impulsively. (c) Ordinarily I do not like to work unless compelled by circumstances.

9. *Working with determination.* (a) I can work with determination without expectation for any return. (b) I can work with determination only when some return is assured. (c) I can seldom work with determination even in encouraging situations.

10. *Accepting pain.* (a) I am ready to undergo pains mainly for attaining spiritual progress. (b) I am ready to undergo pains, but mainly for attaining worldly happiness. (c) I do not like to take pains at all; rather I like comforts and amusements

Appendix B
Items for Measuring *Karma-Yoga*

1. When I do a good job, I let people know that I have.

2. I thoroughly enjoy the fruits of my own action.

3. I feel a sense of attachment to the goals that I set for myself.

4. When I set targets, I am agitated as the deadline approaches.

5. I look for recognition at the end of a job well done.

6. When I achieve success, I generally talk about it to people I know.

7. I hate failure and would do anything to avoid it.

8. I evaluate my performance on a task by the output generated from the task