

# INTEGRATING HUMANISTIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INTO MODERN MANAGEMENT

*-Akshay Kumar, Research Scholar, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, India*

*-Sunita Singh Sengupta, Professor of Spirituality, Ethics and Leadership, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, India*

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## ABSTRACT

Regardless of the advancements of humanistic notions in management theories and applications and the paradigm switch from an economic perspective to a more humanistic one, current leadership literature still needs to be revised to propose alternatives for a modern economic worldview since it conforms to a mechanistic logic. The authors primarily emphasized highlighting the relevance of humanistic philosophy to organizational practices by reflecting on humanistic leadership insights from the specific case of Tata Group, which ensued by Tata Steel, and therefore, seek to contribute towards a leadership model based on humanism. The authors reviewed the literature on Humanistic Leadership tenets and practices to align it with the philosophy of the Tata Group, which is typically ingrained in Tata's culture that shaped its underlying prosperity and sustainability and led it to expand holistic communal development. Humanistic Philosophy counterbalances the growing impact of the performance-driven managerial attitude and, therefore, assists managers in being more aware of the boundaries they should levy on specific performance measures. Thus, the

authors contribute to humanistic leadership research and open up several avenues for future investigation into how modern leaders might exercise humanistic leadership.

**Keywords:** *Humanism, Humanistic Leadership, Philosophy, Humanistic Management, Tata Group, Leadership.*

## INTRODUCTION

Previous advancements in management education have developed today's societal and environmental challenges by removing moral principles from the core of economic thought and subordinating ethical concerns to the periphery of commercial activity (Ghoshal, 2005). Global issues and crises such as degradation of the environment, injustice, and communal distrust highlight the need to reconsider corporate strategies and management practices (George, Osinga, Lavie & Scott, 2016). Previously encouraged to concentrate on one-dimensional performance measurements, post-modern managers now demonstrate multifaceted understanding, hence reconsidering their position in business and society (Dierksmeier, 2016). However, there is no denying that

running businesses is a double-edged sword for several people, not just because of the need to generate profit but also because society demand - even requires – social responsibility and ethical behavior from the business community (Miranda & Mahajan, 2011). Today, societies expect managers to generate real value rather than merely acquire economic gains (von Kimakowitz, Pirson, Spitzack, Amann & Khan, 2009). It is becoming increasingly apparent that focusing exclusively on instrumental aspects of monetary gains is inherently unsustainable (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). Hence, there has been substantial criticism of traditional management approaches founded on the underlying principles of an economic model (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010) that portray humans as homo economicus driven by rational objectives focused on self-utility maximization. Following them, F.W. Taylor, Henry Fayol, Henry Ford, and some others disregarded the holistic well-being of employees other than to enhance their operational efficiency at the workplace (Mele, 2003).

Nevertheless, among the most influential management thinkers, Abraham Maslow expanded this mechanistic perspective by transcending cognitive neuroscience and psychoanalytic theory to embrace a new “general philosophy of life” to comprehend human needs better (Mele, 2003). Maslow’s (1971) ‘Needs Hierarchy’ is arguably the most extensively developed notion in humanistic psychology. The topmost need (self-actualization) is also reflected in Melé’s (2016) principles of humanism (see Table 1), exhibiting a greater degree of interconnectedness between humanistic philosophy and psychology.

A quest is ongoing for a modern theoretical framework characterized by social enterprise paradigms, particularly w.r.t. the novel and hybrid types of business activities that do not adhere to a solely commercial logic (Rath, 2012). These considerations significantly contribute to the notion that reincorporating the philosophy of Humanistic Leadership into organization theories and modern management practice is highly relevant (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). In theory, transitioning from mechanistic to humanistic economics (Dierksmeier, 2011) and, in practice, “from capitalist to humanist business” is a pressing concern (Pirson, 2014). Humanistic, rather than mechanistic, investigative approaches should be applied when the subject matter involves a person’s economic behavior and actions in corporate activities (Dierksmeier, 2016). Case studies on Humanistic Management practices (e.g., von Kimakowitz, Pirson, Dierksmeier, Spitzack & Amann, 2011) demonstrate the practicality of incorporating humanistic management concepts into a wide range of business realms across the world. Furthermore, these literary shreds of evidence (albeit open to future investigation and debate) strongly emphasize incorporating cross-cultural ethics in the workplace (Dierksmeier, 2011) and theoretically urge the possibility of transforming the capitalist system (Pirson, Dierksmeier, Steinvorth & Largacha-Martinez, 2014).

Moreover, while humanism provides a remedy for the unsustainable economic structure, leadership research should revolve around workers to develop a leadership model that promotes worker-centrism and fosters a fresh perspective on business. Unfortunately,

a thorough understanding of humanistic leadership is yet to be created, and researchers today still approach conventional leadership theories and notions through a humanistic lens, even if these concepts vary significantly from humanistic leaders' characteristics. Considering the importance of this theme and the prevalence of leadership studies, it is surprising that humanism in commerce and leadership has yet to converge. Conforming to this, the authors have attempted to highlight the significance of humanistic leadership practices in a corporate setting, focusing on humanitarian practices followed by Tata Group and Tata Steel. The authors begin by summarizing the notion of humanism in business and emphasize humanistic leadership practices, which are an extensive necessity for a humanistic paradigm and highly crucial to facilitate academic discourse. Consequently, individuals in charge of humanistic companies can better establish a humanistic leadership culture to realize its potential ultimately. Furthermore, in such a human-centered environment, workers could begin a comprehensive discussion on humanistic leadership inside their workplace, triggering a paradigm change in the overall organizational perspective.

## HUMANISM

Humanism cannot be explicitly defined because of various cultural interpretations and intellectual underpinnings (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017). In particular, Giustiniani (1985) suggested that the conception of Humanism contains many subtleties that it becomes nearly impossible to evaluate them all. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (cited in Abun,

La Gente, Francis & Encarnacion et al., 2022), conforming to the ancient origins of Humanism, describes it as "a devotion to the humanities" or "a devotion to human welfare." Contemporary Humanism pertains to beliefs such as pragmatic, Christian, and secular Humanism (Abun et al., 2022). A deeper contextualization of Humanism's etymology and development is beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, the philosophy of Humanism and humanistic leadership has been the central focus of the current study.

Humanism is the source of the adjective 'humanistic.' The literature on Humanism addresses this issue in two primary ways (Adai & Habisch, 2013). In a broader sense, Humanism has been presented throughout history with a range of subtleties and approaches, sometimes emphasizing man's reasoning ability and renouncing transcendental reality (Huxley, 1961) and other times supporting religion and transcendental ideals (Maritain, 2001). In this broader sense, Humanism encompasses a broad spectrum of approaches, from Protagoras' homo mensura description, "man is the measure of all things," to the post-humanistic or anti-humanistic ones developed in the late twentieth century in response to the failures of previous humanist experiments (Adai & Habisch, 2013). Other post-humanistic approaches reflect current issues regarding climate change and the unforeseeable effects of technologies on human psychology (Badmington, 2000) or bring humanity and the place of men in society into question. While from a narrower

perspective, Humanism pertains to an ideological movement of the 15th century that

emerged during the Italian Renaissance and emphasizes studying traditional cultures of moral philosophy (Davies, 2008). In modern management literature, an increasing number of aspects with a humanistic origin make their way to the forefront of management research. Melé (2009), for instance, outlines the following transitions:

1. From rigorous work design to searching for a better person-organization fit.
2. From institutions whereby each individual is just a component in the business machine to institutions where individuals get put first,

with a significantly more significant degree of participation, dedication, and involvement.

3. From construing organizations as a network of contractual agreements to displaying them as a self-governing group of individuals.

4. From maximizing shareholders' wealth to management by virtues.

Melé (2016) further aimed to propose an expansion of the humanism concept by highlighting similarities and interdependences across various philosophical perspectives. Therefore, Mele (2016) formulated seven principles that clarify the concept of Humanism.

**Table 1: Principles of Humanistic Management (adapted from Mele, 2016).**

<b>Wholeness</b>	<b>Acknowledges the holistic being rather than confining humans to just a few traits.</b>
<b>Comprehensive Knowledge</b>	Aspires to an extensive understanding of human beings and acknowledges their distinctiveness and individuality.
<b>Human Dignity</b>	Respects and promotes all individuals' inherent dignity and rights.
<b>Development</b>	Acknowledges that individual beings are in a state of continual evolution and seeks human flourishing.
<b>Common Good</b>	Promotes personal freedom and interpersonal relationships and emphasizes dynamism, discussion, involvement, collaboration, and unity in social relationships.
<b>Stewardship-Sustainability</b>	Acknowledges the importance and interdependence of all living species and the natural world and requires people to serve as custodians and to value the harmony and convergence between humankind and the global ecosystems.
<b>Spirituality</b>	Encourages transcendentalism and meaningfulness, and purpose, thus embraces spirituality and religious beliefs.

Melé (2016) also provides practical instances of humanistic management in support of these principles, which firmly assert that modern corporations, besides pursuing economic goals, also need to consider their goals' social and environmental impacts. Fundamentally, the firm must infuse humanistic values into its DNA (Melé 2016).

The dichotomy between the individual and the community is arguably humanism's most intensely debated aspect. Morden (2017) asserts that "humanists" consider that humankind should concurrently strive to fulfill individual and communal needs. This concept of community is a recurring issue of discussion for identifying humanism as a characteristic

of management style in specific geographic regions where the community is an essential social characteristic. For instance, European humanistic management, as outlined by Lessem and Neubauer (1994), transitioned from a patriarchal management style to colonial architecture when family businesses developed socio-economic alliances. Humanistic Management Network (HMN) - a worldwide network of academicians, administrators, and businesses - recently published on the European management approach to better complement Lessem and Neubauer's findings. HMN members comprehend management scope as the pursuit of human flourishing via commercial development that is life-conductive and delivers value to the community (Kimakowitz et al., 2011). HMN recommended the following humanistic perspective for business organizations:

1. Business approaches where collective value generation processes are imperative on theoretical and practical grounds; the equilibrium between various stakeholder groups and between short-term and long-term goals is needed (Pirson et al., 2011).
2. Governance structures prioritize strategic support for business leaders above management opportunism (Pirson et al., 2011).
3. Organizational frameworks are highly decentralized and emphasize self-governance, promoting human capability and efficacy (Pirson et al., 2011).
4. Transformational leadership approaches concerned with moral ideals, intended to encourage followers, engage people cognitively and passionately with organizational responsibilities' (Pirson et al., 2011).

5. Organizational climate that allows consistent evolution and can create inclusivity and organizational identities based on interpersonal relations, designed to foster human well-being not only inside the organization but also outside of it (Pirson et al., 2011).

Other approaches to humanism, such as Vittal's (2004) work on Indian management and Grassl and Habisch's (2011) within the Christian Social Tradition, emphasize the significance of community for the realization of individual ideals. These perspectives perceive the organization as communities of individuals (Bruni, 2009; Melé, 2011) and examine the relationship between humanism and economics throughout many socio-cultural traditions. Dierksmeier (2016) argues that rather than being handed objectification inside the economic structure, individuals must restore their position as proactive beings. Humanistic organizations cannot be perceived as impersonal and abstract entities. According to Mele (2015), the organization should be considered a people's community that reflects an individualistic humanistic perspective and embodies human completeness rather than simply a collection of agreements or competing interests. Thus, the person becomes the focal point of the economic structure and the organization. Acevedo (2012) stressed that in such a paradigm, employees are indeed a goal in themselves, and corporate accomplishments are not the primary justification for nurturing human beings at work. Such a perspective often transforms the manager's role from a regulator and navigator to that of a collaborator (Melé, 2015). Therefore, humanistic organizations stand in contrast to mechanical, exchange-

based, and short-terminated corporations and provide a different economic perspective that seems crucial in today's rapidly changing global business landscape.

## HUMANISTIC LEADERSHIP

The conception of leadership is described differently within and across cultures. House, Javidan, Hanges and Dorfman (2002) defined leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations in which they are members." Although the description of leadership differs, the leadership outcomes for nearly all theoretical approaches have been essentially the same, including convergence on company effectiveness as the criterion for effective leadership. For instance, Daley (1986) demonstrated a moderate degree of positive correlation between humanistic leadership practices and organizational effectiveness. Addressing several other organizational aspects, Hu, Chen and Wang (2018) examined that humanistic leadership practices firmly consider CSR goals and that humanism at the managerial level favorably influences CSR activities. According to Abun et al. (2022), the humanistic leadership approach impacts the employees' conscientiousness toward the organization.

Similarly, Wang, Qin and Zhou (2021) and (Vui-Yee, 2016) also concluded that a humanistic leader's social conscience towards the needs and motives of employees positively affects employees' affective and cognitive commitment to the organization. Effendi, Bafadal, Sudana and Arifin (2019) discovered

that a worker-centric approach of the principal in the context of academic institutions substantially impacts optimizing moral education. Humanistic leadership outcomes aim to meet the diverse needs of personnel and the organization's overall performance (Fu et al., 2020). Literature promotes humanistic leadership, although research regarding it is scarce (Davila & Elvira, 2012). Little documentation provides an understanding of how leadership can facilitate the adoption of Humanistic Management concepts in business corporations and reconcile them with economic goals.

Aktouf and Holford (2009: 113) urge that the individual must enable "to find both by himself and for himself the reasons to make it his own what we ourselves would like him to do, all while being a full partner in what is projected, planned, and intended" is valuable for comprehending the fundamental aspect of humanistic leadership. Further, under a humanistic leadership paradigm, the leader cannot be idealized or distanced; instead, workers must be raised to the stature of peers and competent partners (Aktouf & Holford, 2009). Peus and Frey (2009) proposed eight essential principles to facilitate humanistic leadership practices in an

organizational context - meaningfulness at work, transparency, employee engagement, greater autonomy, justice, workers' personal development, collective goal setting, and role modeling. Melé (2016) condemns contemporary leadership approaches and claims that humanistic leadership departs from the employer-employee paradigm, which treats workers solely as a vehicle to achieve an



outcome. Tripathi & Kumar (2020) highlight seven humanistic values and leadership capabilities – (a) Compliance with the founder's philosophy and valid fundamental values, (b) Trust-based Leadership, (c) Community is the core objective of the organization, (d) Senior leaders as role models, (e) adherence to the ethical code, (f) Employee-focused, and (g) Compatibility with Indian cultural values, which reverberate the tenets of humanistic leadership. Humanistic leaders are grounded in spirituality, modesty, and self-deprecatory (Fu et al., 2020) and, accordingly, do not aggrandize their interests but rather balance their own and others' interests in line with universal moral standards (Dierksmeier & Pirson, 2010). Humanistic leaders, according to Fu et al. (2020):

1. Acknowledge the stakeholders' interests while continuing to pursue the greater good.
2. Identify areas for continuous improvement in themselves besides encouraging the adherents to unlock their maximum potential.
3. Respect human dignity by caring for their followers' needs and aspirations.

Humanistic leadership is characterized by a commitment to others' integrity, compassion, and communal participation (Nathanson, 2017). The humanistic leader profoundly comprehends that the most crucial measure of corporate success is the degree of happiness and relevance employees derive from their job (Nathanson, 2017). Aktouf and Holford (2009) assert that humanistic leadership should theoretically account for the individual consciousness in pursuing meaningfulness and purpose at work. Thus, conceptions

like the top-down approach need to be revised to address the humanistic leadership framework (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017). Such a perspective should not impose materialistic goals explicitly but rather enable individuals to create meaningful goals besides facilitating the alignment of those individual goals and organizational vision (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017). Peus and Frey (2009) proposed vital principles (autonomy, transparency, participation, justice, constructive feedback, and role-model) that clarify what humanistic leadership traits include and are essential for managing a business in a humanistic way. Maak & Pless (2009), rather than philosophically delving into humanistic leadership, asserted that humanistic leaders should assume the responsibility of a world citizen besides stressing the need to serve for the global benefit as proactive stewards. The humanistic leadership perspective "understands organizational members as human persons; that accounts for, respects and appreciates their subjectivity, relationality, individuality, and personality; that acts in respect of these persons' self-determination and human dignity; and that aims at building a constructive community of persons and at human flourishing (meaning the well-being, self-actualization and self-transcendence of organizational members) as an end in itself" (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017:19). By emphasizing the relationship between humanistic management and humanistic leadership, it becomes apparent that although we concentrate on the dimension of leadership, what gets developed may also apply to scholars primarily concerned with Humanistic Management. We strive to contribute within the framework of a recently proposed leadership

theory by employing a primitive perspective that explicitly emphasizes the holistic being of individuals as the fundamental objective with an emphasis on the collective welfare, which can positively result in restoring future sustainability.

## **SHORTLY REVISITING LEADERSHIP THEORIES THROUGH HUMANISTIC PRISM**

Since leadership became an independent research area more than a century ago, several theories have been proposed, most strongly connected to humanistic leadership. In essence, Humanistic Leadership, the current article selected the six most pertinent and extensively tested leadership theories: Transformational Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Ethical Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, and Servant Leadership. The present article provides a concise introduction to the conceptions and the frequently examined outcome variables of the under-mentioned theories.

### **Transformational Leadership:**

James McGregor Burns (1978), the originator of transformational leadership, stated that the transformational leadership paradigm entails a vision that motivates people to follow and adopt the mission's mantra. Leban and Stone (2008) characterized transformational leaders' conduct as visionary and change-oriented. During uncertainty, transformational leaders guide followers' actions (Leban & Stone, 2008). Transformational leadership in the religious setting resembles the leadership traits of Jesus Christ (Fryar, 2007). According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership encompassed

intellectual stimulation, idealistic influence, and personalized consideration to impact the conduct of followers. Transformational leadership majorly results in followers' exerting additional efforts or succeeding at a greater level than stated or predicted (Boseman, 2008). The efficacy of transformational leadership is context-dependent (Zagorsek, Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2009). Influential transformational leaders have a variety of characteristics, such as viewing themselves as catalysts for change, being risk lovers, trusting in people, being altruistic, analytical, self-disciplined, and far-sighted (Yule, 1994). According to Smith, Montagno and Kuzmenko (2004), transformational leaders engage adherents in problem-solving and aim to establish and employ bilateral, individualized interactions. Transformational leadership indicates the interrelationship between leaders and followers; nevertheless, the Humanistic leadership paradigm may offer alternative opportunities for examining followers' perceptions. Furthermore, transformational leadership is not consistent with the definitions of humanistic leadership, the concept of the human being, or the humanistic vision of the organization (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017).

### **Authentic Leadership:**

Bill George (2003) initially presented Authentic Leadership as a reaction to the confidence crisis in contemporary business and political leaders. Authentic leadership is the fundamental principle supporting effective leadership strategies (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders cultivate improved self-awareness, internalized transparency, an internal moral stance, and balanced processing to inspire



authenticity in their followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Through the elements of inspiring motivation, personalized concern, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence (Bass, 1985), authentic leadership fosters individuals' positive health on several levels, including the physiological, psychological, interpersonal, and emotional aspects of well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1998). As with transformative leadership, authentic leadership extensively examines individual/team task efficiency as an outcome variable. Nevertheless, the authentic leadership style reviewed via a humanistic viewpoint and exclusively focusing on the leader neglects its adherents' self-improvement and holistic being. Humanistic leadership is in stark contrast to this viewpoint and is thus equally concerned with followers and leaders (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017).

### **Ethical Leadership**

Trevino, Hartman and Brown (2000) were the first to identify ethical leadership, who asserted the characteristics of ethical leaders as altruistic, truthful, honest, and ethical decision-makers concerned with the holistic well-being of their adherents and the larger community. Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005) describe ethical leadership as the manifestation of contextually compatible behavior through individual acts and interpersonal interactions and reinforcing such behavior among adherents through bilateral communication, encouragement, and decision-making. Brown and Trevino (2006) further acknowledged honesty, integrity, compassion, trust, communal motivation, and fairness as attributes of ethical leaders. Frequently examined dependent variables of ethical leadership literature include organizational citizenship

behavior, dedication, job involvement, work motivation, leader-member exchange, innovation, trustworthiness, and leadership effectiveness. Despite some enduring parallels, the description of ethical leadership also encompasses the notion of punishing those who fail to conform, which is particularly problematic from a humanistic leadership standpoint (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017). In addition, as previously indicated, ethical leaders persuade their followers to behave morally. However, Humanistic leadership, on the contrary, strives to eschew any directive influence since both leader and follower develop mutual objectives and behavioral standards. Furthermore, ethical leadership relies on the notion that the leader is an ethical exemplar and therefore believes subordinates have lower morals and require ethical guidance.

### **Spiritual Leadership**

Spiritual leadership theory is theoretically well-defined; more restrained and adheres to ethics and values-based leadership theories. Fairholm (1996), in "Spiritual Leadership: fulfilling whole-self at work," clearly laid down various characteristics of such a proposed causal model, which includes a strategically embedded and well-communicated vision statement, innerness, transcendental energy, compassion, empathy, service attitude, interconnectedness, a surrounding which inspires honesty, fairness, subjectivity, and creativity, and a process that facilitates continuous evaluation of performance. Spiritual leadership theory estimates moral & spiritual wellness and Corporate Social Responsibility (Indradevi, 2020). Spiritual leaders inherently motivate the workforce through a value alignment model,

which creates a psychological attachment between the workforce and the organization and enlarges their sense of fulfillment. The intrinsic motivation in a spiritual leadership model is dependent on triangular dimensions of vision, faith, and altruism, resulting in a magnified sense of spiritual survival and positively impacting organizational commitment, productivity, and long-term prosperity.

### **Servant Leadership**

Robert Greenleaf developed the term servant leadership in 1977. Greenleaf (1977), instead of examining some exemplary business executives, offered the impetus of the phrase - servant-leader, which was Herman Hesse's "Journey to the East," whose central protagonist, Leo, epitomizes the servant-leader (Davis, 2017). According to Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership aims to transform followers into happier, wiser, more independent, and inclined to become servants themselves. The servant ensures that people's "highest priority needs are being served" (Greenleaf, 2002). A servant-leader takes the initiative, has concrete goals, is a skilled communicator and listener, embraces compassion, empathy, and empowerment (Sfetcu, 2021), is foresighted, observant, and insightful, and uses influence rather than coercion (Greenleaf, 2002). Humphreys (2005), cited in Overbey & Gordon (2017), provided the four core servant leadership concepts as: (a) service before self; (b) listening as a means of affirmation; (c) creating trust; (d) nourishing followers to become whole. Organizational commitment, quality in work and life, creative behavior, intrinsic job satisfaction among followers,

team effectiveness, organizational performance, higher productivity, and life satisfaction among personnel are the frequently examined variables in servant leadership literature. Parallel to the charismatic leadership style, servant leadership often establishes a paternalistic connection between a leader and followers, with the servant leader assuming the position of a parent serving the worker as just a kid (Fritz & Sorgel, 2017). Therefore, considering servant leadership philosophically humanistic is difficult since the leader and personnel are on a different footing, and there continues to be a distinct order amongst them, albeit inverted.

The earlier mentioned leadership theories identify attributes closely tied to humanistic leadership. Nevertheless, Humanistic leadership is an amalgamated leadership paradigm (Davila & Elvira, 2012) because it incorporates all the necessary behaviors and characteristics that no other leadership style in isolation can substitute. The humanistic paradigm regards individuals as holistic beings with numerous needs and motivations and aspires to develop both the leader and the followers concurrently (Fu et al., 2020). The current study briefly examines but refrains from incorporating the literature on Moral Leadership due to the need for its commonly agreed-upon definition (Maldonado & Lacey, 2001), multifaceted practical implications, and scattered outcomes. Some findings concerning moral leaders describe them as capable of creating a positive, long-lasting impact on people and society (Roepke, 1995). Vinkhuyzen and Karisson-Vinkhuyzen (2014) asserted that moral leadership accommodates the principles of fairness, togetherness, and compassion

regarding the group, humanity, and the job at hand. Fu et al. (2020) observed that moral leadership is conceptually interrelated to corporate ethics, transformational, authentic, empowering, and servant leadership. Regardless of these findings, there persist unambiguous conclusions; hence we abstain from comparing moral leadership to other paradigms.

Some other contemporary leadership approaches, such as transcendental leadership, empowering leadership, followership, paternalistic leadership, self-leadership, distributed and shared leadership, responsible global leadership, and Level-5 leadership, have also garnered considerable interest. However, this brief Review of the Literature (ROL) could not include these leadership paradigms due to space constraints. Despite this, it is apparent from the brief outline of these six leadership themes that humanistic leadership literature constitutes a distinctive, valuable, and prominent leadership approach. Incorporating humanism into leadership literature will improve our awareness of the human and understanding of human interactions in the context of leadership.

## **HUMANISTIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES: TATA GROUP**

The Tatas' powerful grasp over the perspective where the economic goals and community welfare can simultaneously exist; where financial goals are designed to benefit the society at large; where profit orientation is not an end in itself but rather the medium to a more virtuous end, provide an opportunity to transform the Group into an entity epitomizing value generation for various stakeholders' Group. The granting of fellowships to Indian students for higher studies

overseas in 1892, the inception of the Welfare Department in 1917, the introduction of the Maternity Benefit in 1928, spearheading of India's steel industry, commencing India's first-ever power plant, and origination of first science Centre and atomic research Centre are amongst few of the landmark contributions of Tata Group which can never be forgotten. The leadership approach and managerial philosophy at Tata Group of Companies have demonstrated a firm commitment towards aligning profit orientation and social & moral imperatives of a commercial unit. The former business tycoon and Chairman of the Group JRD Tata himself asserted (cited in Sharma & Mukherji, 2011) that "The Tata philosophy has always been, and is today more than ever, that corporate enterprises must be managed not merely in the interests of their owners, but equally in those of their employees, of the consumers of their products, of the local community and finally the country as a whole."

The aforementioned humanistic perspective acknowledges that organizational moral validity should stem from its contribution to society's shared benefit (Solomon, 1992). Sympathetic to the social responsibility of corporations, Fredrick (1960) contended that businesses must adjudicate the conduct of a financial system that delivers to the conjecture of the community. However, Davis (1960) argued that Corporate Social responsibility is formless but considered it pertinent from the managerial frame of reference. A pragmatic CSR model encompasses ethical and philosophical facets, especially in the Indian context, where an enormous socio-economic divide exists amongst the various community sections (Bajpai, 2001).

### **Leadership Values: Strategic Embedment**

Ratan Naval Tata (Chairman, Tata Sons Ltd. 1991-2012), cited in (Tripathi & Kumar, 2020:14), predicted after he succeeded JRD Tata's 53-year reign: "Do we have a common thread that runs through the Tata Group? In the past, the thread was embodied in a personality, may be JRD Tata. But I think times are different now. You have to institutionalize certain things. You cannot rely forever on personalities. There may be a Tata as Chairman, or there may not be a Tata as Chairman of the Group." Former Tata Group leaders, including Ratan Tata, embedded several high-profile initiatives into the Group's strategic vision highlighting their leadership qualities and core business philosophy.

### **Founder's Leadership Ideology**

Tata Group's ideology of serving society was founded on Jamsetji's "breadth of vision and brilliance for organization," as well as his philanthropic and kind disposition. Jamsetji ingested three specific virtues from his ideology: "Humata" (positive cognition), "Hukhta" (positive utterance), and "Hvarshata" (positive conduct), which guide the Conglomerate or body of knowledge (Tripathi & Kumar, 2020). However, Jamsetji's Parsi values and inclination toward self-governance of a colonialist India could have jeopardized his short and moderate-term financial interests, particularly his esteem as an entrepreneur (Worden, 2003). Dharma (performance of moral obligations and commitment to other-regarding perspective), nishkama karma (altruistic task orientation and desire for perfection irrespective of the concern about the consequences), and jnana (knowledge) are three Indian cultural ideals that implicitly translate to Tata's leadership attitude. Tata's enthusiasm for institutionalized altruism, giving

back to the community, and India's scientific progress manifests nishkama karma, dharma, and daanam (Kumar, 2018). Jamsetji Tata strongly supported such a triangulated approach through his never-dying dedication.

### **Tata Business Excellence Model (TBEM)**

Founded on the Malcolm Baldrige Framework, TBEM is a Business Excellence model implemented by the Tata Group in 1993 under the leadership of Ratan Naval Tata. TBEM is a method that can be employed to evaluate the maturity of a company's primary business processes and outcomes which aid in achieving its goals. The market concentration and income ratings in the TBEM measures were minuscule (Mithas, 2015). Instead, Leadership-focus, strategic planning, consumer focus, workforce focus, and business results carried more significant weightage. Performances are acknowledged through Group-wide recognition. TQMS enables the Tata Group of companies to acquire insights into their company's strengths and potential areas for progress by utilizing the framework. A yearly evaluation and assurance procedure control this. With its frequent and recalibrated updates, Tata firms use the framework to adapt to a dynamic corporate environment. Additionally, all the Tata Group of Companies need to sign a binding contract with Tata Sons Ltd. (the holding company of the Group) to obtain a license for acquiring the Tata brand that guarantees adherence to the Tata code of conduct and TBEM. Compliance with TBEM was an extremely effective organizational strategy that produced significant benefits in terms of quality awareness and progress toward excellence in several operational aspects of the organization.

### **Unique Philanthropy**

Exhibiting an organization as highly ethical and profitable is unique in a world that has emerged customary to consider corporate prosperity as a challenging game in which one's victory necessitates others' defeat. The likes of Jamsetji Tata had never indulged in any tenacious game but somewhat redesigned the barometer of corporate success and put together philanthropy, morality, and humanity, not just the complements to the profitability but the very cornerstone of business success. Shashank Shah (2018), in "The Tata Group: From Torchbearers to Trailblazers," reasonably designated that the evolving Tata empire did not splurge any probable chances and further exemplified how India failed to capitalize on both the Industrial and Electronics Revolution – first and foremost as a consequence of colonialism and after adopting a communalist-inclined approach to the economic system of the Indian government after independence. In 1869, Jamsetji Tata, the founding father of the Tata Group, transformed an insolvent oil mill into a successful venture for cotton production, which provided a glimpse of his awe-inspiring vision of what India was capable of. When the other capitalists and so-called 'doyens' of industry were solely and excessively focusing on generating profits and wealth, Jamsetji was triggering the concept of philanthropic trusts. Therefore, Jamsetji, besides being an impetus for extensive changes in his motherland, conceived a distinct way of conducting business and philanthropy.

While Americans and Europeans have predominated the idea of philanthropy over the last 100 years or so but in accordant with a recent list of top-50 philanthropists produced by Hurun report and EdelGive Foundation, Indian

industry's veteran Jamsetji Tata has emanated as the most prominent philanthropist across the globe in the past century by donating US\$102 billion, thus substantially leaving behind the likes of Bill Gates and his antagonized wife Melinda (US\$ 74.6 bill.), Warren Buffet (US\$ 37.4 bill.), George Soros (US\$ 34.8 bill.), John D Rockefeller (US\$ 26.8 bill.) and others (Hurun Report, 2021). An enormous change in the lives of the infinite is the testimony of the truth behind the humanitarian approach of the Tata Group.

### **Worker-Centric Initiatives**

Tatas' well-known employee engagement culture and practices are frequently acknowledged as its competence irrespective of the company within the entire Group. Tata Group pioneered most labor welfare policies, including the 8-hour working weeks, maternity coverage, accident compensation, paid holidays, pension fund, etc., long before becoming the standard regulatory obligation (Sinha, Sodhi & Mohanty, 2005). Formation of the Tata Management Training Centre (TMTTC) and Tata Administrative Services (TAS) are two projects that attempted to consolidate leadership approaches throughout the Tata Group of companies. Tata Management Training Centre is designed as an internal training facility intending to serve as a transforming agent for Tata managers. As most faculty members are Tata workers with enthusiasm for teaching, its training courses aim to instill leadership qualities embedded in the Group's culture (Shah, 2010). Similarly, Tata Administrative Services hires recent university graduates and postgrads from prestigious business institutions and develops them into corporate leaders. It is likely the only program that grants applicants lifetime mobility



among group firms (Shah, 2010). The Tata group leaders are committed to advancing and deepening the organization's leadership principles across all the enterprises and environments in which they operate.

As an inclusive workplace, Tata Steel ensures the fair representation of disadvantaged social groups. MOSAIC (the Inclusion and Diversity Initiative of Tata Steel) enables gender equality, employment & engagement of Disabled individuals, involvement of the LGBT community, and much more. The SCIP Strategy (founded in 2008) of Tata Motors permits women with substantial professional experience to re-enter the industry following a professional hiatus for whatever purpose. A hyper-local initiative designed to guide qualified female staff to prepare them for their forthcoming corporate role. Tata Chemicals fosters ethical work behavior, work-life synergy, extended maternity benefits, flexible work schedules, inclusiveness, and fairness among its personnel for the best interests of their well-being. In 2021, Tata Consumer Products introduced a "Caregivers Support Programme" for Indian workers in new parenthood or on the verge of becoming parents. The Employee Engagement Survey (EES) of Tata Power offers profound insight further into the satisfaction levels of employees and identifies essential business characteristics that impact employee performance. In addition, employing SAMIKSHA and the Engagement Action Planning Dashboard enables it to monitor employee participation programs. Tata Communications 'TCare initiative' provides various programs to promote its employees' physiological, psychological, and emotional well-being worldwide.

In conclusion, the strategic embedment of the primary leadership values of the Tata group, namely the Founder's Leadership Ideology, TBEM, Corporate Philanthropy, and Worker-Centric Initiatives, provides close reciprocity between the behavioral leadership aspects and the Group-wide policies and procedures. Strategic actions at the organizational level are crucial to encouraging personal leadership traits and vice versa.

## **TATA STEEL AND HUMANISTIC PRACTICES**

Tata Steel has always strived to conduct business ethically, considering its social responsibility, obeying all legal requirements, and preserving human dignity and worth. Tata Steel's sustained CSR goal of "improving the quality of life of the communities we serve globally through long-term value generation for all stakeholders" (<https://www.tatasteel.com>.) coincides with Tata Group's core purpose. The corporate philosophy of Tata Steel emphasizes four major substantive domains: Health, Education, Urban and Rural Infrastructure, and Livelihoods; besides interfering for the greater good in the areas like sports, humanitarian aid, the ecosystem, and multiculturalism, among other things, which are all geared at strengthening the communities' standard of living. Tata Steel vigorously pursues six maneuvering principles – Impact, Affirmative Action, Volunteerism, Relationship, Communication, and Interaction - that spring to mind concerning its influence. Although Tata Steel Limited has prominently contributed to flourishing nearly every segment of the Indian economy with its humanitarian practices but constrained by this paper's scope



and focus, we have concentrated only on a few of such core segments - Education, Health, and Sports.

### **Education Sector**

Tata Steel has benefited tribals through economic integration in an obscure and realistic way by supporting the education of tribal children and adolescents of different ages and academic pursuits. Privately administered ballads (crèches/nurseries) prepare infants and young children for formal education. "Sahyog," a unique project undertaken in five schools, assists tribal adolescents in developing self-esteem and planning for their future. Tata Steel has also sponsored the Xavier Institute for Tribal Education in Jamshedpur to generate competent and trained personnel. Tata Steel offers "Jyoti" Fellowships to deserving candidates from economically marginalized sections as part of its Affirmative Action Policy to enable them to achieve their academic potential. The Tribal Cultural Society of Tata Steel recruits meritorious applicants from the company's functional areas based on a merit system. Tata Steel established the Tribal Culture Centre (TCC) in 1990 to help the tribal population preserve their rich heritage. Furthermore, from 2002-03, a Santhali Language Laboratory was established at the Centre. The Centre was indispensable in reintroducing the now-defunct 'Kati,' an activity famous for evaluating the competitors' team spirit, physical prowess, and degree of contamination during non-agricultural seasons. The villagers of the Mahadevnasa hamlet in the Deojhar Gram Panchayat of Odisha's Keonjhar district recently received a new community center inaugurated by the Tata Steel Foundation. The Thousand Schools Program was established

to develop a reproducible and scalable strategy for universalizing primary education within the Right to Education framework.

### **Health Sector**

Within the Health Care Sector, Tata Steel is amongst the most proactive donors of the "Lifeline Express" - a traveling hospital - that strives to provide medical care to people not associated with the company's business. This one-of-a-kind train travels to portions of rural India that have remained unaffected by pharmacological treatments at the request of its sponsors. To serve its employees and many inhabitants around the steel metropolis, the company operates an 850-bed medical Centre with a highly specialized Burn Center, Dispensaries, and Super Dispensaries in Jamshedpur. It has also created a network of advanced medical care units to meet the demand for cost-effective, significant healthcare care for the underprivileged. The "Tata Steel Rural Development Society" and the "Tata Steel Family Initiatives Foundation" work together and provide primary medical care to rural and urban communities. Both social welfare branches have been developing the capacity to produce healthcare professionals who work in the community and vital volunteers through training programs. Motivational programs have been incredibly successful in breaking down prejudices and misconceptions to encourage community participation, especially in societies that do not typically embrace family planning. Tata Steel, the country's first corporate to develop a family welfare Programme, has advocated for regulated family planning since the 1950s. Employees' and communities' health and safety are inextricably linked to

productivity and are incorporated into Tata Steel's aspirations. Tata Steel has developed an organizational model to combat the global and national STD/HIV/AIDS spread. This framework has been communicated through organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Global Compact Initiatives, the WHO-SE Asia Regional Office, National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), and Jharkhand AIDS Prevention Consortium (JAPC), as well as more lately through Global Reporting Initiatives.

### **Sports Sector**

Sports have always been essential to Tata Steel's 'nation-building' Philosophy. Sir Dorabji Tata, the company's first Chairman, inaugurated the tradition by funding India's first Olympic squad to Antwerp, Belgium, in 1920. Tata Steel is a pioneer in the corporate development of sports in India, encouraging professional and amateur athletes and its personnel to participate in sports and thrive. Chanakya Chaudhary, Vice-President of Corporate Services at Tata Steel (2020), in a press release on the occasion when Tata Steel was recognized as the "Best Organization Contributing in Sports through CSR" at the FICCI India Sports Awards 2020, mentioned that: "Tata Steel's association with sports dates back nearly a century, and are an integral part of its culture. Through its Sports Academies and Training Centers, Tata Steel has helped shape some of India's iconic sporting talents over the years."

In 1927, Tata Steel founded the Jamshedpur Athletic Club and began organizing athletic tournaments for male workers, women, and their children. In 1984, the "Tata Youth Adventure

Centre" (now "Tata Steel Adventure Foundation") was established. In 1987, the Tata Football Academy was established three years later, followed by the "Tata Archery Academy" in 1996. When Tata Steel established the Tata Sports Academy in 2004, it impeded Indian athletics. Tata Steel has preserved its commitment to the nation's larger sports community by providing top-notch facilities and training via professional coaches and support staff. Tata Steel has received one Padma Bhushan, eleven Padma Shrees, one Khel Ratna, one Dhyan Chand, six Dronacharyas, and 42 Arjunas thus far. Tata Steel has received numerous other awards and accolades, including the "National CSR Awards 2019", "Steel Sustainability Champion 2019" by worldsteel, "CII Greenco Star Performer Award 2019", Ethisphere Institute's "Most Ethical Company" award 2020, and CNBC TV-18's "Best Risk Management Framework & Systems Award 2020" (<https://www.tatasteel.com.>).

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS & FUTURE SCOPE**

While several assertions and appeals for people-centric leadership styles have been made in the leadership theories, more is theorized about humanistic leadership instead of its implementation in the real world (Fu et al., 2022). We attempt to tackle this issue by developing the corporate understanding of leadership styles practiced by humanistic leaders, the tactics and methods they implement, and how proficient leaders transcribe the humanistic leadership dimensions into activities applicable to a particular cultural setting. Therefore, organizational leaders, business people, and corporate executives will come across various instances of a people-centric

leadership approach far more comprehensive than solely carrying a productive purpose. This approach is more optimizing than prioritizing commercial operations, more effective concerning management practices instead of just performance-driven, and more engaging regarding multiple stakeholders. The case of Tata Group, accompanied by a reflection of humanistic methods by Tata Steel, will facilitate practitioners to explore instances of the practices followed by humanistic leaders. We consider embracing the humanistic leadership approach a great moment, particularly during a challenging phase when corporate leaders must reassess their existing leadership approach. Furthermore, corporate leaders must frequently reconcile shareholders' expectations (wealth maximization) while still considering the collective good of all stakeholders. We believe that the humanistic leadership tenets would inspire leaders to engage in an ethical self-reflection, empowering them to make challenging decisions based on people-centrism. Notwithstanding the shortcomings, our work contributes to the notion of humanism in business and a human-centered leadership theory and approach.

However, due to the paucity of time and limited access to archival information, the selected case of Tata Group, succeeded by Tata Steel, highlighting humanistic leadership practices only partially represents the entirety of the world's major socio-cultural groupings. Despite the relatively limited number of instances reported, the results highlighted a few similar characteristics shared by humanistic leaders from various cultures, acknowledging the numerous disparities between them. Future researchers should conduct a more rigorous examination of the available

information, as the leaders have been from disparate industry verticals with varied ownership structures. Cappelli, Singh, Singh and Useem (2010) empirically investigated and emphasized that Indian firms do not prioritize the principle of shareholders' wealth maximization and nearly invariably place it behind employees' interests. We suggest that an empirical investigation would be worthwhile to determine the extent to which Indian companies other than the Tata Group are motivated by the particular humanitarian values mentioned in this study. The Tatas' philosophy of integrating behavioral and institutional factors effectively advances humanistic leadership principles transcending India. Therefore, we firmly intend to continue this line of inquiry. We suggest a further analysis and comparison of thematic data from various cultures determine the cultural sensitivity and generally accepted traits of humanistic leadership.

The other shortcoming is the noticeable omission of female leaders from the discussion, despite the increasing visibility of women in leadership positions. In the Indian context, for instance, Mrs. Rajashree Birla (an industrialist and philanthropist) reiterated the significance of corporate leaders engaging in thoughtful introspection of the self. Mrs. Birla appealed to imagine the essence of holistic engagement and working collaboratively with communities while envisioning an improvised present and future for all (Casio, 2011). Ms. Chiara Lubich developed the "Economy of Communion" - a network of organizations - to unite business people who implement humanistic leadership ideas (Lemanski, 2019). The network presently consists of over a thousand businesses across all continents. Future studies on humanistic leadership need to

emphasize more on incorporating narratives of female leaders across the globe.

## CONCLUSION

It is pleasing to witness a rising trend of self-driven corporate leaders seeking effective remedies to the world's issues rather than solely focusing on increased profitability. Mackey and Sisodia (2014), in "Conscious Capitalism," clearly emphasized the significance of leadership by demonstrating how to transform into humanistic leaders by connecting minds and hearts by gaining self-consciousness and empathy and inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. Summarizing through the content analysis, we contend that humanistic leaders are influential on both intrapersonal and interpersonal grounds. This perspective entails practicing reflective consciousness and adhering to secular humanism, besides accessing and approaching workers cognitively and affectively and reinforcing appreciative interaction. The intrapersonal dimensions of a humanistic leadership perspective can broaden the self-leadership paradigm proposed by Neck & Houghton (2006) such that self-leadership becomes a reasonable basis and an indispensable part of the humanistic leadership paradigm. Moreover, by adhering to secular humanism, ethical leadership theory, in particular, embeds itself into the humanistic paradigm and, therefore, should depart from portraying leadership solely as moral preaching. Furthermore, we can expand the domain of emotional leadership by emphasizing the significance of comprehending workers' cognitive and affective perspectives and ignoring the traditional notion of managers' emotional regulation of employees.

A business unit with efficacious virtuous values holds an upper edge in becoming an employer of choice and is unparalleled in captivating and retaining an excellent workforce and henceforth magnifying its profits. We contend that the 'Tata Group' can be used to illustrate how 'business strategy' and 'leaders' personal ideologies' can be combined to offer an inexhaustible, deployable, and conceivably testable framework of humanistic leadership, even though it could be challenging to extract strong generalizations from Cases and document analysis. While we consider it always a good idea to encourage humanistic leadership, this period sees all corporate executives grappling with difficult decisions and being pushed to reassess their management approaches. Remarkably, they frequently have to trade between shareholders' demand and the collective good or choose between money and human resources. We are confident that the humanistic leadership depicted through the cases and reflections will serve as inspiration for leaders and as a guide for them as they make challenging decisions that will have an emphasis on employees in the workplace.

Even though different religions and cultures are distinctive, corporate leaders and organizations might sustain and strengthen humanistic leadership concepts by conforming to their personal beliefs, seeking congruence with the more significant cultural norms, and codifying the practices strategically. The contribution of the Tata Group to the corporate world offers an exemplary case of humanistic leadership, and hence, proposes the following assertions:

1. A corporation may successfully transform itself from a domestic entity into a multinational one without abandoning its ideological beliefs of humanistic leadership.

2. A corporation may become a profitable conglomerate while retaining its founding members' humanitarian values.

Moreover, precise terminology is vital for communicating fundamental patterns of thought and beliefs while comparing humanistic leadership to other leadership theories. Future research on humanistic leadership concepts should thus separate the phrases 'leadership,' and 'followership' as both have inherent connotations incompatible with a humanistic viewpoint. As has been contended repeatedly, humans cannot be reduced to merely following in need of direction, in pursuit of mentorship and inspiration, and solely characterized by their role of obeying someone else's rules and instructions. Similarly, the phrase 'leader' also has an ambiguous connotation other than that of a humanistic. Typically, a leader communicates a vision statement and guides personnel efforts

toward achieving that vision. However, vision and mission are developed through productive communication with employees under humanistic leadership rather than getting imposed from the outside. We assert that although terminological modifications may seem trivial, they enable a more inclusive, reasonable, and productive dialogue that embraces all individuals engaged in an organizational setting and does not conceal their humanity underneath vague, reprimanded, or glorifying phrases. We hope that facilitating unconstrained holistic well-being at the workplace will ultimately provide enterprises with higher morality and happiness than degrading humans to rational actors. While the world is far from a fundamentally humanistic social-economic and political structure, practitioners and scholars who comprehend human capacity may and will guide humanity toward a sustainable, egalitarian, and conscientious future.

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