

Leading with Oneness: An *Īsopaniṣad* Perspective

Dr Richa Baghel

Assistant Professor, Sri Sri University

Abstract

This paper investigates are modern leadership qualities embedded in the verses of the *Īsopaniṣad* be identified, interpreted, and integrated into a framework that links spiritual wisdom with contemporary organisational and leadership models for practical application; by integrating qualitative hermeneutic-thematic analysis with empirical validation through small sample group for applied thematic and quantitative methods. The eighteen verses of the text were decoded to identify leadership constructs, which were then clustered into three overarching dimensions - Interpersonal Inner Grounding and Ethics, Interpersonal Vision and Adaptability, and External Future-Oriented Sustainability - forming a holistic leadership framework. A survey-based approach, with purposive and snowball small sampling, was employed to assess perception of these constructs in modern organisational setting. Findings highlight the distinct significance of the *Īsopaniṣad*'s emphasis on oneness, detachment, balance, and authenticity in addressing modern challenges such as ethical decision-making, digital transformation, sustainability, and employee well-being. The results demonstrate strong alignment between the text's spiritual principles and contemporary theories of authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership. Practical implications include applications in leadership development, training, and organisational strategy, while theoretical contributions expand global leadership discourse by positioning Indian philosophical thought alongside dominant Western paradigms. Ultimately, the research underscores the potential of ancient spiritual traditions to enrich management scholarship and practice, offering a model of leading with oneness for a complex and interconnected world.

Keywords *Īsopaniṣad*, Oneness, Spiritual-Leadership, Indian Value System, Ethics, Organisational Strategy.

Introduction

Leadership has become a central concern in fast paced changing world, particularly as businesses navigating increasingly complex challenges such as globalisation, rapid digital transformation, sustainability imperatives, and employee well-being. The growing volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) of organisational environments requires leaders who can demonstrate not only technical competence but also resilience, adaptability, and moral clarity. Traditional leadership models, which emphasised hierarchical authority and transactional efficiency, are proving insufficient in addressing these emerging challenges. Instead, organisations are placing greater emphasis on ethical, authentic, and sustainable forms of leadership that foster trust, inclusivity, and long-term value creation (Dinh et al., 2014, Petrie 2014).

This shift reflects broader societal expectations, where stakeholders increasingly hold leaders accountable not only for financial outcomes but also for their contributions to environmental, societal, and governance (ESG) goals. Employees seek leaders who embody integrity, authenticity, and transparency, creating workplaces that support well-being, equity, and personal growth. Similarly, digital disruption requires leaders to embrace technological innovation while maintaining a human-centred and ethical orientation. Together, these pressures underscore the need for leadership models that balance performance with responsibility, integrating values such as fairness, inclusivity, sustainability, and societal contribution into organisational practice (Hannah et al., 2011, Sousa & Rocha 2019, Mark & Pless 2006). Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon - a leading global e-commerce company, hinged sixteen leadership principles that serve as the foundation of the company's organisational culture and decision-making processes. These principles, which emphasize customer obsession, ownership, invest and simplify, are right a lot, learn and be curious, hire and develop the best, insist on highest standards, think big, bias for action, frugality, earn trust, dive deep, have backbone - disagree and commit, deliver results, striver to be Earth's best employer, success and scale bring board responsibility (Nothouse, 2021). Amazon's adherence to its leadership has fuelled its global e-commerce success by promoting high performance, competitive advantage, and sustainable growth.

Despite advances in authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership research, scholarship remains fragmented in addressing the integration of spiritual, ethical, and strategic dimensions. Existing studies often treat constructs such as detachment, balance, or inclusivity in isolation, offering limited empirical insight into their organisational relevance. This highlights a pressing need for a comprehensive framework that bridges ancient philosophical wisdom - exemplified by the *Īsopaniṣad* - with contemporary leadership practice, enabling both theoretical rigour and practical applicability.

The *Īsopaniṣad*, a brief but profound text of 18 mantras, emphasises the all-pervasiveness of the Divine and advocates a life of detachment, balance, and ethical responsibility (Radhakrishnan 1994). These teachings encourage self-awareness, emotional stability, and resilience by urging individuals to focus on duty rather than personal gain. In the context of personality development, these principles foster inner discipline, authenticity, and social responsibility, offering a holistic framework that integrates spiritual wisdom with modern professional and personal growth (Raina 2015). Despite the growing recognition of ethical and authentic leadership models, there is a lack of empirically grounded frameworks that integrate ancient India spiritual wisdom, particularly the *Īsopaniṣad*, with contemporary leadership practices. The study tends to find out how can modern leadership qualities embedded in the verses of the *Īsopaniṣad* be identified, interpreted, and integrated into a framework that links spiritual wisdom with contemporary organisational and leadership models for practical application? The two objectives of the study are: (i) to identify and interpret the modern leadership qualities embedded in the verses of the *Īsopaniṣad* through a hermeneutic-thematic analysis, linking them to contemporary organisational context. (ii) to develop a framework that connects spiritual wisdom from the *Īsopaniṣad* with modern leadership models for practical application in organisations.

Īsopaniṣad

The *Upanishad*, a collection of ancient Indian spiritual texts, constitute the philosophical essence of the *Vedic* tradition and serve as the foundation of *Hindu* philosophy. They mark a pivotal stage in the evolution of *India's* spiritual and philosophical inquiry, encapsulated in *Vedānta* - the culmination of *Vedic* wisdom. As such *Upanishad* continue to shape Indian philosophy while exerting a profound global influence (Koul

2024, Baghel 2023). The *Isha Upanishad* or *Īśopaniṣad*, is the final chapter of the *Shukla Yajurveda*, is a main *Upanishad* comprising 18 verses and foundation to *Vedanta* philosophy. It offers enduring insights into ethical conduct, self-mastery, and leadership virtues, highlighting *Īśvara* (the lord) as a guiding principle for one's moral. (Chinmayananda 1992) in his commentary on the *Īśā Upanishad*, notes that the 18 verses unfold across seven 'thought waves'. The first three verses delineate three distinct paths of life; verses 4-8 articulate the Vision of Truth; verses 9-14 describe the path of worship leading to purification; verses 15-17 emphasise the *Rishis*' (saints') call for individual to awaken to their immortal nature; and verse 18 serves as a concluding prayer, seeking the Lord's blessings for all seekers to embody the teaching of the *Upanishad*.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative interpretive design, integrating hermeneutic-thematic and applied thematic analysis to explore the relevance of the *Īśopaniṣad* for modern leadership. The verses (IP1-IP18) were decoded via hermeneutic-thematic analysis through iterative reading, interpretation, and coding to identify leadership constructs, which were clustered into meta-themes and mapped to contemporary theories. To validate their current applicability, 33 responses were collected through purposive and snowball sampling, using 18 open-ended questions aligned with the identified themes. Applied thematic analysis of responses highlighted recurring perceptions and lived experiences of leadership. Trustworthiness was ensured through reflexivity, triangulation, and transparency in coding. This two-phase approach demonstrates how ancient spiritual insights can be systematically interpreted and empirically examined for contemporary organisational context.

Findings and Discussion

As shown in Table 1: Hermeneutic-Thematic Application of the *Isavasyopanishad* Verses to Leadership findings and discussions are mentioned hereafter. The integration of spiritual wisdom into modern leadership scholarship has been an evolving area of interest, particularly in the context of sustainable and ethical management. Fullness comes from fullness (IP *Shanti Mantra*). Similarly, (Jacobs, 2015) emphasises that practice such as silence and meditation not only reduce stress but also contribute to collective harmony, offering a pathway from individual well-being to organisational balance. The entire universe is for our happiness, but the principle is that happiness should be done with sacrifice (IP1). In leadership, it translates into detachment. Detachment is the ability to make objective, unbiased decisions. In management, it reflects rational financial planning, resource efficiency, and impartial evaluation, free from emotional distortions (Sharma & Goyal, 2018; Jensen, 2003). The guidance from the sages is to live for 100 years and perform our deed (IP2). In leadership, it translates into action. Making striving the central purpose of life eliminates fear, sharpens focus, and aligns action with long-term fulfilment (Gautier, 2006). In management, this reflects productivity and organisational firmness, where sustained effort - akin to *karma* (action) - drives success (Cascio, 2006; Judge et al., 2001; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Locke & Latham, 2002).

Unaware are those who violate discipline, relying on physical and sensual power while lacking true discernment. They live in the darkness of ignorance (IP3). In leadership, it translates into direction. Direction gives productivity its meaning; absent strategic sustainability alignment, short-term 'wines' sow the seeds for long-term collapse. In management, effective leaders therefore convert purpose into metrics, metrics into routines, and routines into culturally supported choices that keep effort aimed at durable value

creating (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Elkington, 1998; Hahn et al., 2015; Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). The unchanging consciousness or supreme power is more dynamic than the mind and cannot be fully grasped by senses. While being stable from within, one can actively engage with the dynamic nature of existence (IP4). In leadership, it translates into vision. In management, a leader's primary role lies in setting a compelling vision. Effective leaders balance a detailed understanding of the immediate micro-environment with board strategic view of the macro-environment. Ratan Tata's experience working on the shop floor illustrates how hands-on engagement can cultivate a grounded yet forward-looking vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Porter, 1980; Ansoff, 1965; Mintzberg, 1994).

The supreme power or consciousness is at an immeasurable distance and near to all, at the same time; also present within all (IP5). In leadership, it translates into digitalisation. In management, this reflects, the transformative power of digitalisation, when integrated with management through conscious awareness, has shaped organisational practices across generations. Consciousness in this context signifies mindful leadership, ethical responsibility, and an acute awareness of organisational interconnectedness with its environment. Such awareness becomes increasingly critical as digital tools continue to redefine managerial process and decision-making (Westerman & McAfee, 2014; Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Reb & Cropanzano, 2014; Senge, 2006; Purser & Milillo, 2015). The acquired knowledge by virtue of learning cannot extract the illusion and the well encountered knowledge is an assertion condition for this (IP6). In leadership, it translated into equality. Human abilities and qualities may be viewed as gifts from a higher power, accessible to all, yet opportunities to realise this potential are often unequally distributed, creating the risk of resentment. In management, cultivating empathy and prioritising collective outcomes over animosity are therefore essential. In this process, knowledge and expertise remain central to generating sustainable and positive results (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Roberson, 2006; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Grant, 1996).

Now at this stage, an individual becomes aware of the unchanging consciousness or supreme power exists in the essence of all beings, where attachment and grief may arise in knowing this oneness (IP7). In leadership, it translates into non-attachment. In management, managing people effectively requires avoiding emotional entanglement, regardless of their performance level. Non-attachment entails minting objectivity and fairness by evaluating roles and contributing without allowing personal biases or emotional investments to shape decisions. Managing people effectively requires avoiding emotional entanglement, regardless of their performance level. 'Non-attachment' entails maintaining objectivity and fairness by evaluating roles (Adams, 1965; Colquitt et al., 2001; Aguinis, 2013; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

The pure consciousness is surrounded by the bodies, that is unhurt, pure, untouched by evil. Wise, intelligent and all-encompassing, he has distributed the resources through the eternal years (IP8). In leadership, it translates into clarity. In management, duality persists within every individual and organisational system, encompassing both strengths and weaknesses as well as positive and negative elements. Cultivating clarity of mind is essential for navigating these complexities and for preventing stagnation (Senge, 2006; Sterman, 2000; Kahneman, 2011; Bazerman & Moore, 2013). Individual who engage in the pursuits of ignorance remain engulfed in gross ignorance. Similarly, individual who's focus is exclusively on leaning conscience can find themselves trapped in ignorance as well (IP9). In leadership, it translates into inclusivity. In management, organisations comprise individuals with varying degrees of knowledge and ignorance, reflecting a dynamic interplay between the two. This balance can be beneficial, as both groups contribute uniquely to the organisational fabric. Recognising ignorance can also act as a

catalyst for learning and growth, thereby strengthening overall effectiveness and adaptability (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Cross & Sproull, 2004; Edmondson, 1999; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Knowledge open one path, while ignorance leads down another. This lesson has been passed down to us by the ancient sages and learned (IP10). In leadership, it translates into integration. Successful individuals demonstrate the ability to integrate diverse elements, challenges, and opportunities in a holistic manner. In management, by recognising the interconnectedness of factors rather than viewing them in isolation, they develop comprehensive strategies and solutions. The integrative perspective deepens understanding of complexities and fosters innovative approaches to problem-solving (Senge, 2006; Gharajedaghi, 2011; Drucker, 1993; Mintzberg, 1994). The person who understands both knowledge and non-knowledge together transcends non-knowledge, overcoming death, and through knowledge, achieves immortality (IP11). In leadership, it translates into reflection. In management, reflection is a critical dimension of the learning process, where knowledge drive achievements while the recognition of ignorance uncovers underlying problems that form the basis for new solutions. Acknowledging such gaps in understanding serves as a catalyst for deeper learning and innovation (Edmondson, 2011; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Nonaka & Konno, 1998). Sambhitti is known as manifestation refers to the process or origination, while asambhitti is known as destruction signifies act of perishing (IP12). In leadership, it translates into balance. In management, the balance emphasises the need to harmonise external, material pursuits with internal dimensions of well-being, ethical responsibility, and self-awareness. In management, aligning profit-driven goals with employee welfare, ethical practices, and a sense of purpose, thereby promoting sustainable and responsible organisational growth (Greenhaus & Allen, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Carroll, 1991; Brown et al., 2005).

The wise have explained that there is something beyond origin or manifestation and beyond non-origin or destruction (IP13). In leadership, it translates into learning. In management, learning carries both pedagogical and strategic significance through mentorship, benchmarking, and the assimilation of best practices. It underscores the importance of engaging with and internalising the experiential knowledge and proven strategies of accomplished individual and institutions to foster sustained growth and excellence (Kram, 1985; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Camp, 1989; Rigby, 2001). After understanding this duality of origin and destruction one attains immortality and transcends death (IP14). In leadership, it translates into sustainability. In management, sustainability reflects the core principle of systems thinking, highlighting the need for equilibrium and stability to ensure long-term functioning. Any imbalance - whether financial, operational, or social-disrupts systemic coherence and risks dysfunction or eventual collapse (Sternan, 2000; Senge, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992).

The truth is concealed beneath a gold vessel. *O Pushan* (prosperity) you reveal it for one who seeks to understand the essence of reality (IP15). In leadership, it translates into authenticity. In management, authenticity is grounded in action rather than rhetoric, requiring leaders to look beyond words to discern true qualities and capacities. The concepts of Trinity Knowledge Exchange (*Bramha* is creating-*Vishnu* is maintenance-*Mahesh* is transformer) embodies a holistic approach, integrating knowledge demonstrated through action, perceived through inherent qualities, and transmitted through structured exchange, thereby fostering authenticity engagement and meaningful learning (Bossidy et al., 2002; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). *Pushan* (prosperity), individual seer (*ekarshi*), controller (*yama*), sun (*surya*), sun of *prajapati*, illuminate us with your rays, collect your brilliance (*tejas*). This is your delightful form that I behold. The one who exists in distance, I am that person (*purusa*) (IP16). In leadership, it translates into energy. In management, energy is multidimensional, encompassing individual vitality and motivating,

the dynamism of organisational processes, the efficient allocation of resources (including energy as tangible input), and the collective momentum within teams or the wider enterprise. It is closely linked to critical organisational outcomes such as employee engagement, innovation, and resilience (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Breath (vayu) to the eternal wind (anila). This body will ultimately turn into ashes. Om, o purpose (kratu), remember the deed (krta) (IP17). In leadership, it translate into evolution. In management, evolution underscores the need for educational institutions to move beyond narrow specialisation and foster a systematic, evolutionary understanding of industries. Learning should be contextualised within broader trajectories - past, present, and future - so that the leaners not only master the current practices but also anticipate shifts in industry landscapes. This integrative approach reframes success from technical proficiency alone to a more holistic balance of knowledge, adaptability, and contextual awareness as drivers of sustainability achievement (Wang & Poutziouris, 2010; Day & Schoemaker, 2006). O Agni (fire/light) guide is on a straight prosperous was. Divine, knows all the ways. Keep the wrong paths of sins far from us. We offer you our heartfelt devotion (IP18). In leadership, it translate into aspiration. In management, the upward movement of fire symbolises aspiration, intellectual advancement, and the pursuit of higher growth. Just as fire naturally rises, human progress is elevated through the disciplined cultivation of intellect. Beyond technical competence, this metaphor points to a spiritual and ethical dimensions-emphasising the need to channel intellectual capacities towards constructive and responsible purposes. In management, nurturing intellectual growth, embedding ethical reasoning into decision-making, and fostering collective wisdom to achieve sustainable and socially responsible outcomes (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Treviño & Nelson, 2016).

Table-1: Hermeneutic-Thematic Analysis - Application of the Isavasyopanishad Verses to Leadership

Verse (IP)	Hermeneutic Decoding (Scriptural Insight)	Leadership Analogy (Applied Theme)	Leadership Quality
IP Shantī Mantra	The universe is inherently complete; peace enables manifestation.	Leaders already carry completeness; inner peace fuels practical skills (e.g., presentation skills).	Tranquility
IP1: Fullness comes from fullness; happiness with sacrifice	Happiness lies in sacrifice and responsible enjoyment.	Resource allocation; budgeting, working capital, NPA management.	Detachment
IP2: Guidance to live 100 years and perform deeds	Human life gains meaning through performance of duty.	Productivity & accountability; avoiding laziness.	Action
IP3: Ignorance from violating discipline	Dependence on senses alone leads to ignorance.	Sustainability depends on right direction; without it, collapse occurs.	Direction
IP4: Consciousness stable yet dynamic	Consciousness is beyond senses, stable yet dynamic.	Vision = leader balances micro & macro perspectives (e.g., Ratan Tata on shop floor).	Vision
IP5: Supreme consciousness near and far, present in all	Supreme power is both immanent and transcendent.	Leadership grounded in inclusivity and fairness.	Digitalisation
IP6: Knowledge alone cannot remove illusion	Learning alone cannot dissolve illusion; wisdom needed.	Knowledge + expertise matter for output.	Equality
IP7: Awareness of oneness brings attachment/grief	Awareness of oneness deepens empathy but risks attachment.	Non-attachment to both performers and non-performers.	Non-Attachment
IP8: Pure consciousness distributes resources wisely	Eternal, untouched power sustains all.	Leaders see both positives and negatives; clarity prevents confusion.	Clarity
IP9: Extremes of ignorance or conscience-focus trap one	Focusing only on ignorance or only on abstract wisdom misleads.	Organisations contain both knowledgeable and ignorant—balance is key.	Inclusivity
IP10: Knowledge opens paths; ignorance misleads	Both are valid paths; sages emphasized integration.	Leadership requires embracing both successes and problems.	Integration
IP11: Understanding knowledge & non-knowledge transcends duality	Together they lead to transcendence (immortality).	Achievement comes through wisdom; problems understood via ignorance.	Reflection
IP12: Sambhiti = manifestation; Asambhiti = destruction	Beyond creation	Balance between material goals	Balance
IP13: Something beyond manifestation/destruction	destruction lies immortality.	inner consciousness	Learning
IP14: Understanding duality leads to immortality	Integration of origin and destruction leads to liberation.	If balance fails, systems collapse.	Sustainability
IP15: Truth concealed; divine illumination needed	Truth hidden under illusion (golden vessel).	Leaders distinguish reality vs. words; authentic action matters.	Authenticity
IP16: Invocation of cosmic forces; alignment	Supreme light reveals truth; identification with universal self.	Leaders integrate energy and inspiration into practice.	Energy
IP17: Awareness of mortality; remembrance of deeds	Body perishes, deeds remain; remember one's purpose.	Educational/industry systems evolve, leaving legacy.	Evolution
IP18: Devotion to Agni; guidance & rejection of sin	Agni purifies and guides towards righteous action.	Like fire rises upward, leaders channel intellect for growth and collective good.	Aspiration

Proposed Conceptual Framework - Integrative Leadership Model: Meta Thematic Coding

Figure : 3 Point Meta-Thematic Coding



The three dimensions - Inner Grounding and Ethics (interpersonal), Strategic Vision and Adaptability (interpersonal), and Future-Oriented Sustainability (external) together for a holistic leadership model. Rooted in the *Īsopaniṣad*, this framework integrates self-awareness and ethical grounding with relational effectiveness and strategic foresight, resonating with authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership while bridging inner development, interpersonal engagement, and external impact. The *Śānti Mantra* reflects the ideal of cultivating inner peace as preconditions for outer effectiveness. Calming the *chitta Vritti* (mental fluctuations) through meditation and silence enhances clarity of thought, enabling leaders to act with precision and authenticity (Ravi Shankar 2019).

As illustrated in figure: 3 point meta-thematic coding, the first, Inner Grounding and Ethical Orientation, emphasized meditation, mindfulness, and self-discipline as foundations for detachment, reflection, and balance, while also highlighting equality, inclusivity, authenticity, and aspiration as expressions of fairness, integrity, and social responsibility. This dimension shows that leadership begins with inner stability and extends outward through ethical and authentic relationships. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar asserts, True detachment is not indifference but a shift from temporary concerns to the ultimate source of lasting happiness (Mostajeran, 2019). Detachment and responsible enjoyment, teaching leaders to allocate resources judiciously (e.g., budgeting, managing working capital, and addressing NPAs) without clinging to personal gain. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar condemned discrimination based on any system, pointing out that it stems from a misinterpretation of the *Vedas* (Avdeeff 2010). Knowledge alone cannot dissolve illusion; wisdom is required. Leaders must combine learning with expertise to produce meaningful outcomes. Equality in treatment of ideas and people emerges as a vital leadership trait.

Sri Sri Ravishankar emphasises on the practice of *anaskti* (non-attachment) is for balanced mindset with conscious living and goes beyond comfort (Bhardwaj 2019). Oneness can deepen empathy but also cause excessive attachment. Leaders should practice non-attachment toward performers and non-performers alike, ensuring fairness and consistency without favoritism. Mind will reflect clarity with fewer thoughts (Ravi Shankar 2019). Pure consciousness sustains and distributes resources wisely. Leaders must cultivate clarity, perceiving both strengths and weaknesses, and thereby avoiding confusion while making balanced decisions. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar posits, wisdom mercy doesn't come by reading, it (its there in screenshot).

The Art of Living organisation is relatively inclusive, embracing individuals from various cultures and belief systems (Jacobs 2015). Both ignorance and overemphasis on abstract wisdom can mislead. Leaders must embrace inclusivity, recognizing that organizations comprise both the knowledgeable and the ignorant, and balance their responses accordingly.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar contends that the life needs to be taken with a holistic perspective (Krishnakumar et al., 2015). Knowledge and ignorance are both pathways with lessons. Leaders demonstrate integration by learning from successes as well as failures, adopting a holistic approach to organizational challenges. Sri Sri Ravishankar ji says, if someone wants to show off, let them be. You should think more about yourself and reflect on—how much more natural have you become? Have you become more practical, more wise? (Mostajeran 2019). Transcendence arises from integrating knowledge and non-knowledge. Leaders achieve reflection by recognising that wisdom brings achievement, while failures and problems deepens understanding. Life requires a very fine balance - between action, result, guilt, and acceptance. The guilt relates to one's actions, while the 'pinch' reflects outcomes or happiness, and navigating between the two with awareness cultivates balance in life and leadership (Ravi Shankar 2014). The verses distinguishes between manifestation (*sambhitti*) and destruction (*asambhitti*). Leaders practice balance by harmonising material goals with higher purposes, avoiding extremes of creation or destruction.

"Only the heart can speak or hear that which is authentic". which aligns with the deeper and experiential wisdom (Ravishankar, 2019). Trust is hidden beneath illusion, requiring divine illumination. Leaders must embody authenticity, discerning reality from appearances, and acting in alignment with truth rather than superficial impressions. Self-awareness and inner peace are foundational to personal growth. By understanding one's true nature and alining with one's aspiration, individuals can cultivate a more meaningful and fulfilling life (Ravi Shankar 2018). Devotion to *Agni* (fire) symbolises purification and upward inspiration. Leaders, like fire raising upwards, direct intellect toward growth, ethical action, and collective good, embodying aspiration and continuous progress.

The second theme, Strategic Vision and Adaptive Action, reflected the dynamic and performance-driven nature of leadership. Direction and vision provided purpose-driven clarity and foresight, while action and energy highlighted accountability, motivation, and consistent execution. Evolution added adaptability and continuous learning, illustrating that effective leadership combines long-term vision with decisive action and responsiveness to change. The assertion that 'lazy personality are not required' underscores the importance of fostering a performance driven culture emphasise by Sri Sri Ravishankar (Vroom 1964). Life gains meaning through fulfilling one's duty. Applied to leadership, it encourages productivity, accountability, and disciplined action, reminding leaders to avoid laziness and set an example of responsible performance. Sri Sri Ravishankar has emphasised on when people acknowledge work as a significant act of productivity, they see it as both a privilege and a responsibility (Pandya 2015). The verse warns against ignorance that arises from violating discipline. For leaders, it stresses the importance of providing direction, ensuring sustainable practices, and preventing organisational collapse by maintaining ethical discipline. Beyond manifestation and destruction lies immortality. Leaders cultivate learning through inner consciousness, recognising the enduring value of knowledge and aligning with higher truths. A leader's vision should highlight the importance of diversity for personal growth and broader perspectives, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar conveys, we need to establish strong roots while cultivating a broad vision of global cultures (Tripathi 2014). Duality of origin and destruction, if integrated, leads to liberation. Leadership here translates to sustainability—systems thrive when balance is maintained, but collapse if ignored. The same every can lead to worry to upliftment, depending on its direction (Ravi Shankar 2019).

This underscores the need to channel organisational energy purposefully toward innovation and growth. The invocation of cosmic forces symbolises alignment with universal light. Leaders channel energy and integrating them into practice, thus uplifting both themselves and their organisation. Human evolution has two steps - from being somebody to being nobody; and from being nobody to being everybody. This knowledge can bring sharing and caring throughout the world (Shankar n.d.). Awareness of mortality emphasises the permanence of deeds. Leaders focus on evolution, recognising that educational and industrial systems evolve while legacies of action endure beyond individuals.

Finally, Future-Oriented Growth and Sustainability captured forward-looking practices through digitalisation, learning, and sustainability. Leaders stressed technology adoption, mentorship, and ecological responsibility as key to remaining future-ready and socially conscious. In the workplace, a pervasive sense of victim consciousness can adversely affect the overall atmosphere, undermining both creativity and teamwork. To the counteract this negativity, it is essential a greater presence in the moment. Elevating one's energy levels is key to this process, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar elucidates this enhancement as spirituality (Mostajeran 2019). Supreme consciousness is near, far, and present in all. Leaders learn inclusivity and fairness from this, applying it in modern contexts such as digitalization—ensuring access and equity in systems and processes.

There is a skill to learning. It is all about what is and what is not. While science is knowing what is and art is creating what is not (Ravi Shankar 2014). Beyond manifestation and destruction lies immortality. Leaders cultivate learning through inner consciousness, recognising the enduring value of knowledge and alining with higher truths. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Jis' The Art of Living Foundation frames sustainability not only as an environmental responsibility but also as an ethical and spiritual imperative. Its large-scale initiatives, illustrates how spiritual leadership can foster sustainable development practices while promoting human values and collective well-being (Dada 2020). Duality of origin and destruction, if integrated, leads to liberation; and translates to sustainability - system thrive when balance is mentioned but collapses if ignored.

Together, these three dimensions form an integrative leadership model that resonates with contemporary theories of authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership, while drawing deeply from the Indian philosophical wisdom of the *Īsopaniṣad*. The findings affirm that effective leadership is multidimensional, balancing inner grounding, ethical conduct, strategic adaptability, and future responsibility.

Implications

This research enriches leadership and management literature by integrating *Vedantic* insights with contemporary theories such as systems thinking, sustainability, and authentic leadership. It advances the notion of Leading with Oneness, emphasising interconnectedness, balance, and purpose in organisational life. For leaders and management professionals, the study provides actionable guidance in designing training, strategy, and performance system grounded in non attachment, conscious awareness, and reflective learning. These principles foster ethical decision-making, organisational resilience, and alignment between individual growth and institutional purpose. The work introduces Indian philosophical wisdom into global management discourse, offering an alternative to Western-dominated leadership models. In framing leadership as oneness, it underscores the role of cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge in shaping sustainable, ethical, and inclusive organisational practices.

Conclusion

This study has explored the integration of ancient spiritual wisdom, particularly insights from *Īsopaniṣad*, with contemporary leadership and management thought. The key findings underscore the relevance of concepts such as balance, non-attachment, conscious awareness, reflection, sustainability, and authenticity in shaping effective leadership and organisational practices. By situating these principles within modern frameworks like system thinking, knowledge management, and ethical leadership, the research demonstrates its enduring applicability to productivity, strategic alignment, and organisational resilience. The contribution of this study lies in reinforcing the value of Indian philosophical perspectives within global leadership discourse, thereby broadening the theoretical base beyond dominant Western paradigms. It offers both theoretical expansion and practical guidance, suggesting ways leaders and organisations can cultivate purpose, ethical responsibility, and adaptability in rapidly evolving contexts.

However, the study is not without limitations. The interpretive approach may reflect perception bias, and the cultural context may limit generalisability across different organisational settings. To strengthen its impact, future research should focus on empirical validation through case studies, cross-cultural comparisons, and integration with quantitative data. Such directions will further establish the roles of spiritual principles in fostering sustainable, ethical, and globally relevant leadership practices.

References

1. *Īsopaniṣad* (IP)
2. ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् । तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥
3. Īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat | tena tyaktena bhujñīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam || 1 ||
4. कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः । एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥ २ ॥
5. kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchataṃ samāḥ | evaṃ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare || 2 ||
6. असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृताः । तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥
7. asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ | tāṃste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmaḥano janāḥ || 3 ||
8. अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् । तद्भावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत्स्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥ ४ ॥
9. anejadekaṃ manaso javīyo nainaddevā āpnuvanpūrvamarṣat | taddhāvato'nyānatyeti tiṣṭhattasminnapo mātariśvā dadhāti || 4 ||
10. तदेजति तत्रैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके । तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥ ५ ॥
11. tadejati tannajati taddūre tadvantike | tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsyā bāhyataḥ || 5 ||
12. यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति । सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ ६ ॥
13. yastu sarvāṇi bhūtānyātmanyevānupaśyati | sarvabhūteṣu cātmanāṃ tato na vijugupsate || 6 ||
14. यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः । तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ ७ ॥
15. yasminsarvāṇi bhūtānyātmaivābhūdvijānataḥ | tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanupaśyataḥ || 7 ||
16. सपर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्त्राविरंशुद्धम् अपापविद्धम् । कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्ययम्भूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥ ८ ॥
17. sa paryagācchukramakāyamavraṇamasnāviraṃśuddham apāpavidham | kavirmanīṣī paribhūḥ syayambhūryāthāthyato'rthānvvyadadhācchāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ || 8 ||
18. अन्धन्तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते । ततो भूय इव ते तमोय उ विद्यायां रताः ॥ ९ ॥
19. andhantamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyāmupāsate | tato bhūya iva te tamoya u vidyāyāṃ ratāḥ || 9 ||

20. अन्यदेवाहर्विद्ययाऽन्यदाहरविद्यया । इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥ १० ॥
21. anyadevāhurvidyayā'nyadāhuravidyayā | iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire || 10 ||
22. विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह । अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययामृतमश्नुते ॥ ११ ॥
23. vidyām cāvīdyām ca yastadvedobhayam saha | avidyayā mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā vidyayāmṛtamāśnute || 11 ||
24. अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते । ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ संभूत्यां रताः ॥ १२ ॥
25. andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtimupāsate | tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyām ratāḥ || 12 ||
26. अन्यदेवाहुः संभवादन्यदाहरसंभवात् । इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥ १३ ॥
27. anyadevāhuḥ sambhavādanyadāhurasambhavāt | iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire || 13 ||
28. संभूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह । विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा संभूत्यामृतमश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥
29. sambhūtiṃ ca vināśam ca yastadvedobhayam saha | vināśena mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā sambhūtyāmṛtamāśnute || 14 ||
30. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् । तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ १५ ॥
31. hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpīhitaṃ mukham | tattvaṃ pūṣannapāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye || 15 ||
32. पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन्समूह । तेजः यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥ १६ ॥
33. pūṣannekarṣe yama sūrya prajāpatya vyūha raśmīnsamūha | tejaḥ yatte rūpaṃ kalyāṇatamaṃ tatte paśyāmi yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi || 16 ||
34. वायुरनिलममृतमथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरम् । ओं । क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥ १७ ॥
35. vāyuranilamamṛtamathedaṃ bhasmāntaṃ śarīraṃ | om | krato smara kṛtaṃ smara krato smara kṛtaṃ smara || 17 ||
36. अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्निश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् । युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥ १८ ॥
37. agne naya supathā rāye asmānviśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān | yuyodhyasmajjuhurāṇameno bhūyiṣṭhām te nama uktiṃ vidhema || 18 ||
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