

Toward a Guna-Based Leadership Framework: Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems with Psychological Safety as a Mediating Mechanism for Employee Well-Being: A Conceptual Development and Exploratory Model Study

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ABSTRACT

Employee well-being has emerged as a critical organisational priority in the context of global workplace stress, burnout, and disengagement. While transformational, ethical, and servant leadership models offer useful insights, they remain predominantly Western-centric and do not adequately address the intrinsic psychological dispositions grounded in Indian civilizational thought. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) provide a refined psychological model through the Guna Theory, identifying three psychophysical forces—Sattva (harmony, clarity, compassion), Rajas (drive, ambition, activity), and Tamas (inertia, ignorance, aggression)—as described in the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 14), Samkhya Karika, and Yoga Sutras.

This paper advances a Tri-Dimensional Guna-Based Leadership Framework as a conceptual contribution, positioning it explicitly as a scale development and exploratory simulation study rather than a claim of full empirical validation. We develop the **Guna Leadership Scale (GLS)** with theoretical anchors in classical IKS texts and propose psychological safety as the critical mediating mechanism between leadership gunas and employee well-being. Drawing on narrative archetypes—Lord Rama as a pure Satvic exemplar and King Vikramaditya as a Satvic-Rajasic hybrid—and using an exploratory simulation ($N = 500$) aligned with published psychometric benchmarks in organisational behaviour, we test structural plausibility through **Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)** using the **lavaan R package**.

Simulation results indicate theoretical consistency: Satvic leadership demonstrates a strong positive path to psychological safety ($\beta = 0.633$, $p < .001$), while Rajasic ($\beta = -0.452$) and Tamasic ($\beta = -0.540$) leadership exhibit negative effects. Psychological safety fully mediates the guna-well-being relationship ($R^2 = 0.85$). These findings are interpreted as exploratory and should be validated through real organisational samples. The paper concludes with a fully developed **GLS instrument**, implementation guidelines, and a future research roadmap calling for empirical EFA/CFA/SEM validation.

Keywords: Satvic leadership, Rajasic leadership, Tamasic leadership, Psychological Safety, Employee Well-Being, Indian Knowledge Systems, Guna Leadership Scale, Structural Equation Modelling, Lord Rama, King Vikramaditya, Scale Development

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Global Organisational Context

The World Health Organization (2024) estimates that workplace stress costs global economies approximately USD 1 trillion annually through absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover. India's corporate sector

confronts particularly acute challenges: survey evidence indicates that more than 80 per cent of employees report burnout symptoms, approximately 70 per cent experience clinical anxiety levels, and engagement scores trail global averages by 15–20 percentage points. Leadership has consistently emerged as the single strongest contextual predictor of team climate, trust, and psychological health, accounting for 30–50 per cent of variance in employee outcomes (Frazier et al., 2017).

Contemporary leadership scholarship emphasises behavioural styles and trait configurations but largely neglects internal psychological dispositions—the subtle psychophysical qualities that Indian philosophy identifies as foundational to human conduct. This Western-centric bias overlooks more than five thousand years of systematic psychological inquiry within IKS, creating a significant gap that this conceptual study seeks to partially address.

1.2 Indian Knowledge Systems and the Guna Framework

The Guna Theory, systematically elaborated in the Samkhya Karika (c. 200 BCE) and further developed in the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 14) and Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, posits three primordial psychophysical forces in dynamic equilibrium. These forces—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—govern cognition, emotion, ethical conduct, and behavioural expression. Critically, they are not static personality labels, but dynamically modifiable dispositions shaped by practice, environment, and intentional cultivation.

Guna	Core Psychological Attributes	Leadership Expression	Impact on Followers
Sattva	Harmony, clarity, truth, compassion, equanimity	Ethical, inclusive, wise, dharma-centred	Psychological safety, trust, sustained well-being
Rajas	Activity, ambition, passion, restlessness	Strategic, driven, competitive, outcome-focused	Task achievement, moderate stress if unanchored
Tamas	Inertia, ignorance, fear, aggression, delusion	Neglectful, authoritarian, blame-shifting	Anxiety, disengagement, psychological harm

Table 1: Guna Framework – Psychological Attributes, Leadership Expression, and Follower Impact (Sources: Bhagavad Gita Ch. 14; Samkhya Karika; Yoga Sutras of Patanjali)

1.3 Research Gap and Positioning

Despite growing academic interest in IKS, several critical gaps persist. No psychometrically validated Guna Leadership Scale (GLS) with rigorous textual anchors has been published. No comparative analysis of classical IKS archetypes (Rama versus Vikramaditya) has been integrated with psychological safety mediation within an SEM framework. Existing exploratory work by Rastogi and Pati (2018) and Sharma (2011) identifies the promise of guna-based constructs but does not extend to scale development or mediational modelling.

This paper is explicitly positioned as a conceptual framework paper with exploratory simulation-based model testing, consistent with established methodological traditions in scale development literature (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2016). It does not claim empirical validation through organisational survey data; rather, it demonstrates theoretical plausibility and statistical consistency under simulated conditions and provides a fully developed instrument for future empirical deployment.

1.4 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The study pursues five objectives:

- Develop the Guna Leadership Scale (GLS) with rigorous IKS textual anchors and establish its item-level theoretical justification.

- Propose psychological safety as the conceptual mediating mechanism between Guna leadership and employee well-being.
- Conduct exploratory SEM-based model testing using a statistically realistic simulated dataset.
- Provide a comparative IKS leadership analysis of Lord Rama and King Vikramaditya.
- Generate a prioritised future research agenda for real-data empirical validation.

Hypotheses under exploratory investigation:

- H1: Satvic leadership positively predicts psychological safety.
- H2a: Rajasic leadership negatively predicts psychological safety.
- H2b: Tamasic leadership negatively predicts psychological safety.
- H3: Psychological safety mediates the relationship between each guna dimension and employee well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Philosophical Foundations of Guna Theory

The Samkhya Karika (attributed to Ishvarakrishna, c. 200 BCE) is the foundational text for the systematic exposition of the three gunas as primordial constituents of Prakriti (Nature). The text delineates: Sattva as characterised by illumination (prakasha), lightness (laghu), and pleasure (sukha); Rajas as characterised by stimulation (upashtambhaka), mobility (chala), and pain (duhkha); and Tamas as characterised by heaviness (guru), obstruction (avarana), and delusion (moha) (Larson & Bhattacharya, 1987).

The Bhagavad Gita (**Chapter 14, verses 5–18**) elaborates the dispositional consequences of each guna for knowledge, action, and its fruits. Verse 14.6 identifies Sattva as binding through attachment to happiness and knowledge; 14.7 identifies Rajas as binding through attachment to action; and 14.8 identifies Tamas as binding through negligence and delusion. Critically, the Gita (14.20) prescribes transcendence of the three gunas (trigunatita) as the highest developmental goal, an insight that has implications for leadership development models.

Modern cognitive science finds structural parallels with the guna schema. Sattva maps onto regulatory focus theory's promotion orientation (Higgins, 1997), open monitoring in mindfulness research (Lutz et al., 2008), and the Conscientiousness and Agreeableness clusters in the **HEXACO personality model (Ashton & Lee, 2007)**. **Rajas maps onto achievement motivation (McClelland, 1961) and prevention/promotion regulatory focus under competitive conditions.** Tamas maps onto learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), defensive avoidance, and dark triad configurations (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

2.2 Justification for Guna-to-Psychometric Mapping (GLS Development Rationale)

A central concern raised in extant literature—and directly relevant to this paper's contribution—is how ancient philosophical constructs are operationalised as psychometric variables. We address this through a three-stage anchoring **process drawn from Churchill's (1979) scale development paradigm and Hinkin's (1998) item generation guidelines.**

Stage 1 (Domain Specification): Each guna is mapped onto its textual manifestations across three canonical sources—the Bhagavad Gita, Samkhya Karika, and Valmiki's Ramayana. This multi-text approach reduces interpretive single-source bias.

Stage 2 (Item Generation): Items are generated to reflect behavioural indicators observable in organisational contexts, not philosophical abstractions. Each item is anchored to a specific textual passage (detailed in Section 3).

Stage 3 (Face Validity Check): Items were reviewed against established leadership scales—the MLQ (Avolio & Bass, 2004), Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al., 2005), and Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans & Youssef, 2007)—to confirm construct distinctiveness and prevent conceptual overlap.

2.3 Satvic Leadership: Lord Rama as Conceptual Archetype

Lord Rama is employed in this study as a conceptual archetype representing Satvic leadership characteristics identified in classical Sanskrit texts, not as an empirical research subject. This usage is consistent with Bennis and Thomas's (2002) concept of 'crucible experiences' in leadership formation and with Avolio's (2004) authentic leadership framework that traces leadership identity to formative narratives.

Valmiki's Ramayana (**Ayodhya Kanda, Sargas 18–20**) depicts Rama's acceptance of fourteen years of exile through a lens of radical emotional equanimity, absence of self-serving rationalisation, and explicit prioritisation of collective dharma over personal entitlement. These textual behaviours constitute Satvic leadership indicators: consistent ethical conduct under adversity (integrity), non-reactive emotional tone (equanimity), transparent communication of decision rationale (transparency), and active concern for follower welfare (compassion). The Yuddha Kanda's Rama Rajya sections (**Sargas 128–130**) elaborate participatory governance, public accessibility, and justice without vengeance as further Satvic markers.

2.4 Satvic-Rajasic Leadership: King Vikramaditya as Conceptual Archetype

King Vikramaditya, as represented in the **Singhasan Battisti corpus (Stories 1, 8, and 17)**, serves as **an illustrative Satvic-Rajasic leadership archetype rather than an empirical case**. His repeated discernment of hidden truth through observation of subtle behavioural cues (the diamond merchant episode, Story 8) represents Satvic epistemic clarity, while his decisive interventions under ambiguity reflect Rajasic drive harnessed within an ethical frame.

This dual-guna archetype has practical relevance for contemporary leadership: it anticipates what modern leadership research describes as ambidextrous leadership (Rosing et al., 2011), combining exploratory (Satvic-inclusive, open) and exploitative (Rajasic-driven, efficiency-focused) behaviours. Critically, the Vetal episodes (Stories 13–25) illustrate repeated moral dilemma resolution under pressure—a feature that maps onto moral courage in contemporary leader virtue ethics (Sekerka et al., 2009).

2.5 Psychological Safety: Bridge Construct

Edmondson (1999, p. 350) defines psychological safety as 'a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.' The Frazier et al. (2017) meta-analysis across 223 studies confirms that leadership behaviours account for 28 per cent of psychological safety variance, making it a theoretically defensible mediator between leader conduct and team outcomes.

From an IKS standpoint, psychological safety corresponds to the concept of Abhayam (fearlessness), explicitly listed among the twenty-six divine qualities (daivi sampat) in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 16, Verse 1. The alignment between Abhayam as a quality cultivated by Satvic environments and Edmondson's operationalisation of safety as freedom from interpersonal fear constitutes what we term a civilizational convergence point—an area where ancient wisdom and modern organisational science independently arrive at structurally similar constructs.

2.6 Employee Well-Being Frameworks

Employee well-being is operationalised as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing affective well-being (positive emotions, stress reduction), cognitive well-being (job satisfaction, meaning), occupational well-being (engagement, work-life integration), and eudaimonic well-being (purpose, growth) (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Diener et al., 2010). This multi-dimensional approach aligns with the IKS concept of Ananda (bliss) not as a momentary emotion but as a sustained state of authentic flourishing—a parallel noted by Srinivas (2015) in comparative positive psychology.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUNA LEADERSHIP SCALE (GLS)

3.1 Satvic Dimension

Theoretical Derivation: Satvic leadership indicators are derived from three primary textual sources: (a) Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14 (verses 6, 11, 17) identifying clarity, non-attachment, and sattvic knowledge; (b) Samkhya Karika verses 12–13 on the illuminating (prakashaka) nature of Sattva; and (c) Valmiki's Ramayana (Ayodhya Kanda) demonstrating Rama's dharma-centred decision-making under personal adversity.

Behavioural Indicators: Ethical consistency (dharma adherence), compassionate engagement (karuna), emotional equanimity (samata), transparent communication, and inclusive participatory governance.

No.	Scale Item	Textual Anchor
SL1	My leader maintains calm and composure even during organisational crises.	Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda 19.3 – Rama's equanimity upon exile decree
SL2	My leader treats all employees with consistent fairness, regardless of hierarchy.	Bhagavad Gita 14.24 – sama-duhkha-sukha (equanimity in pain and pleasure)
SL3	My leader encourages open expression of ideas without fear of negative consequences.	Ramayana, Yuddha Kanda 128 – Rama Rajya participatory councils
SL4	My leader demonstrates integrity: actions consistently align with stated values.	Bhagavad Gita 14.6 – Sattva attaches to knowledge and happiness through clarity
SL5	My leader acts compassionately when employees face personal or professional difficulties.	Samkhya Karika 12 – Sattva as prakashaka (illuminating, enabling discernment)

Table 2: Satvic Leadership Sub-Scale (GLS-SL) – Items and Textual Anchors (7-point Likert: 1 = Never, 7 = Always)

3.2 Rajasic Dimension

Theoretical Derivation: Rajasic leadership indicators are derived from: (a) Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14 (verses 7, 12) identifying passion (raga), ambition, and restless activity (cheshta) as Rajasic markers; (b) Singhasan Battisi (Stories 8, 17) depicting Vikramaditya's strategic drive and decisive risk-taking; and (c) Cross-referencing with achievement motivation theory (McClelland, 1961) to ensure observational validity.

Behavioural Indicators: Performance orientation, competitive ambition, high-urgency communication, risk-taking under uncertainty, and reward-for-output emphasis.

No.	Scale Item	Textual Anchor
RL1	My leader strongly emphasises achieving targets and performance goals.	Bhagavad Gita 14.7 – Rajas as upashtambhaka (stimulating activity)
RL2	My leader rewards rapid and high-quality execution of tasks.	Singhasan Battisi Story 17 – Vikramaditya's decisive strategic judgments
RL3	My leader takes calculated risks and expects team members to do likewise.	Bhagavad Gita 14.12 – Rajasic manifestations: greed, restlessness, undertaking actions

RL4	My leader pushes aggressively for organisational targets, sometimes at the cost of work-life balance.	Samkhya Karika 13 – Rajas as chala (mobile, dynamic but pain-inducing)
RL5	My leader focuses primarily on outcomes and results over relational or process considerations.	Bhagavad Gita 14.7 – Rajas produces attachment to action and its fruits

Table 3: Rajasic Leadership Sub-Scale (GLS-RL) – Items and Textual Anchors

3.3 Tamasic Dimension

Theoretical Derivation: Tamasic leadership indicators are derived from: (a) Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14 (verses 8, 13, 17) **identifying delusion (moha), negligence (pramada), and ignorance (ajnana) as Tamasic markers;** (b) **Negative IKS archetypes such as King Duryodhana (Mahabharata) and Ravana (Ramayana), used as contrast cases;** and (c) **Cross-referencing with destructive leadership literature (Einarsen et al., 2007; Pelletier, 2010).**

Behavioural Indicators: Responsibility avoidance, blame-shifting to subordinates, suppression of employee voice, authoritarian and punitive responses, and moral disengagement.

No.	Scale Item	Textual Anchor
TL1	My leader avoids taking responsibility for team failures.	Bhagavad Gita 14.8 – Tamas as pramada (negligence, heedlessness)
TL2	My leader suppresses employee voice and discourages dissent or questioning.	Ramayana – Ravana as tamasic archetype: ego-driven suppression of truth
TL3	My leader reacts with aggression or punishment when mistakes are made.	Bhagavad Gita 14.13 – Tamasic manifestations: confusion, inertia, darkness
TL4	My leader shows little interest in employee growth or well-being.	Samkhya Karika 13 – Tamas as avarana (obstruction) and moha (delusion)
TL5	My leader uses blame-shifting and scapegoating when targets are not met.	Mahabharata – Duryodhana as tamasic archetype: adharma-perpetuating leadership

Table 4: Tamasic Leadership Sub-Scale (GLS-TL) – Items and Textual Anchors

3.4 GLS Summary and Psychometric Targets

Dimension	Items	Primary Source	α Target	AVE Target	Theoretical Basis
Satvic (GLS-SL)	SL1–SL5	Ramayana; BG Ch. 14	$\geq .85$	$\geq .50$	Dharma, karuna, samata, satya
Rajasic (GLS-RL)	RL1–RL5	Singhasan Battisi; BG 14.7	$\geq .80$	$\geq .50$	Ambition, cheshta, upashtambhaka
Tamasic (GLS-TL)	TL1–TL5	BG 14.8; Mahabharata	$\geq .80$	$\geq .50$	Moha, pramada, avarana, adharma

Table 5: GLS Summary – Dimensions, Items, Textual Sources, and Psychometric Targets

Note: The GLS is currently at the content validity stage. Future research should subject the instrument to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on a pilot sample of at least 150 respondents, followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on a separate independent sample, consistent with MacKenzie et al.'s (2011) recommendations for construct validation.

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method conceptual design: (a) qualitative textual-thematic analysis of IKS sources to derive the GLS and establish archetype profiles; (b) quantitative exploratory simulation-based SEM to test structural plausibility. This design is consistent with Rindova's (2008) framework for theory-building papers that employ illustrative rather than confirmatory evidence, and with MacKenzie's (2003) argument that simulation-based model testing is a legitimate preliminary step before resource-intensive empirical data collection.

The methodology should be interpreted as conceptual development and exploratory model testing, not as empirical validation of the GLS or confirmation of the hypothesised causal pathways. All results are described as theoretically plausible patterns under simulated conditions.

4.2 Sample Characteristics and Simulation Rationale

An $N = 500$ simulation was constructed using Python's numpy and scipy libraries, generating multivariate normal data via a theoretically derived covariance matrix. The correlation structure was informed by: (a) Frazier et al.'s (2017) meta-analytic estimates for leadership-to-psychological safety paths; (b) Edmondson's (1999, 2019) empirical benchmarks for psychological safety-to-well-being associations; and (c) Rastogi and Pati's (2018) exploratory estimates for guna-leadership-outcome relationships.

Simulated occupational distribution mirrors India's formal sector profile: IT/Software (38%), Academic Institutions (24%), Manufacturing (18%), Financial Services (12%), Other (8%). $N = 500$ provides statistical power exceeding 0.95 for the specified SEM with five latent variables and 15 observed indicators (MacCallum et al., 1996).

Important caveat: Simulated data cannot establish that the proposed relationships actually exist in Indian organisations. This study does not claim to have done so. The simulation demonstrates that the theoretical model is internally consistent and structurally plausible—a necessary but not sufficient condition for empirical support.

4.3 Measurement Instruments

Guna Leadership Scale (GLS): 15 items across three sub-scales (SL1-5, RL1-5, TL1-5), 7-point Likert (1 = Never, 7 = Always), developed in Section 3 above.

Psychological Safety Scale: Edmondson's (1999) 7-item scale, widely validated across cultural contexts (Newman et al., 2017), Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .82$ in published Indian samples.

Employee Well-Being Scale: Warr's (1990) affective well-being items combined with Diener et al.'s (2010) Flourishing Scale, producing an 18-item multi-dimensional instrument ($\alpha \geq .89$).

4.4 Simulated Correlation Matrix

The following correlation matrix was used to generate the simulated dataset and is presented for full methodological transparency:

	SL (Satvic)	RL (Rajasic)	TL (Tamasic)	PS (Safety)	WB (Well-Being)
SL	1.00	-0.08	-0.06	0.63	0.60

RL	-0.08	1.00	0.08	-0.45	-0.40
TL	-0.06	0.08	1.00	-0.54	-0.64
PS	0.63	-0.45	-0.54	1.00	0.92
WB	0.60	-0.40	-0.64	0.92	1.00

Table 6: Simulated Correlation Matrix (Blue = positive; Red = negative; generated from meta-analytic benchmarks)

4.5 SEM Specification

Structural equation modelling was conducted using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R 4.3.1. Model specification:

- Exogenous latent variables: Satvic Leadership (SL), Rajasic Leadership (RL), Tamasic Leadership (TL)
- Mediator latent variable: Psychological Safety (PS)
- Outcome latent variable: Employee Well-Being (WB)
- Estimator: Maximum Likelihood (ML)
- Mediation test: Sobel test and bootstrapped indirect effects (5,000 replications, 95% bias-corrected CIs)

Fit criteria: CFI > .90, RMSEA < .08, SRMR < .08, $\chi^2/df < 5.0$ (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULTS (EXPLORATORY SIMULATION)

5.1 Measurement Model

All simulated factor loadings exceeded the .70 threshold. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded .50 for all constructs. Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded .70, confirming convergent validity under simulation conditions. Discriminant validity was assessed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion: the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded inter-construct correlations. Overall measurement model fit: $\chi^2(48) = 102.3$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .03.

5.2 Structural Path Analysis

The following results are derived from exploratory simulation and should be interpreted as theoretically plausible patterns, not as confirmation of real organisational effects:

Path	β	SE	p	95% CI	Hypothesis
Satvic Leadership → Psychological Safety	0.633	.04	< .001	[0.55, 0.71]	H1 – Supported
Rajasic Leadership → Psychological Safety	-0.452	.04	< .001	[-0.53, -0.37]	H2a – Supported
Tamasic Leadership → Psychological Safety	-0.540	.04	< .001	[-0.62, -0.46]	H2b – Supported

Psychological Safety → Employee Well-Being	0.920	.02	< .001	[0.88, 0.96]	H3 – Supported
Satvic Leadership → Well-Being (direct)	0.182	.05	< .01	[0.08, 0.28]	Partial direct path

Table 7: Structural Path Coefficients (Exploratory Simulation, N = 500)

5.3 Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapped indirect effects (5,000 replications) were calculated. All 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals excluded zero, indicating full mediation of each guna-to-well-being path through psychological safety under simulation conditions:

Indirect Path	β	95% Bootstrapped CI	Mediation Type
SL → PS → WB	0.582	[0.51, 0.65]	Full Mediation
RL → PS → WB	-0.416	[-0.49, -0.34]	Full Mediation
TL → PS → WB	-0.497	[-0.57, -0.42]	Full Mediation

Table 8: Mediation Analysis – Bootstrapped Indirect Effects (5,000 replications)

Model summary: $R^2(\text{PS}) = .72$, $R^2(\text{WB}) = .85$ under simulation conditions. These figures indicate strong within-model structural consistency, not explanatory power over real-world variance.

EXTENDED CASE STUDIES

6.1 Lord Rama – Pure Satvic Leadership Archetype

As established in Section 2.3, Rama is employed as a conceptual archetype representing Satvic leadership characteristics found in the Valmiki Ramayana. Two narrative episodes are particularly instructive for the GLS constructs.

The exile episode (Ayodhya Kanda) illustrates emotional equanimity (SL item 1), ethical consistency (SL item 4), and collective welfare orientation (SL item 5). Rama's dignified acceptance of an unjust decree—without personal recrimination, and with active concern for the welfare of Ayodhya—prevents factionalism and preserves institutional stability. This behaviour pattern maps directly onto what Edmondson (2019) identifies as leader inclusiveness: a key antecedent of psychological safety.

Modern organisational parallel—ISRO: Analyses of ISRO's culture during the Chandrayaan-2 (2019) and Chandrayaan-3 (2023) missions document a leadership culture characterised by collective ownership of failure, non-punitive public framing of setbacks, and scientific humility among senior leaders. These features are structurally consistent with Satvic leadership as operationalised in the GLS-SL sub-scale. Psychological safety research (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) confirms that non-punitive responses to error are among the strongest predictors of learning orientation and team resilience.

6.2 King Vikramaditya – Satvic-Rajasic Hybrid Archetype

Vikramaditya's leadership in the Singhasan Battisi illustrates the productive synthesis of Satvic discernment and Rajasic decisiveness. In Story 8 (diamond merchant judgment), his capacity to infer emotional truth from micro-behavioural observation reflects GLS-SL item 1 (equanimity) and item 4 (integrity), while his willingness to decide swiftly under moral ambiguity reflects GLS-RL items 2 and 3.

Modern organisational parallel—Infosys under N.R. Narayana Murthy: Corporate governance literature on Infosys's founding phase (1981–2006) documents a consistent pattern of combining ethical principles (values-based governance, transparent financial reporting) with disciplined performance orientation. This corresponds structurally to a Satvic-Rajasic profile: high GLS-SL combined with moderate-to-high GLS-RL, anchored within an explicit ethical frame. When Rajas is thus contained within Sattva, the simulation findings suggest that psychological safety remains high while innovation energy is preserved.

6.3 Tamasic Leadership Patterns – Contrast Cases

Tamasic leadership is not illustrated through a single mythological archetype but through composite behavioural patterns from IKS negative exemplars (Duryodhana, Ravana) and contemporary Indian workplace survey evidence. Empirical studies on punitive supervision and opaque hierarchies in Indian organisations (Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2009) document high stress, suppressed voice behaviour, and elevated turnover intentions—consistent with the simulation result that Tamasic leadership shows the strongest negative relationship with psychological safety ($\beta = -0.540$).

6.4 Gen Alpha Workforce Expectations

Gen Alpha (born approximately after 2010) will constitute the core workforce by 2040. Emerging evidence from educational psychology and early workforce studies suggests that this cohort demonstrates heightened intolerance for psychologically unsafe cultures and elevated demand for authenticity, mental health support, and ethical technology practices (Twenge, 2023). This generational expectation pattern aligns precisely with the GLS-SL profile: high compassion, transparency, emotional equanimity, and inclusive governance. Leadership development programmes for Gen Alpha pipelines therefore have strong a priori rationale for integrating Satvic competencies.

DISCUSSION

7.1 Sattva as Theoretically Optimal Leadership Quality for Well-Being

The model demonstrates theoretical consistency between Satvic leadership and positive well-being outcomes mediated through psychological safety. This is convergent with IKS descriptions of Sattva as a quality that elevates consciousness, fosters truthfulness, and enhances interpersonal harmony (Bhagavad Gita 14.6, 17), and with contemporary leadership research identifying ethical consistency, respectful listening, and principled decision-making as primary antecedents of psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017). The GLS-SL items capture precisely these behavioural manifestations, suggesting that Sattva as an IKS construct has strong face validity relative to empirically validated Satvic leadership behaviours.

7.2 The Ambivalence of Rajas

The negative simulation path from Rajasic leadership to psychological safety ($\beta = -0.452$) suggests that unregulated ambition and performance pressure may create climates characterised by interpersonal fear and reduced voice behaviour. However, the Vikramaditya and Infosys archetypes demonstrate that when Rajas is anchored within a Satvic ethical frame, it becomes a productive leadership resource. The Bhagavad Gita's prescription for regulated action (nishkama karma, Chapter 3) is structurally analogous to what modern leadership theory describes as authentic goal pursuit (Deci & Ryan, 2000): action without self-serving attachment, which preserves relational safety while sustaining performance orientation.

The practical implication is not suppression of Rajas but its 'spiritualisation' through Satvic anchoring—a leadership development task with direct pedagogical applications.

7.3 Tamasic as the Most Destructive Configuration

The strongest negative simulation path is from Tamasic leadership to well-being ($r = -0.64$ in the correlation matrix), consistent with destructive leadership literature identifying negligence, blame-shifting, and authoritarian control as the most harmful leader behaviours for follower wellbeing (Einarsen et al., 2007;

Pelletier, 2010). From an IKS standpoint, Tamas clouds viveka (discriminative wisdom) and perpetuates adharmā—unethical conduct that in organisational terms manifests as exploitative, neglectful, or psychologically abusive practices. The model confirms that Tamasic structures require deliberate deactivation, not merely enhancement of Satvic qualities at the individual leader level.

7.4 Psychological Safety as Civilizational Convergence Point

The very strong simulation path from psychological safety to well-being ($\beta = 0.920$) affirms psychological safety as the central mediating bridge between ancient leadership virtues and contemporary mental health outcomes. The structural parallel between the IKS concept of Abhayam (fearlessness, Bhagavad Gita 16.1) and Edmondson's operationalisation of safety as freedom from interpersonal fear is not merely metaphorical but points to a genuine convergence in how two distinct civilizational traditions identify the conditions for human flourishing. This convergence strengthens the theoretical plausibility of the GLS as a cross-culturally grounded instrument.

7.5 Comparative IKS Leadership Profile: Rama versus Vikramaditya

Dimension	Lord Rama (Pure Satvic)	King Vikramaditya (Satvic–Rajasic)
Dominant Guna Profile	High Sattva; Low-controlled Rajas; Near-zero Tamas	High Sattva; Moderate-High Rajas; Low Tamas
IKS Source	Valmiki Ramayana (Ayodhya, Yuddha Kanda)	Singhasan Battisi (Stories 1, 8, 17, 21–25)
Decision Style	Deliberative, dharma-first, participatory	Swift, strategic, justice-anchored
Psychological Safety Impact	Very high – inclusive, predictable, transparent	High – inclusive but performance-driven
Innovation & Agility	Moderate – stable, principled	High – adaptive, risk-taking within ethical bounds
Well-Being Impact	Strongly positive, emotionally stable	Positive but performance stress may fluctuate
Modern Parallel	ISRO – collective ownership, humble leadership	Infosys (founding phase) – ethical-performance duality

Table 9: Comparative Guna-Based Leadership Profiles – Lord Rama vs King Vikramaditya

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Theoretical Contributions

First, this study makes an original contribution by developing the GLS as a psychometrically grounded instrument with explicit textual anchors in classical IKS sources, advancing beyond the exploratory item pools in Rastogi and Pati (2018) and Sharma (2011). Second, it proposes psychological safety as a conceptual mediating variable that creates a structural bridge between IKS philosophy and mainstream organisational behaviour, operationalising the civilizational convergence between Abhayam and Edmondson's safety construct. Third, by employing Rama and Vikramaditya as carefully bounded conceptual archetypes rather than empirical subjects, the study establishes a methodologically defensible template for integrating IKS exemplars into leadership research.

8.2 Practical Implications: Guna Leadership Development Pathway

A phased implementation pathway is proposed for organisations:

Phase	Activity	Practical Action
1	Guna Profiling	Deploy GLS (15 items) as a 360° diagnostic; generate individual Satvic-Rajasic-Tamasic scores.
2	Awareness Workshops	Introduce guna theory through the Bhagavad Gita framework; use Rama and Vikramaditya case vignettes.
3	Sattva Enhancement	Ethics training, mindfulness practice, reflective journaling, peer coaching anchored in dharma principles.
4	Rajas Balancing	Goal clarity sessions, emotional regulation training, value-performance alignment reviews.
5	Tamas Deactivation	360° accountability mechanisms, grievance systems, leadership coaching to address blame-shifting and avoidance.
6	Safety Audits	Bi-annual psychological safety measurement using Edmondson's (1999) scale; track guna-safety correlations.
7	Well-Being Tracking	Quarterly well-being surveys; longitudinal analysis of guna profile changes against well-being outcomes.

Table 10: Phased Guna Leadership Development Pathway

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations are explicitly acknowledged to ensure transparent scholarly positioning of this conceptual study:

No.	Limitation	Future Mitigation Strategy
1	Simulated dataset: The study uses simulation rather than real employee data; findings cannot establish that the proposed relationships exist in actual organisations.	Collect N = 400–500 responses from Indian organisations across IT, Education, Manufacturing, Banking, and Healthcare sectors. Run EFA (n ≥ 150, pilot) followed by independent-sample CFA (n ≥ 250) and full SEM.
2	GLS under development: The Guna Leadership Scale has not been subjected to EFA, CFA, or convergent/discriminant validity tests with real respondents.	Subject GLS to systematic scale development: domain specification → item generation → expert panel review → pilot EFA → independent CFA per Churchill (1979) and Hinkin (1998).
3	Interpretive subjectivity of archetypes: Mythological archetypes (Rama, Vikramaditya) may be interpreted differently across scholarly traditions and regional cultural contexts.	Use Rama and Vikramaditya solely as textually bounded illustrative archetypes; avoid causal or deterministic attributions. Conduct inter-rater reliability studies on archetype-item mappings.

4	Cross-cultural validity untested: The GLS is developed for Indian organisational contexts; applicability to other cultural settings is unknown.	Future multi-country studies with GLOBE (House et al., 2004) country clusters as moderators; cross-cultural invariance testing via multi-group CFA.
5	Common method bias unaddressed: Self-report instruments for both predictor and outcome variables create potential for common method variance inflation.	Use Harman's single-factor test; collect predictor and outcome data at different time points (T1/T2 design); consider supervisor-rated well-being as an alternative operationalisation.
6	Longitudinal effects untested: The model proposes dynamic guna effects but is tested at a single simulated time point.	Deploy longitudinal panel design (at least two waves, six months apart) to capture how guna profiles shift with leadership development interventions and track lagged well-being effects.
7	Sector and occupational homogeneity: The simulated sample distribution may not accurately reflect guna expression across all Indian organisational sectors.	Oversample manufacturing, public sector, and family enterprise contexts where Tamasic leadership patterns may be more prevalent, enabling sector-moderated SEM.

Table 11: Limitations and Future Mitigation Strategies

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

This study generates a prioritised agenda for the empirical development of Guna-Based Leadership Science:

- Phase 1 – GLS Validation: Expert panel content validity ($CVI \geq .80$) → Pilot EFA ($n = 150-200$, IT and education sectors) → Independent CFA ($n = 250-300$) → Multi-group invariance testing across sectors.
- Phase 2 – Full Empirical SEM: Real-data SEM with $N = 400-500$ employees across five sectors; bootstrapped mediation; comparison of simulated versus empirical path coefficients as a validation check.
- Phase 3 – Longitudinal Panel Study: Two-wave design testing whether guna-profiling interventions shift GLS scores and whether those shifts predict lagged psychological safety and well-being improvements.
- Phase 4 – Cross-Cultural Extension: Multi-country GLS adaptation in East Asian Confucian cultures (dharma-analogous concepts), Middle Eastern contexts, and Western individualist cultures; cross-cultural SEM invariance.
- Phase 5 – Neuroscientific Grounding: Correlate GLS-SL scores with EEG alpha wave patterns and cortisol profiles during leadership decision tasks; test whether Satvic leaders exhibit neurophysiological markers consistent with mindfulness research.
- Phase 6 – Gen Alpha Longitudinal Study: Track entering Gen Alpha employees over three years; test whether Satvic leadership culture predicts lower attrition, higher innovation output, and superior well-being markers compared to Rajasic or Tamasic cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study positions itself explicitly as a conceptual framework contribution and exploratory simulation study, making no claim to empirical validation of the proposed causal pathways. Within those clearly defined boundaries, it advances four substantive contributions to leadership science: (1) a theoretically grounded Guna

Leadership Scale (GLS) with item-level anchors in canonical IKS texts; (2) a formally specified conceptual mediational model connecting guna dispositions through psychological safety to employee well-being; (3) a methodologically defensible template for integrating classical IKS archetypes as illustrative, bounded exemplars rather than empirical evidence; and (4) an exploratory simulation demonstrating that the proposed model is internally consistent and structurally plausible.

The civilizational convergence identified between the IKS concept of Abhayam (fearlessness) and Edmondson's psychological safety construct suggests that Indian philosophical thought, far from being a cultural curiosity, contains sophisticated organisational insights that anticipate and enrich contemporary management science. Lord Rama's dharma-centred equanimity and King Vikramaditya's ethical-strategic duality are not anachronisms—they are archetypal templates for the very leadership competencies that India's Gen Alpha workforce and global organisational psychology are independently identifying as indispensable for sustained human flourishing.

The rigorous empirical work that this conceptual foundation calls for—real-data EFA, CFA, SEM, and longitudinal validation—is now the critical next step. This study provides the theoretical architecture and measurement instrument for that programme of research.

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APPENDIX A: COMPLETE GUNA LEADERSHIP SCALE (GLS) INSTRUMENT

- a. Instructions to Respondents: The following statements describe your immediate supervisor or team leader. Please rate how frequently your leader displays each behaviour on a scale from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always).

No.	Item	1–2	3–4	5–6	7
	SATVIC DIMENSION (GLS-SL)				
SL1	My leader maintains calm and composure even during organisational crises (SL1)				
SL2	My leader treats all employees with consistent fairness, regardless of hierarchy (SL2)				
SL3	My leader encourages open expression of ideas without fear of consequences (SL3)				
SL4	My leader demonstrates integrity: actions consistently align with stated values (SL4)				
SL5	My leader acts compassionately when employees face personal or professional difficulties (SL5)				
	RAJASIC DIMENSION (GLS-RL)				
RL1	My leader strongly emphasises achieving targets and performance goals (RL1)				
RL2	My leader rewards rapid and high-quality execution of tasks (RL2)				
RL3	My leader takes calculated risks and expects team members to do likewise (RL3)				
RL4	My leader pushes aggressively for organisational targets, sometimes at the cost of work-life balance (RL4)				
RL5	My leader focuses primarily on outcomes and results over relational considerations (RL5)				
	TAMASIC DIMENSION (GLS-TL)				
TL1	My leader avoids taking responsibility for team failures (TL1)				

TL2	My leader suppresses employee voice and discourages dissent or questioning (TL2)				
TL3	My leader reacts with aggression or punishment when mistakes are made (TL3)				
TL4	My leader shows little interest in employee growth or well-being (TL4)				
TL5	My leader uses blame-shifting and scapegoating when targets are not met (TL5)				

Appendix A: Guna Leadership Scale (GLS) – Full 15-Item Instrument with Response Grid (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Occasionally, 5 = Often, 6 = Very Often, 7 = Always)