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Investigating the Influence of Dharma and Religions on Leadership and Socio-Economic Growth in India

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores the role of dharma in enhancing leadership skills and fostering national socio-economic growth. Dharma, a distinctive concept in Hinduism, embodies notions of individual duty, virtue, and morality, constituting a fundamental aspect of human life. It is important to note that sometime dharma is equated with religion, while this association is not entirely accurate, as dharma transcends religious boundaries and applies universally to all faiths. Dharma represents a broader philosophical concept that encompasses ethics, spirituality, duty, law, and the cosmic order, extending beyond the conventional definition of "religion."

Given that our primary research objective is to assess the influence of dharma in advancing economic growth in India, our focus centers on India's economic development. After a comprehensive review of relevant literature on religion, dharma, leadership, and economic growth, our findings suggest that dharma plays a pivotal role in refining leadership qualities within individuals. These enhanced leadership skills, in turn, empower individuals to motivate others in support of economic development initiatives.

Recent events in various countries have underscored the necessity for trustworthy leaders who are held in high regard for their ethical values. Such leaders are sought after to provide guidance and oversee the functioning of the political economy. Consequently, leaders bear the responsibility of adhering to dharmic principles, serving as guides for their followers and fostering their active participation in national economic development endeavors.

Key Words: Religion, Dharma, Leadership, Capital Formation and Economic Growth.

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INTRODUCTION

All religious beliefs and practices are not compatible with the characteristics of dharma. Dharma believes in the principles which are essential for human existence and common to all cultures. Dharma is a mechanism through which various religious values are harmonized in such a way that may lead to maximum human happiness. Dharma generates human happiness through individual actions, cooperation and continuous distributional changes, and investment in human and non-human agents. The negative distributional impact of economic growth is minimized by individual adherence to dharma or through governmental support which makes every person ready to participate in the growth process. It is argued that economic growth depends partially on an individual's religious beliefs, which may be true to some extent. Religious beliefs influence individual traits, which are likely to affect their economic performance. All religions have different beliefs and practices, which influence their follower's thinking and actions. Thus, religion can play an important role in developing its own culture, which means a set of values, beliefs, rules, and institutions held by a group of people believing in a particular religion. However, religious beliefs are not secular because they vary from one religion to another. In the absence of great leaders to guide, cultural beliefs and practices of the group of followers can have serious negative effects on many activities in society, including social, economic, political, and business operations. For example, violent acts between classes and religious communities in India, Pakistan, Northern, Middle Eastern, and African countries have wounded those areas' economies due to the lack of proper leadership.

India has several religions, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Hinduism, and treats them equal in the eyes of law. It is difficult to make a generalization about the specific impact of any individual religion on economic development in India. However, it has been observed that all religions in India have shown evidence of entrepreneurial activities and substantial economic growth. We will review the teachings of various religions in India and analyze their respective impact on Indian economic growth.

We assert that there exists a strong correlation between dharma and religion concerning socio-economic advancement and leadership. Dharma is the universal and moral law that governs individual conduct throughout one's own life. We found that adherence to the main essentials of dharma is helpful in improving leadership skills. Leaders, irrespective of their mission, are expected to follow dharmic principles in their lives so that they may exercise moral influence on their followers and motivate them to participate in accomplishing the mission of improving the economy. There are examples in many countries where successful leaders performed several difficult tasks with the support of the followers due to their moral and ethical influence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study is exploratory and follows the qualitative analysis of the relationship among dharma, leadership, and economy. It follows the descriptive and logical study of this relationship. Our main methodology in this research study is to review the relevant literature for examining the possible impact of teachings and practices in various Indian religions on national economic developments, and their relationship with dharma and leadership. Therefore, we have analyzed the skills which are essential for making individuals successful leaders with special attention to the relationship of dharma to leadership and economic growth. After reviewing the relevant literature, we have concluded that dharma can be instrumental in developing leadership skills in individuals, which in turn, would help promote economic developments. We tried to consult other studies about the relationship among dharma, leadership, and economic growth in India; but we did not find any study directly related to our topic of research. Thus, this research in dharma, leadership and economic growth is a new study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

RELIGION: Religion is a controversial and complex subject in religious studies. Oxford Dictionaries defines religion as a belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods¹. According to the Collins English Dictionary, religion is a system of beliefs in God or gods, including the activities that relate to this belief system, such as praying in a church, temple, mosque, and performing other related ceremonies². The concept of beliefs which is central to religion, is itself a controversial subject. Several courts have attempted

to Interpret the meaning of belief in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The United States Supreme Court ruled in the United States V. Ballard, (1944) that the sincerity of persons' beliefs is paramount to decide if these beliefs constitute a religion that deserves constitutional protection³. Again, the United States Supreme Court explained in Everson V. Board of Education, (1944) that belief means a sincere and meaningful belief that occupies in the life of possessor a place parallel to the place held by God in the lives of persons⁴.

Thus, religion is a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as a creation of superhuman agency; usually involving devotional and ritual observances and a moral code of conduct. The set of beliefs must be agreed upon by several people or sects to make it a religion. The Court of Appeal of England and Wales in R v. Registrar General ex P Segerdal, (1970) emphasized that the following elements of belief are essential to form the religion⁵:

1. Religion is a spiritual and non-secular belief system.
2. Religion is the adherence to the belief system from a group.
3. The belief system claims mankind's place in the universe and its relationship with the infinite.
4. Religion is a code of behavior consistent with the belief system.

It is to be noted that according to the social constructionists, religion is a modern concept that developed from Christianity and was then inappropriately applied to nonwestern countries⁶. However, we found that most religions in India were founded independent of Christianity. They all have their separate belief systems. It is, therefore, essential to review the respective teachings of all religions in India to examine their proximity with dharma in Hinduism.

CHRISTIANITY:Christianity originated with the Ministry of Jesus, a Jewish teacher who proclaimed the imminent kingdom of God and was crucified in A. D. 30-33 in the Roman Province of Judea, Jerusalem. The main teachings of Christianity are as follows⁷:

1. Love God.
2. Love your neighbor as yourself.
3. Forgive others who have done any wrong to you.
4. Love your enemies.

5. Ask God for forgiveness of your sins.
6. Jesus is the Messiah and was given the authority to forgive others.
7. Repentance of sins is essential.
8. Do not be hypo- critical.
9. Do not judge others.
10. The kingdom of God is nearby. It is not for the rich and powerful; but for the weak and poor who will inherit the kingdom.

The main beliefs of Christianity are⁸:

1. Uniqueness of Jesus.
2. One God.
3. Necessity of the cross.
4. Inspiration and Scripture.
5. Resurrection.

A German sociologist, Max Weber, is of the opinion that Capitalism originated in Western Europe where Christian business leaders trained in technology believed in accumulating wealth, which inspired economic developments, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Individual values, hard work, and attitude about work ethics, and desire to accumulate wealth are important factors that contributed to the economic growth⁹.

ISLAM:The history of Islam is concerned with the political, social, economic and cultural developments of Islamic civilization. The roots of Islam go back to the start of seventh century. Islam originated in Mecca in Saudi Arabia following the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammed at the age of forty. Islam believes in the oneness of God and its followers are called Muslims¹⁰.

Muslims believe that God is the creator of all things, and that God is all powerful. Islam believes in fairness, morality and good for all. Islam teaches living in peace and harmony with others. According to the International Centre for Peace & Spirituality, Islam teaches that when dealing with others, we should always bear in mind that God is watching over us. He will deal with us as we have dealt with others. According to Maulana Wahid Uddin Khan, the following are the main teachings of Islam:

1. Keep a gentle attitude.
2. Do not accumulate wealth by unethical means.
3. Render service to others.
4. Believe in hygiene.
5. Believe in peace.
6. Waging war with self and against immoral activities is Jihad.
7. Believe in the reality of nature.
8. Believe in contentment¹¹.

The main beliefs of Islam are:

1. Belief in Allah as the one and only God.
2. Belief in angels.
3. Belief in Holy books.
4. Belief in Prophets.
5. Belief in the day of judgement.
6. Belief in Predestination¹².

Islam believes in making individuals' life economically better through developing individual values, honesty, trust, and work ethics. Islam does not approve in economic attainment if it is not achieved by ethical means. The basic philosophy of Islam is based upon the moral foundation of Quran, collection of Islamic taxes, and prohibition of interest on money. Islam supports economic creativity which is based upon the teachings of the Prophet¹³. However, Islam's belief in predestination is basic factors which might create impediments in economic growth. In Quran good and moral actions are emphasized in Chapter 2, Verse 177 as follows "Righteousness is not whether you turn your face towards East or West; but righteousness is to believe in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books and the Prophets, to spend wealth, in spite of love for it, on relatives, orphans, helpless, needy travelers, those who ask for and on the redemption of captives; to establish Salah (*prayers*), to pay Zakat (*poor dues*), to fulfill promises when made, to be steadfast in poverty, hardship and at the time of war. Those are the ones who are truthful and those are the ones who are the pious" (Holy Quran, 2:177)

SIKHISM: Sikhism is an Indian religion which originated in the Punjab region of India. It was founded in the fifteenth century by Guru Nanak in the days of Mughal Empire in India for the defense of persecuted Hindus and other non-Muslims who were being forcibly converted to Islam¹⁴. Sikhism believes in one God and that He is the same for all people of all religions.

The main teachings of Sikhism are remediation, devotion to the creator, truthful living, and service to humanity. Sikhism requires that its followers must uphold the values of honesty, compassion, generosity, humility, integrity, service, and spirituality on daily basis¹⁵.

The main beliefs of Sikhism are:

1. There is only one God.
2. God is without form or gender.
3. Everyone has direct access to God.
4. Everyone is equal before God.
5. A good life is lived as a part of the community by living honestly and caring for others.
6. Empty religious rituals and superstitions have no value¹⁶.

Sikhism is a new religion. Therefore, it is difficult to create the relationship between Sikh religion and economic growth. However, Sikhism believes in meditation and devotion, honesty and sharing with others the fruits of hard work. Some of the beliefs might be instrumental in contributing to economic growth, which is evident from the fact that the Punjab State, where the majority of Sikhs reside, is the richest place in India.

JAINISM: Jainism is an Indian religion. It was founded by Vardhman or Mahavira in 527-599 B C. Jainism teaches that the way to liberation is to live the life of harmlessness and reunion. The guiding principles of Jainism are¹⁷:

1. Right belief.
2. Right knowledge.
3. Right conduct.

The main teachings and philosophy of Jainism are¹⁸:

1. Non-attachment.
2. Non-Violence.

3. Self-discipline.
4. Truth.
5. Non-stealing.

Jainism believes in moral values and limits to self-interest. Jain religion believes in GNH, Gross National Happiness, as opposed to GNP, Gross National Product. Gross National Happiness is achieved by earning ethically; it can be concluded from the teachings that Jainism is not conducive to the accumulation of wealth¹⁹.

BUDDHISM: Buddhism is an Indian religion that was founded by Siddhartha Gautam (The Buddha) more than 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautam. This religion originated in the State of Bihar, India, and spread from there to the northern region of India and later to other countries²⁰.

Buddhist beliefs are known as dharma which means adherence to the teachings of Buddha. According to Buddhism, wisdom, kindness, patience, generosity and compassion are important virtues. Buddhism prohibits killing living things; taking what is not given. The following are the basic teachings of Buddhism²¹:

1. No killing—Respect for life.
2. No stealing—Respect for others' property.
3. No sexual misconduct—Respect for our pure nature.
4. No lying—Respect for honesty.
5. No intoxicant—Respect for a clear mind.

Buddhism supports economic prosperity only if it is attained by ethical means, that is, by honesty and truthful means. Buddhism devotes materialism and supports human happiness. Therefore, it is doubtful that there is a positive relationship between Buddhism and economic creativity. According to Buddhism, the following are main beliefs which are known as Noble Truths²².

1. The truth of suffering.
2. The truth of the cause of suffering.
3. The truth of the end of suffering.
4. The truth of the path that leads to the sufferings.

HINDUISM: According to many scholars, Hinduism is the world's oldest religious faith which developed in the Indus Valley near modern Pakistan around 2,300 B.C. But many Hindus argue that their faith is timeless and has always existed. Unlike other religions, Hinduism has no specific founder; but it is a fusion of various beliefs. Hinduism embraces many religious ideas and, therefore, it is referred to as a way of life, or a family of religions as opposed to a single, organized religion. Many scholars believe that Hinduism is a philosophy of life out of which several religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism originated²³. However, many Hindus associate Hindu Religion with Hindu Dharma. Hinduism has five fundamental goals on which it is founded. They are primary beliefs of Hinduism²⁴.

1. Dharma (Righteousness, moral values)
2. Arth (prosperity, economic values)
3. Kama (pleasure, love, psychological values)
4. Karma (action, intent, consequences)
5. Moksha (liberation, spiritual values)

The five goals of Hinduism combined are termed as Purushartha, which is commonly translated as "the goals of human existence". Dharma is the most important goal which preaches that the acts of earning wealth and attaining psychological values must be regulated by ethics and morality. This is the main duty of each individual and the only way to get salvation. Any achievement which does not have an ethical basis is not acceptable by Hinduism. The Hindus accept individual's social status, occupation, and other worldly possessions because of their Karma (actions). Thus, Hinduism has been acting as a disincentive to economic growth because of its faith in a preordained order of life²⁵.

DHARMA: In Hinduism, dharma is the universal law governing individual conduct, and it is one of the four ends of human life. Dharma simply means to act morally and ethically throughout one's own life. Dharma is a philosophical concept that has been present in Hinduism since the inception of mankind and follows the laws of nature. Hindu Dharma constitutes the subject matter of Dharma-sutras, religious manual, which are the earliest source of Hindu Law, and in the course of time have been extended into lengthy compilations of Law, the Dharma-Shastra²⁶. The ancient Hindu religious and philosophical book, Manu Smriti, written by the ancient Sage Manu in 200 B.C. prescribes the following essential rules for the observance of dharma²⁷.

1. Patience.
2. Forgiveness.
3. Piety.
4. Self-control
5. Honesty.
6. Sanctity.
7. Control of senses.
8. Knowledge or learning.
9. Truthfulness.
10. Absence of anger.

Dharma means duty, virtue, morality, and it refers to the power which upholds the universe. Therefore, dharma is called the universal law or righteousness. Acting according to dharma does not precisely mean the same thing for all. Different people have different obligations and duties according to their age, gender, and social positions. For example, the basic dharma of a teacher is to provide the best possible education to the students, which is different from that of a medical doctor. The dharma of a medical doctor is to provide the best medical treatment to the patients. Hindus practice dharma in various forms in their daily lives, such as Putra Dharma (the duty of a father to his children), Pitru Dharma (the duty of children to their father.), and Matru Dharma (the duty of the children to their mother) etc.

Dharma is universal but it is also individual and operates differently within different circumstances. The word dharma is derived from the Sanskrit word “dhri” which means “to hold together” and thus, it has wider meaning than religion which means “that which leads to one God²⁸.” Other characteristics that distinguish religion from dharma are:

Dharma is not limited to any specific religion or society. It is universal and equally belongs to all religions and to all people throughout the world; and it does not mis-guide anyone. Recent events in several countries demonstrated that the mis-guided notion of any belief can deviate its followers from ethical values and hurt others; but dharma does not have any negative effects. The concept of dharma is important for producing successful leaders. Hindu epics, Ramayana and Mahabharat, are great examples of the application of dharma by successful leaders. In the Ramayana, Shri Ram reminded the importance of a doctor's dharma to a doctor who

denied medical treatment to the wounded soldier during the war. Similarly, In Shri Bhagwat Gita, Lord Krishna preached Arjun that it is the highest dharma of all persons to perform their individual duties. Thus, each person has his or her own individual dharma, which is known as Seava Dharma, that is, selfless act that aims to provide service to other without expecting any reward²⁹.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON BETWEEN RELIGION AND DHARMA

RELIGION	DHARMA
Religion is founded by someone.	Dharma does not have any known founder.
Religion has a date of origin.	Dharma does not have any known date of origin.
Religion has a set of beliefs.	Dharma is not a set of beliefs. It is based on Cosmic-Law and Order.

The concept of Dharma, which encompasses universal human values, ethics, and moral principles, can indeed have a significant influence on economic growth in India. Here are some ways in which Dharma can contribute to economic growth in the country:

1. **Ethical Business Practices:** Dharma encourages individuals and organizations to conduct their activities with integrity, honesty, and fairness. When businesses and leaders adhere to these ethical principles, it fosters trust among stakeholders, including customers, investors, and employees. Trust is vital for economic transactions and can lead to increased business opportunities and growth.
2. **Leadership:** Leadership is a practical skill encompassing the ability of an individual to lead, manage and guide others to achieve specific goals. Leadership is a process in which the leader plans and inspires the followers to achieve predetermined common goals. Although leadership and management overlap, each entails a unique set of activities or functions. Managers typically perform functions associated with planning, investigating, organizing, and controlling, whereas leadership deals with the interpersonal aspects of managers' job. Many scholars have classified leadership as autocratic leadership,

participative leadership, free-rein leadership, and servant leadership. The term, servant leadership, was coined by Robert Greenfield in 1970. He believes that great leaders act as servants putting the needs of others as their priority. Servant leadership focuses on increased service to others rather than benefiting themselves. After analyzing the characteristics of different leadership styles, it was found that servant leadership has more similarities with dharma than other leaderships.

Great leaders concentrate on the success of their goals planned to be achieved and motivate others to help accomplish them. The most important quality of a leader is to apply positive changes to achieve objectives through moral and ethical behavior. The leader must have clear vision, integrity, humility, knowledge, planning skills and a positive attitude. Successful leaders provide directions, inspiration, and guidance to their followers. Leadership can play a key role in promoting economic growth by creating opportunities for progressive developments.

3. **Social Responsibility:** Dharma places a strong emphasis on social responsibility and the welfare of others. Companies that embrace Dharma often engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, which can have a positive impact on local communities. These initiatives can improve education, healthcare, and infrastructure, contributing to overall social and economic development.
4. **Long-Term Perspective:** Dharma encourages a long-term perspective in decision-making. Instead of focusing solely on short-term profits, leaders and businesses guided by Dharma consider the long-term consequences of their actions. This can lead to sustainable economic growth and stability, as well as a reduced risk of financial crises.
5. **Inclusive Growth:** Dharma promotes inclusivity and fairness. When leaders and policymakers prioritize the well-being of all citizens, it can lead to policies and programs that reduce income inequality, improve access to education and healthcare, and create opportunities for marginalized communities. Inclusive growth is essential for a robust and sustainable economy.
6. **Wealth Redistribution:** The concept of Dharma underscored the duty of individuals, especially those who were more prosperous, to share their wealth with the less fortunate. Wealthy individuals and kings were encouraged to engage in acts of charity, including

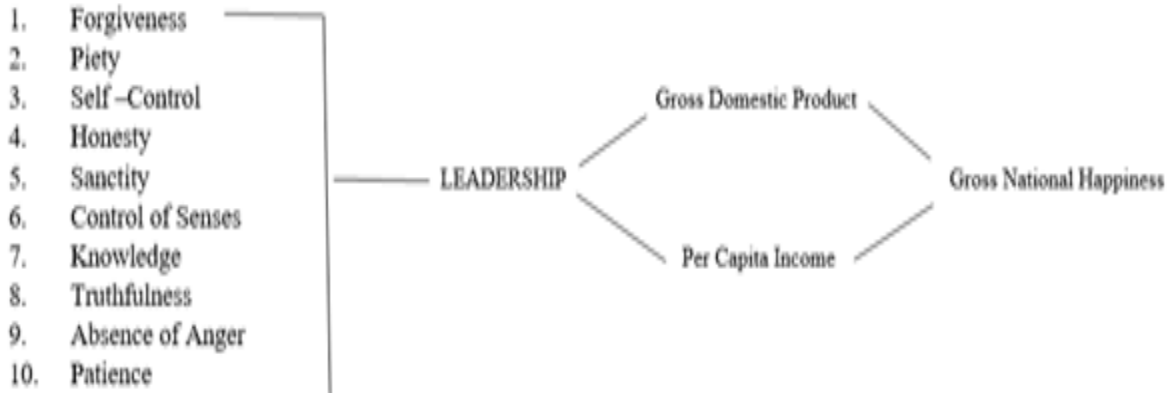
the construction of public infrastructure, such as roads, wells, and temples, to benefit the broader society.

7. **Environmental Stewardship:** Dharma also extends to the environment. Leaders and businesses that incorporate environmental sustainability into their practices can contribute to economic growth by reducing the costs associated with environmental damage and resource depletion. Additionally, environmentally responsible businesses can tap into the growing demand for sustainable products and services.
8. **Conflict Resolution:** Dharma provides a framework for conflict resolution and problem-solving. When conflicts are resolved peacefully and justly, it creates a stable environment for economic activities. This can attract investment, both domestic and foreign, and foster economic growth.

It's important to note that the impact of Dharma on economic growth may vary depending on the interpretation and application of these principles by individuals, businesses, and leaders.

However, when Dharma is integrated into the decision-making processes of both private and public sectors, it has the potential to create a more ethical, inclusive, and sustainable economic environment, ultimately contributing to India's long-term economic growth and development.

DHARMA ELEMENTS



IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON THE ECONOMY: After reviewing the teachings of various religions in India, we concluded that all religions in India believe in promoting economic growth. However, they believe in different methods to achieve this objective. Christianity adopted a policy of open market, free competition, and absolute capitalism. The modern study of religion and economics begins with Adam Smith. He wrote a book in 1776, “An Inquiry into Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations”. In his book, Adam Smith applied his innovative Laissez-faire philosophy to several aspects of religion. He projected that religious beliefs and activities are a rational choice. People make a free choice to choose a religion, and the degree to which they participate and believe. Creativity plays an important role in economic growth and technological developments in Christianity. Generally, other Indian religions have a negative association with creativity; but Christianity is closely associated with creativity, which helps to develop the economy as compared to other religions in India³⁰.

Indian religions including Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism all believe in promoting economic developments. However, their primary methods to accumulate wealth are through developing human capital. They believe that the main purpose of religion is to make individuals’ lives better by teaching them the value of virtues, such as honesty, trust and hard

work. Economic progress with maintaining high values is more satisfying than accumulating wealth by discarding ethics and morality. However, despite hard work and high moral values, no religion may be able to take advantage of scientific and technological developments, if it does not allow its followers a reasonable freedom for technology and innovation. According to the study published in the journal, *Science Advances*, a decline in religious authority influences a country's future economic growth. German sociologist, Max Weber also expressed his views that Secularization would lead to economic development when it is accompanied by individual liberties³¹.

Religion plays a significant role in the socio-economic landscape of both the United States and India. In the U.S., religion contributes approximately \$1.2 trillion in socioeconomic value annually, a figure that positions it as comparable to the world's 15th-largest national economy. Meanwhile, in India, the temple economy holds substantial economic weight, estimated at Rs 3.02 lakh crore, roughly \$40 billion, representing 2.32 percent of the country's GDP. However, this estimation may be conservative, as it encompasses a broad spectrum of goods and services, including flowers, oil, lamps, perfumes, bangles, sindur, images, and puja dresses. This temple economy thrives on the contributions of informal and unprotected labor. Furthermore, India's religious tourism sector is experiencing growth, set to create 140 million new jobs and opportunities in cities across the country. These phenomena underscore the intricate relationship between religion, economy, and employment dynamics in both nations.²⁸

Consumer Behavior: Religious beliefs wield significant influence over consumer behavior in India, as studies suggest. Notably, during religious festivals like Diwali and Eid, there is a discernible uptick in consumer spending, particularly on items such as clothing, gifts, and sweets. This surge in expenditure frequently translates into a palpable boost for the retail and hospitality sectors.

Tourism: India boasts an array of revered religious sites, drawing millions of domestic and international tourists annually. Pilgrimage tourism, in particular, serves as a robust revenue generator for local economies. Destinations such as Varanasi, Haridwar, Amritsar, and Tirupati experience a constant influx of pilgrims, catalyzing the development of infrastructure and the hospitality industry in these areas.

Philanthropy and Charity: Religious teachings in India underscore the significance of charity and community welfare. Consequently, religious institutions and adherents actively contribute to philanthropic endeavors, including funding education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation initiatives. This infusion of resources plays a pivotal role in supporting marginalized communities and fostering social welfare.

Agriculture and Livelihoods: Many Indian festivals and religious practices are intricately tied to agricultural cycles. Rituals associated with monsoon festivals, for instance, seek divine blessings for abundant harvests. Additionally, religious beliefs often shape dietary preferences and taboos, thereby influencing agricultural practices and the food industry.

Social Cohesion and Trust: Religious beliefs serve as linchpins for social cohesion and trust within communities. In business realms, networks forged through religious affiliations frequently facilitate trade, investment, and collaboration, fostering economic development and growth

Helps to reduce corruption by allowing faith-based ethics to be voiced-10 most corrupted country with highly restricted religious freedom.

Table#2

Helps to reduce corruption by allowing faith-based ethics to be voiced-10 most corrupted country with highly restricted religious freedom.

Most corrupt country 2014	Government Restriction on Religion
1. Somalia	Very High
2. North Korea	Very High
3. Sudan	Very High
4. Afghanistan	Very High
5. South Sudan	Low
6. Iraq	Very High
7. Turkmenistan	High

8. Uzbekistan	Very High
9. Eritrea	Very High
10. Libya	High

Sources-<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2014>

In Table #2, the correlation between government restrictions on religion and corruption levels is highlighted, particularly in the context of the top 10 most corrupt countries. Among these nations, Somalia, North Korea, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Eritrea, and Libya are categorized as having "very high" government restrictions on religion, while South Sudan falls into the "low" category, and Turkmenistan is classified as having "high" restrictions on religion. This data suggests a potential link between highly restricted religious freedom and corruption levels. Notably, countries with very high government restrictions on religion dominate the list of the most corrupt nations, indicating that allowing faith-based ethics to be voiced could potentially aid in reducing corruption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, India needs good leadership and well-planned economic policies to promote economic growth. To initiate economic developments after COVID-19, India should pursue a policy of sustainable economic growth. Based on our research, we suggest that the following steps may be helpful in stimulating economic growth in India:

1. Introduction of high-quality technological education in colleges and universities.
2. Introduction of high school level basic courses in religious beliefs and teachings of all religions in India.
3. Introduction of college level courses in Entrepreneurship and Supply Chain Management.
4. Introduction at college level and university levels of required courses in leadership.
5. Introduction of a compulsory course about the concept of dharma.
6. Promoting the growth of corporate organizations in India.
7. Tax incentives to corporations that intend to invest in productive economic sectors.
8. Promoting small businesses and providing them with financial assistance to grow.
9. Inviting foreign investment in India.
10. Investment to improve sustainable infrastructure.

11. Reforming the agriculture sector.
12. Promoting greater integration in the global economy.
13. Ensuring availability of efficient financial services for all people in India.
14. Abolishing discrimination in employment, wages, or salaries on grounds of caste, religion, sex, or national origin.

In this study, we concluded that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is not the only reliable indicator of real economic growth because it alone cannot bring real happiness in the lives of all people. The main objective of economic growth must be to provide reasonable opportunities for the betterment of all without any discrimination. To achieve this objective, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) needs to be supported by Gross National Happiness (GNH). Gross National Happiness is a measure of the collective happiness in a nation.

The term, Gross National Happiness, was coined by the king of Bhutan, Jigme Signye Wangchuk, in 1972. According to the King, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product." The concept of GNH is based upon nine elements, which are psychological well-being, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community validity, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standard³². The concept of GNH has been applied by the United Nations to measure the national wellbeing using the four pillars of GNH, which are good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation³³.

Gross National Happiness is a better mechanism than GDP to measure the wellbeing of people. GDP is a quantitative measure which is limited to only one aspect of economic life, the production of material goods. National happiness cannot be quantitatively measured in an efficient manner³⁴. Gross National Happiness is measured not only quantitatively; but also uses morality and justice to measure overall wellbeing. There is a huge income gap between rich and poor people in India. According to Oxfam International, "top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1% while 67 million Indians who comprised the poorest population show a 1% increase in the wealth³⁵". Unless the per capita income in India increases in proportion to the increase in GDP, India cannot ensure real National Happiness. The following tables for 2021 prove that GDP alone cannot create true national economic growth:

TABLE 3
Top 10 Rank Religious freedom by Countries

Top 10 Rank Religious freedom by Countries	GDP
Canada	\$2000.14 billion
United Kingdom	\$3000.07 billion
Denmark	\$395 billion
Netherlands	\$991 billion
Sweden	\$586 billion
Norway	\$579 billion
Finland	\$281 billion
Belgium	\$579 billion
Australia	\$1000.68 billion
New Zealand	\$247 billion

Source: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/rankings/religious-freedom>³⁶.

Table 3 presents the top 10 countries ranked by religious freedom alongside their respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures. Canada secures the top spot with a GDP of \$2000.14 billion, followed by the United Kingdom with \$3000.07 billion. Denmark ranks third with a GDP of \$395 billion, while the Netherlands follows closely with \$991 billion. Sweden and

Norway hold the fifth and sixth positions, with GDP figures of \$586 billion and \$579 billion, respectively. Finland trails slightly behind with a GDP of \$281 billion, while Belgium matches Norway's GDP at \$579 billion. Australia claims the ninth spot with a substantial GDP of \$1000.68 billion, and New Zealand rounds off the list with a GDP of \$247 billion. This data showcases the economic prowess of countries with high levels of religious freedom, underlining the potential correlation between religious liberty and economic prosperity.

TABLE #4
COUNTRIES RANKED ACCORDING TO HAPPINESS

RANK	GROSS DOMESTIC HAPPINESS
1	Finland
2	Denmark
3	Switzerland
4	Iceland
5	Netherlands
6	Norway

Source:2021 World Happiest Report³⁷.

Table #4 ranks countries according to their Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH), with Finland claiming the top position, followed by Denmark in second place. Switzerland secures the third spot, while Iceland and the Netherlands occupy the fourth and fifth ranks, respectively. Norway rounds out the top six in this ranking. These findings shed light on the subjective well-being and contentment levels within these nations, emphasizing factors beyond economic indicators that contribute to overall happiness.

Jeremy Bentham, a philosopher, economist, jurist, and legal reformer published a book in 1789,” The Principles of Morals and Legislation,” in which he propounded the theory of Utilitarianism which contains the following three principles³⁸:

1. Pleasure and happiness are the only things that have true intrinsic value.
2. Actions are right in so far as they promote happiness.
3. Everyone’s happiness counts equally.

CONCLUSION

This research study concluded that there is a close relationship among dharma, leadership, and national economic growth. All religions in India, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism have several characteristics of dharma in their religious belief systems, but those characteristics are not universally acceptable. Religious beliefs may be different from one religion to another, which may prevent individuals from performing their individual duties. Dharma is not based on any specific religious belief system. It is an individual duty, virtue, morality, and refers to the power that upholds the universe and society. Dharma teaches many lessons, such as individual actions based on ethics, righteousness, service to others without reward expectations, and fairness to all, which improve necessary skills to become successful leaders. This is evident from Hindu epic Ramayana, which is more than 7,000 years old, based on astronomical information, such as the position of constellations and the time of eclipses available in scripture. Another example of Hindu epic is Mahabharat, which is about 5,000 years old. The leaders in these two events were successful in accomplishing their respective missions due to the allegiance to and application of dharma's teachings³⁹.

There is plenty of evidence in modern times that many leaders in several countries made successful social, political, and economic decisions to improve the lives of others. We concluded that those who follow the basic principles of dharma become successful leaders. Due to ethical thinking, sense of duty without expecting any reward, desire to act righteously, leaders can be successful in motivating their followers to accomplish the task assigned to them. Successful leaders with excellent planning skills can mobilize their followers to achieve the predetermined common goals in any field that may affect human welfare.

Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel were among those recent successful leaders in India. Mahatma Gandhi got freedom for India due to his adherence to nonviolence. Sardar Patel unified the whole country without any violence after India got its independence. Leaders in other countries also were successful in applying leadership skills to accomplish their respective missions. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the former U. S. President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt are recent examples in the United States of America. Dr King adopted a peaceful method to get equal treatment and equal justice for all, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt implemented

excellent economic development programs during the Great Depression in the United States through the New Deal Legislation.

The history of all religions and countries is full of successful leaders who took individual decisions to accomplish the missions of common interest, rejecting the pressure of their religious beliefs. However, leadership skills that are essential to bring national economic prosperity are different from those which help achieve religious, social, or political objectives. Economic growth involves several technical issues, which need detailed knowledge of laws, economics, finance, technology, business, and international environment to solve the problems. No leader is expected to have expertise in all areas. They can only exercise their moral influence to inspire the followers unless they themselves have expertise in economic issues. We, therefore, concluded that it is imperative for leaders, who desire to create national economic growth, to have a team of experts to assist them on various issues. The conclusion of our research study is clearly depicted in the Chart of Dharma Elements.

Gross Domestic Product alone cannot provide happiness across the board unless everyone can share the economic growth. Therefore, it is the responsibility of policy makers and leaders to ensure that the national policies in all areas that affect human welfare must be aimed at providing maximum benefit to the maximum number of people. To reduce the gap in income between rich and poor people, and to create equal social and economic conditions for all citizens to lead happy life, the Constituent Assembly of India added the Directive Principles of State Policy to the Constitution of India, which were borrowed from the Irish Constitution. Article 38 of the Directive Principles of State Policy is designed to promote social, economic, and political justice for all. Article 39 (b) states that the ownership and control of material resources of the community are distributed to serve the common good. These articles in the Constitution of India in essence are synonymous to the Utilitarianism philosophy of Jeremy Bentham⁴⁰. This research was conducted keeping in view the Socio-economic environment in India. However, a reasonable inference may be drawn that many of the recommendations in this study are applicable to other countries also with huge disparities in socio-economic conditions.

Our research is based upon the available literature. This study is conducted exclusively with a view to examine the impact of dharma, which is a secular concept in Hinduism as opposed to non-secular religious beliefs, and its contribution to improving leadership skills and economic

growth. This study may not be completed and, therefore, needs additional research to reach a definite conclusion⁴¹.

BIOGRAPHIES

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