

## ALTRUISM AS COMPONENT OF LEADERSHIP: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstracts**

Among various components of leadership, altruism has a significant place. Various noble characters around the world have exhibited the power of altruism in their behaviour which can be linked to their special achievements. Altruism is not very common among the entrepreneurs, and requires a strong willpower and determination with a selfless heart on the part of the subject. India's ancient history and cultural accounts are full of stories through which relevant lessons in altruism can be profitably withdrawn. While performing and working with altruistic behaviour, a leader's incredible approach of morality has been widely studied and examined in the Indian literary texts by several intellectuals. This paper intends to emphasise the significance of altruism in the modern competitive materialistic world. An attempt has been made to analyse the inevitability of altruism through the works of creative literature and their employability in the study of modern management.

### **Research paper**

**Keywords:** Leadership, Literature, Altruism, Ethics, Management, Noble Behaviour, Vedas

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## **Introduction**

According to Miller (2005), ‘Altruistic leadership can be defined as guiding others with the ultimate goal of improving their wellness.’ In most cases, self-interest as either a philosophical, normative or motivational orientation would hold stronger president. Leadership free of self-interest may be an ideology and altruism can be considered a more realistic view of leadership ethics in business by the leadership theorists (*Joseph, 2015*).

## **Role of Ethics**

The concept of Altruism appears as a set of assisting behaviours aimed at exactly needy persons straightaway. Social psychologists have been defined altruism in two ways: Firstly, as an attributed persistence to help others and secondly, in terms of apparent behaviour and its’ resemblance. Ethics are generally considered as the instructions given in our ancient literary texts for human civilization and adequate actions performed by the civic leaders. We can classify them as commandments for human prosperity for maintaining law and order in the society and some scholars also categorized as a system for controlling the human behaviour in the personal and social front. Ethics clarifies the theme of conclusion of right and wrong. So in studying the altruism or altruistic beliefs, ethics have a very important role because these guidelines have their miscellaneous characteristics due to the originality and universal applicability in various disciplines. So there is a very strong relationship between altruism and ethics because we found altruism as a value in the system of beliefs in every culturist society of the world. Ethically, it is perceived as a form of subsequent helping pattern due

to its dependence on moral accuracy of an action to provide virtuous results to others (*Sagnak, 2017*).

### **Altruism and Egotism**

According to Andrew (2009), ‘The adoration of altruistic manners lies in its a sense of completeness, congruence and comfort formed through carefulness, concern and gratitude for both self and others.’ Schulz (2016) defined that we cannot incorporate all the wishes of human for welfare of others under altruism but only few of them can be termed so far. Because, sometimes there will be a major difference of helping others persistently or intentionally. We can see the change in the selfish behaviour pattern turned in to selfless or altruistic and egotism can be the reason behind this change. So this kind of conduct of the leader can never be labelled as altruism.

### **Research Methodology**

For this purpose, we have hypothesise our study that altruism has its significant place in the ancient literary writings. We have adopted the analytical methodology and empirical research approach for this research and analyzed the epics like *Ramyana*, the *ShrimadBhagwad Gita* and other ancient *Vedic* Sanskrit texts. We have studied the various epic characters who performed their duty as the best altruistic leader like *Lakshmana* in *Ramayana*, the concept of Karm-Yoga in the *ShrimadBhagwad Gita* and the memoires of many reformists of India. We have analysed them in the context of ancient Indian culture, especially the ancient part.



Figure 1. The reflection of altruism in various phases and systems

### Vedic Approach of Altruism

According to Parmeshwaranand (2000), ‘The Vedic concept of a welfare state, of a happy and prosperous nation is to be found in following terms.

*“To achieve the end in view, (Ichchantah bradram) desiring universal prosperity. (tasmaat) Out of that, (Jaatam) is born raashtram the nation, balam the strength (ojah cha) and splendour, (tat) so (devah) let the learned and noble men (upa sum namantu) have the best regard (asmai) for this principle.”*

Let us build up our nation on the strong bedrock of these twin principles, selfless service and determination to bear cheerful all suffering (for the sake of the cause) and thus pave the way to international co-operational and ultimately to a world administration to which all other national administrations willingly transfer a part of their freedom in order to keep the world free from the scourge that is war.

Vedic knowledge scientifically regulates the duties and rights, activities and requisites of every class and individual in a w-holistic a spirit of cooperation and selfless service.

### ***Purpose of human existence according to Vedic civilization***

- Dharma or selfless service (duty) as a sacred activity offered to God.
- Artha or prosperity and economic development acquired through selfless service of each individual, by independence and cooperation.
- Kama or pleasure and enjoyment derived from selfless and intelligent performance of the respective duties for all group of the society.
- Moksha or liberation from conditioning considered as the highest achievement and from this platform, the transcendental purpose of life (the fifth purpose) of direct and blissful God realization can be easily attained. Altruism existed in the primordial period of India because in Vedic literature, society was considered as the body of God by Vedas and serving society by performing one's duty is service to God (*Knapp, 2005*).

### **Altruism as a Principle of Moral Behaviour**

Altruism as described by Rabindra N. (1996) has its important place in almost every culture with its various forms as the essence of wide-ranging decent principle. So the leadership effectiveness is confirmed only by altruistic performances that replicate the leader's continuous aspiration and concern for other's welfare despite the risk of personal loss in such performances. According to Salib (2014), 'The efficiency of employees is increasing continuously who perceived altruistic behaviour from their manag-

ers and they become more innovative, enthusiastic, and honest by working together for mutual benefits. The issue of work problem could be managed and solved more patiently and the conflicts become negligible in this case. But the leader should never be fallacious for its selfless approach so it required great courage to run through humility in depicting a moral behaviour.’

### **Leadership and Altruism**

The concept of altruism has also its place in the transforming/transformational leadership theories given by James Mac Gregor Burns and Bernard Bass along with other literary texts. They have recognized that a leader should sacrifice its instant personal self-interest for a moral cause. The dark side of the altruism noted that empathy can induce partiality and can cause people to violate ethical norms (such as equity), but not to act selfishly per se. But the bright side of altruism noted that they are still acting with other person’s interest in mind (rather than their own) (*George R., 2004*).

According to Rabindra N. (1996), ‘The behaviour of the leader could be defined in the three stages to ensure correct direction, developing trust, and stimulate motivation among the followers to attain the organization’s vision through collective actions. In the first stage, the leader identified the insufficiencies in the status quo in the environment and the potential opportunities available within the organization’s resources in terms of man, power and machine. This environment assessment leads, in the second stage, to the formulation and articulation of an idealized vision. Finally, in the third stage, the leader initiates steps to achieve the vision.’ Prosocial leaders nev-

er care for the reward or penalty and his ultimate focus is to work selflessly for the welfare of the others. He is just committed serve the needy people. He never cares for the personal losses he incurred during this expedition (Ewest, 2017). Similar to altruism is the concept of social responsibility. Both involve acting in ways that might be counter to one's self interest, but social responsibility focuses on a person's sense of duty to others. People high in social responsibility feel that they have an obligation to more than just to themselves and their family; they have a duty to society (Shane, 2010).

### **The Framework of Altruism in Ancient Texts**

According to Jindal (2015), 'In Indian ancient literary Sanskrit texts, the word altruism comes as *Seva* which means the spiritual practice of selfless service. *Seva* is one of the simplest and yet most profound and life changing ways that we can put our spiritual knowledge in to action.' Selfless service indeed a central tenet in Hinduism. It relates to key concept of dharma, which is to be fulfil one's duties without selfishness. In this regard, Hinduism has a very important concept known as *Seva*, meaning sacrifice and selfless service towards the deity.

The idea of *Sarvodaya* Samaj by Vinobha Bhave (1895-1983): *Sarvodaya is not a sect. it has not compulsory practices, no rigid disciplines, sarvodaya depends on service through understanding in a spirit of love.*

In these line Bhave has interpreted the notion of selfless service as a sentiment shared by human beings towards each other, in a spirit of suspicion of any form of representative rule, including democracy. Along with Bhave, the modern Hindu reformist thinkers such that Raja Ram Mohan

Roy who was one of the greatest benefactors of mankind, B.G. Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi have the same approach of *sarvodya*. They all stressed the importance of selfless action karma. Even in Buddhism, five basic principles (Pancasila) underpin the dharma and *sarvodya* (Jawad, 2009).

### **Significance of Altruistic Behaviour**

According to Blount (2011), ‘Leading is influencing the workplace with encouragement, enthusiasm and novelty. It presents the vision a tangible reality before the organization’s people and empowers others through various projects and tasks with a system of management. Similarly coaching is a constant process of modelling and developing people through teaching, surveillance, criticism with a follow-up in real time and on the job.’ History has various examples of leaders who fulfilled the characterization of leadership but resisted with their moral personal values like the president of the United States Woodrow Wilson held racist belief. Yet to his credit he was also accountable for leading positive social modification (Ewest, 2017).

According to Gates (2006), ‘Leadership sometimes involves a notion of authority resulting from widespread limitations of knowledge and authority. Altruism involves recognising problems and seeking solutions for them. Some social scientist discount religion as a significant force in altruism, it is necessary to examine religion and possible reasons why it may not be a powerful motivator of altruistic actions. It is proposed that altruism embodies a self – love that acts towards people in need in a manner that epitomizes sacrifices. It embraces a quality that is termed selflessness. The parables of the sheep and the goats is the second benchmark utilized in the examination



of altruism. The lesson from this states that God will judge us in according with the way we react to the marginalized and suffering.’

Altruism is also characterized as an instinct for survival that may be originate in everyone as a wow feature since birth. As a natural law, people writing about natural law refer to the same human characteristics, altruism, as did Kropotkin, Wilson and Trivers. These references have been dispersed over time, are brief and poorly connected, but all the views of moral principles have been focussed on human consciousness and helped human existence by endorsing the civil behaviour in the society (*Ozinga, 1999*). Altruism supported that while practising the moral behaviour, the ultimate recipient should be the individuals or the society. So it is the demands a very responsible behaviour which van never be categorised under the conditions of self-centredness value (*B.J. Avolio, 2002*).

### **Examples of Helping Opportunities**

- Tutoring younger employees.
- Performing for other employees.
- Serving as monitors.
- Serving as task force leaders.
- Being a big brother/sister. (*Curwin, 1993*)

### **Conclusion**

Without altruism a leader cannot be great until he has an altruistic bent of mind. So accordingly a leader must work selflessly for the society. He is not supposed to prosper individually. It is because of this reason that even modern leaders are supposed to dissociate themselves from selfish

worldly concerns of life. Kings in ancient India were also supposed to work selflessly for the welfare of their subjects. A king or a leader working for his personal gains was much looked down upon. In post independent India the expectations from a king or a leader are still the same. Thus, a leader's personal life ceases to remain personal any more after his entry into public life and he or she is supposed to behave like a model of altruism.

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