

# Against Ecological Crisis: Sustain Life Through Lens of Ramayana

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## Abstract

*The whole emphasis of Indian Vedic philosophy is the human connection with nature. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and the Epics of Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata have numerous instances of worshipping the divine nature. These scriptures contain some of the earliest messages of environmental protection, ecological balance and the necessity of treating Mother Nature ethically. The interaction between nature and human beings is very much apparent throughout Ramayana. The very first incidence which forms the central metaphor of the epic begins with "A hunter kills one of the two birds in love and Vālmiki curses the hunter". This suggests the importance that has been attached to the preservation of life in forests. None was entitled to kill any animal or bird unless it was absolutely necessary.*

*The world of Ramayana and Mahabharata being blessed with the richness of nature reminds us of our place and role in the Great Nature in addition to our duties towards such human collectivities as family, village and society. Ramayana defines not only the relationship but also the ecological wholeness that has promoted millions of plants, animals, and other life forms. This paper advocates that spiritually-based motives are needed to save humankind from the escalating ecological crisis in this country. A deeper and broader view embracing our inner commitment is very much needed in the present time.*

**Keywords:** *Ecological Crisis, Sustainability, Spirituality, Ramayana*

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## Introduction

Post industrialization, problems of biodiversity depletion, climate change, ecological imbalance and health conditions have intensified all over the world. Thereby, creating the need for an integrated framework for sustainable growth, against the present economic development model which is based on the exploitation of natural resources. Acknowledging this urgent need, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or Earth Summit was held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, wherein 108 heads of states and governments, and representatives from all around the world met to discuss issues pertaining to sustainable development. 20 years later during the Rio+20 a set of focused documents were produced for the first time which contained clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were announced by the UN General Assembly in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Also referred to as the Global Goals, the 17 SDGs being universal, apply to all countries over the world and encapsulate the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. With only nine years left to achieve the target of SDGs, a lot is yet to be done and achieved. There is an urgent need for action at the global level (requiring stronger leadership), regional level (community level efforts for supportive policies, regulatory framework, etc.), and at the people level (youth, civic society, industry, academic and other stakeholders driving the necessary changes at their respective levels).

Sustainable Development implies a pattern of “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. When this was identified as a framework to measure the performance and effectiveness of the production systems, the concept garnered a lot of attention and discussion. It is very much evident now that economic development can no longer be viewed in isolation from environmental protections and social progress. Otherwise, previously, in order to progress and lead the world, the western economies followed a myopic approach resulting in aggressive exploitation of the existing resources at the cost of the welfare

of future generations. The eastern economies also sought to achieve a high degree of growth by aping the western model of development. Like their western counterparts, they have indiscriminately exploited Planet Earth and increasingly undermining Life at large. To challenge the pervasive suicidal development, any useful idea must be utilized, including the ideals from ancient Indian culture. The Traditional Indian Wisdom stems from a wide view of the world that deems human life as a part of the entire ecosphere. Its adherent has been practicing and preaching the well-being of all the inmates of the single nest, i.e. world (यत्र विश्वम् भवति एकं निडम्). “Hence, they believed that man’s life should not be corrupted by self-interest, cut-throat competition and activities of any kind that produce ill-fare” (Balachandran, 2011). “Moderate consumption is a source of pleasure. As a result, the enormous trade activity coupled with the natural resources of the country made India then very wealthy” (Majumdar, 1977).

It has been believed that a panacea for all these issues is to follow a spiritual course of sustainable development with a collective approach to protect the environment, ecosystem, society and the interest of future generations. But there is hardly any shift in the attitude of the business leaders: the world economy is driven by the fear of putting the growth process in reverse gear, without realizing that their actions are making the planet completely unfit for living. The adverse effects on the environment are posing a grave threat to the very existence of humankind.

According to Ancient Indian scriptures, the concept of Sustainable Development stands for Dharma which includes means and ends both. It not only elucidates the moral, economical, and sociological duties of a person living in a society but also has deeper spiritual connotations as well. Thus, it could be understood as the way of life prescribed and practiced by ancient Indian wisdom. Dharma aims to develop spiritual fellowship with all living and non-living beings of this universe (Sundareswaran, 2015).

Besides the Vedic discourse, the centuries-old traditions of Buddhism and Jainism also talk about ecological harmony and sustainability ideals. As moral obligations, the beliefs direct one to make attempts to integrate spiritual and bodily activities. They consider the cosmos to be one entity, that is, every

component of the man-environment connection has a divine origin.

“Let there be peace in the heavens, the Earth, the atmosphere, the water, the herbs, and the vegetation, among the divine beings and in Brahman, the absolute reality. Let everything be at peace and in peace. Only then will we find peace.” Atharva Veda

## **Western Philosophy on Environmental Ethics**

Although there are different views of environmental perspectives of Greek philosophers, mostly they have been criticized by environmental thinkers for holding the view that puts nature at the disposal of people. Ancient civilizations have not suffered environmental crises at least not in the way that we face today. Thus, most ecocentric literature came from the industrial revolution and its after-effects as it was only after modernity that the damage to the environment intensified. Though it is plausible to believe that humans are the only organisms on Earth capable of rational decision-making, this knowledge has served to validate and define an anthropocentric approach to environmental ethics. Most western philosophies are ‘human centered’ (anthropocentric), that is it regarded “humankind as the central or most important element of existence, especially as opposed to God, nature or animals”. For example, Aristotle in his book *Politics* apparently upholds the view that “nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man” encouraging the belief that the value of non-human things in nature is merely instrumental (Brennan, Andrew and Norva, 2021), i.e. nature is simply a means to serve the needs of humans.

“In like manner we may infer that, after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not all, at least the greater part of them, for food, and for the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now, if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man.” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1256b, 15-22)

“He (Plato) is concerned with the land as essential for satisfying our basic human needs. Consequently, he has a significant albeit anthropocentric concern

with the preservation of the land as a resource for human goods that are needed for a thriving social and political community.” (Stone, 2018)

Human beings played a central role in the Persian myths whereas Greek mythology is inhabited by beings having supernatural powers. Despite divinity being the focal point in both myths, and it is their will that matters the most, none of them support the ecocentric viewpoint. Nature is respected to the extent it serves the purpose of (im)mortals (thunderbolt, volcanos, rain, etc. acting as armor to gods) or sustains human beings (animals being domesticated and bred by humans). It is very much evident in the incident of Prometheus tricking Zeus over his share of sacrifice or the black serpent in the Persian myth getting killed by the king as it was seen as the embodiment of terror and evil, and that is why the serpent had to be killed.

## **Eastern Philosophy Perspective on Environmental Ethics**

The Chinese philosophy of Taoism (Daoism) follows the principles of nature and emphasizes the need for respect and protection of nature in pursuit of harmony between man and nature. Taoism advocates for a society that is more cooperative and less competitive, thereby minimizing the adverse impact on the environment. Even the ongoing focus of China on renewable energy projects and pollution control is hinted at the resurgence of Taoist philosophy.

Founded by Siddharth Gautama also known as Lord Buddha, Buddhism believed in compassion, respect for all living creatures, and harmonious existence of all living and non-living beings. Given the present-day concerns, Buddhism is even seen as ‘eco-friendly’ religion. From a Buddhist perspective, avarice and insatiable need of people are the root causes of environmental concerns. Therefore, Buddhism realizes that for the protection of the environment, special attention needs to be paid to the psychological dimension of human nature.

Confucianism is believed to be one of the primary social norms of ancient and modern China and incorporates various ecological concepts, namely ‘humanism’, ‘integration of man and nature, and ‘sustainable development. It is considered that the ecological concept of Confucius, “morality and

profit” and “worshipping the mean and valuing the harmony” (Jenkins 2002; Li, Jin, and Tang 2012; Chen and Bu 2019) has the ability to influence people, societies, industries, rules and regulations to actively protect the environment. It advocates the connection between humanity and heaven, thereby suggesting ethical human activity for the harmonious existence of all living beings on earth.

### Gleaming of Sustainability in Ramayana

The Indian attitude to nature differs from its western counterpart in viewing human existence as merely one part of the universe, rather than considering it the supreme element in nature (Ray, 1996). The extensive literary and philosophical works of early India are a treasure trove of ideas for comprehending India's approach toward the tight integration of human life in nature. The whole emphasis of Indian Vedic philosophy is a human and spiritual connection with nature. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and the Epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata have numerous instances of worshipping the divine nature. These scriptures contain some of the earliest messages of environmental protection, ecological balance and the necessity of ethical treatment of Mother Nature. There was hardly any pollution in Vedic times, still one finds shreds of evidence of environmental consciousness in *Manusmriti*, known to be the first written record on Hindu Law. Environmental laws of *Manusmriti*, formulated before 5000 BC highlight the foresightedness of the Vedic age Indians. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, a treatise on statecraft, which also includes ecological concerns, categorically states that “any person who sets fire to pasture lands, fields, yards prepared for threshing out grains, houses, forests of timber, or of elephants shall be thrown into the fire.” The Ancient Indian texts emphasize that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from their natural surroundings because the Earth has the same relationship with human beings as the mother has with her child. Human ties with nature were deeply felt in ancient times as humans never treated Mother Nature or Earth as hostile elements to be conquered or dominated. These scriptures teach humans to live in harmony with nature and realize that divinity prevails in all elements of nature. The Hindu view of life does not differentiate between the existence of living and non-living beings. The ancient Indian

scriptures time and again speak of norms for an ideal way of living wherein all kinds of living beings live together in blissful harmony. The two great epics – Mahabharata and Ramayana, viewed nature as the extension of the same consciousness.

The interaction between nature and human beings is quite evident throughout Ramayana. The very first incidence which forms the central metaphor of the epic poem begins with “A hunter kills one of the two birds in love and Valmiki curses the hunter”. This suggests the importance attached to the preservation of life in forests. None was entitled to kill any animal or bird unless it was absolutely necessary.

As stated in the epic, Ramayana, life on earth is governed by the five elements – Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Sky). Destruction of these elements or ecological systems in any form is not acceptable by the holy sage. For example, when the beautiful and everlasting hermitage of Rishi Vashisht is being destroyed by Vishwamitra, cursing him, Vashisht says:

आश्रमं चरिसंवृद्धं यदवनिशतिवानसि ।  
दुराचारो ऽसतिन्मूढ तस्मात्त्वं न भवषियसि ।  
न भवषियसीतनिशषियसीतयावत् ॥ 1.55.27 ॥

[O Fool this hermitage has been developed over a long time. Why did you destroy it? On account of your wickedness, you will not live long – Valmiki Ramayana developed and maintained by IIT Kanpur].

In another instance, when Kaushalya accuses Bharata of being the man behind the plot of banishing Rāma, he tries to convince Kaushalya about him knowing nothing about the banishment of his elder brother. He inflicts upon him a series of curses, one of the sins that he pronounces is the sin of polluting the drinking water:

पानीयदूषके पापम् तथैव विषदायके ।

यत्तदेकह स लभताम् यस्यार्यो अनुमते गतह ॥ 2.75.55 ॥

[May the sin of polluting drinking water and administering poison to others be put together and be incurred by the man who counseled the exile of my esteemed brother – Valmiki Ramayana developed and maintained by IIT Kanpur]



The first poet warns us that air pollution will cause the destruction of one and all. Thus, the world can never have the air element as we need to breathe the air every minute.

Apart from these, all kinds of vegetation, medicines, animals, birds, and other living and non-living beings are an integral and indivisible part of the environment. Ramayana is full of animal and bird characters – Hanuman, Sugreev, Jamvant and Jatayu, to name a few, who helped Rāma to fulfill his cause. It can be seen that even birds and animals will come to one's aid if they take the correct road; nevertheless, even one's kith and kin cannot help them if they choose the wrong path. It is also indicated in the ancient literature that people treated birds and animals with love, affection and care, and for a very good reason – humans can survive only while these non-human species exist. An example of one of these moments is when Maharishi Vālmiki imparts a message for the environment by highlighting the importance of cow protection:

एतदेव हि मे रत्नमेतदेव हि मे धनम्।  
एतदेव हि सिरस्वस्वमेतदेव हि जीवतिम्॥1.53.23॥  
दर्शश्च पूरणमासश्च यज्जाश्चैवाप्तदक्षिणाः।  
एतदेव हि मे राजन् विविधाश्च कर्षास्तथा॥1.53.24॥  
अदोमूलाः कर्षास्सर्वा मम राजन् संशयः।  
बहुना क्पि लपेन न दास्ये कामदोहनीम्॥1.53.25॥

[This is verily my jewel, my wealth my very life. This is all in all for me. O King verily this Sabala is useful for my Darsa and Purnamasa sacrifices, for appropriate gifts and various rites. O King this (cow) is undoubtedly the source of all my actions. Why these useless words? I will never give a wish-fulfilling cow – Valmiki Ramayana developed and maintained by IIT Kanpur]

Ramayana is inundated with several beautiful descriptions of ashrams, forests, animals, birds and other natural resources. Vālmiki's description portrays all the living beings existing in complete blissful harmony. One such instance is when Rāma, Sīta, and Lakshmana are leaving the abode of Sutikshna. The best of sages said:

सप्राज्यफलमूलानि पुष्पतिनि विनानि च।  
प्रशस्तमृगयूथानि शान्तपक्षिणानि च॥ 3.8.13॥  
फुल्लपङ्कजषण्डानि प्रसन्नसलिलानि च।

कारण्डवकीर्णानि तटाकानि सिरांसि च॥3.8.14॥  
दरक्ष्यसे दृष्टरिम्याण गिरिप्रसरवणानि च।  
रमणीयान्यरण्यानि भयूराभरितानि च॥3.8.15॥

[You will see the beautiful forest areas with abundant fruits and roots, flowers in full bloom, herds of animals, flocks of quiet birds, tanks and lakes filled with clean waters and shining with fully blossomed lotuses, resounding with water ducks and peacocks and waterfalls coming down the hills. Thus you will enjoy a delightful sylvan sight – Valmiki Rāmāyana developed and maintained by IIT Kanpur]

Upholding Dharma as a way of life in perfect unison with the cosmic rhythm, Vālmiki often sees nature as a human being. One of his descriptions of nature is:

रात्रिशिशिङ्कोदतिसौम्यवक्त्रा  
तारागणोन्मीलति चारुनेत्रा।  
ज्योत्स्नां शुक्लप्रावरणा वभिर्ता  
नारीव शुक्लांशुकसंवृताङ्गी॥4.30.46॥

[The night appears like a lady with a sweet face lit up by the rising Moon, her beautiful eyes opened up by stars, her body draped in the robe of white Moonlight – Valmiki Rāmāyana developed and maintained by IIT Kanpur]

This attraction towards plants, trees, forests, animals, birds, and other living and non-living beings narrated in Ramayana is nothing but spiritual consciousness that provides protection to all. The Ancient Indian texts emphasize that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from their natural surroundings because the Earth has the same relationship with human beings as the mother has with her child.

Ramayana highlights the need and importance of using pleasing worlds and melodious voices for interaction in all spheres of life. Even science has also certified that sweet music or pleasing sound purifies the environment. Our sage of ancient times had already realized the fact that the world is based on these enactments. Narrating the ecological foundation of the melodious tunes of the kavya, Valmiki says that the recitation of the epic in the streets and main roads was very pleasing to all hearts and ears. It gave long life and prosperity to the listeners.

अभगीतमदिं गीतं सर्वगीतेषु कोवदौ।  
 आयुष्यं पुष्टजिनकं सर्वशरुतमिनोहरम्॥1.4.22॥  
 प्रशस्यमानौ सर्वत्र कदाचित्तर गायकौ।  
 रथ्यासु राजमार्गेषु ददर्श भरताग्रजः॥1.4.23॥

[The two singers, proficient in all kinds of notes recited the epic in the streets and on the principal roads. It was pleasing to hear for all. It gave long life and prosperity to the listeners. People admired them. Once Rāma happened to see them – Valmiki Rāmāyana was developed and maintained by IIT Kanpur]

ह्लादयत्सर्वगात्राणि मनांसि हृदयानचि।  
 श्रोत्राश्रयसुखं गेयं तदबभौ जनसंसदि॥1.4.29॥

[The chanting of the kavya in the assembly of men comforted the sense of hearing. The listeners rejoiced in their mind, heart and whole being.]

Thus, signifying the effect of noise on the environment, physical, mental, and spiritual health of people.

The incident of bridge construction is very much indicative of environmental protection.

एतद्वनिपि ह्युदधेस्तवारय।  
 सम्पत्स्यते वीरतमस्य कारयम्।  
 भवद्वधिः क्रोधवशम् न यान्ति।  
 दीर्घम् भवान्पश्यतु साधुवृत्तम्॥ 6.21.34॥

[Calming the terrifying Rāma, when he was about to dry the complete ocean, Lakshmana stops and suggests him seek some other alternative to reach Lanka which can keep benefiting the coming generations for centuries.]

The poet educates us to plant trees all around our homes which will in turn provide clean and fresh air, and also various kinds of fruits and flowers. An example of this environmental consciousness is presented in a number of descriptions of the city Ayodhya and how it is surrounded by beautiful gardens and fruits. Mention of dam construction and digging of wells in water-scarce areas presents an example of environment consciousness in the Rāmāyana:

अचरिण एव कालेन परविहान् बहु उदकान्।  
 चक्रुर् बहु वधि आकारान् सागर प्रतमिन् बहून्  
 ॥2.80.11॥

नरिजलेषु च देशेषु खानयामासुरुत्तमान्।  
 उदपानान् बहुवधिन् वेदकि परमिण्डितान्॥2.80.12॥

[In a short span of time many water reservoirs of various shapes and sizes with plenty of water resembling seas were built. In water-scarce areas, excellent good drinking water wells were dug with decorated platforms all around.]

At another instance the great poet describes the Mountain Everest:

प्रकृत्या हमिकोशादयो दूरसूर्यश्च साम्प्रतम्।  
 यथार्थनामा सुव्यक्तं हमिवान्हमिवान्गरि॥3.16.9॥

[Presently distanced from the Sun, the Himalayas abounding in the snow has naturally justified its name.]

The Everest abounding in snow keeps the rivers plentiful with water throughout the year. Though, there was no such issue of environmental degradation in those times, still, the mention of this in the scripture shows the visionary and practical approach of the Sagacious Vālmiki. Natural resources like mountains and rivers – Ganga, Yamuna and Sarayu, to name a few, were treated with so much respect in those times, in contrast to how we pollute them by dumping waste. Therefore, in order to run the world smoothly, each of us is urged to polish our own ecological consciousness to sustain the natural dynamics. This is especially true because disturbing any one element typically leads to the disturbance of the other elements.

## Hanumān: The Monkey God

Hanumān or Mahāvīra having been born to Vayu (the wind God) and Anjana (a celestial nymph) is an embodiment of nature in himself. He is the wise, intellectual and resourceful monkey who helped Rāma in the battle against Rāvana to rescue Sīta. Rāmāyana contains glowing accounts of Hanumān's exploits, but it always pictures the monkey as a devoted servant of Rāma, motivated and empowered by the fixity of his love for Rāma (Wolcott 1978). The

importance and sacredness that has been attached to Hanuman are attributed to the role that he along with his monkey army played as allies to Lord Rāma and for his *anant bhakti* towards Rāma. Even today, monkeys are treated as incarnations of Hanuman, and there are numerous temples dedicated to Lord Hanumān all over India. The reason for any reverence to Hanumān is attributed to his adoring devotion to Rāma, and the power that he draws from Rāma *bhakti* which is very much evident from the following excerpt:

कपि तव दरस सकल दुख बीते। मिले आजु मोहि राम पिरिते॥ 7.2.6॥

[At your sight, O Hanuman, all my woes have disappeared. In you I have embraced today my beloved Rāma Himself.]

## Prakriti and Purusha: Essential Aspects of Rāmāyana

Sīta appears in Rāmāyana as the manifestation of nature, and Rāma as mankind. The coming together of Prakriti and Purusha leads to the creation of the universe, and the necessary tattvas (the elements or aspects of reality that constitute human experience) for its creation. While their union depicts bliss, perfection, respect for each other, balance, and harmony, this happy moment is overpowered by the other, which features chaos, unhappiness and destruction happen. Rāma (mankind) is always unhappy when he is separated from Sīta (nature), either because of Rāvana or his subjects.

Sīta emerged from the earth and returned to the earth. While living many parts of her life in the forest, Sīta was most comfortable when she was in close proximity to nature. She spent most of her married life in the forest – while on exile, being captive she lived in Ashokavatika. Procreation is the best gift, she even gave birth to her children in the forest.

Prasanna (2019) in his book, *Mool Rāmāyana*, depicts Sīta and Rāmāyana as metaphors for Prakriti (nature) and Purusha (mankind). According to him, “Rāmāyana tells us that both man-woman and Prakriti-Purusha should strive to live in harmony despite the many obstacles they face. Calling Rāmāyana a cautionary tale as this is what happens when Prakriti and Purusha are separated, he advocates for integrating living with nature to

fight climate change. He further adds, “Rāmāyana operates in metaphors. Rāma fights Rāvana, who separates Prakriti-Purusha with a green army – with monkeys, a bear, an eagle, mountains, rivers, and the sea acting as friends”.

## Conclusion

In today’s era, forests, many trees and animals are unsafe. Escalating deforestation is being done to meet the expanded agricultural land and lumber needed to sustain the housing need of the increasing population. Many species of birds and animals are becoming extinct as anthropogenic global warming and climate change are causing unprecedented extreme weather. While looking at western thinkers, one realizes that western philosophies are not only inadequate to protect nature but rather aid in the destruction of nature. Environmental ethicists have even argued that western philosophies have shaped the thinking process with the teaching that human beings are superior to nature, and hence, nature is at the disposal of human needs. As per the present model of development that is still upheld in most areas of the world, humans are kept at the center of development in spite of the fact that Homo sapiens is only one species among millions of life forms whose survival has allowed its emergence.

In such difficult times, Vālmīki Rāmāyana paves the way to solve our environmental problems through the beautiful and simplest guidelines of protecting the forests, trees and animals.

Indian Scriptures are replete with rites and rituals that ensure compliance with the preservation and protection of different manifestations of nature. They emphasize the need for an approach that is balanced and justified. “A balance has to be struck between spiritual and materialistic values, between greed and compassion, between self-restraint and self-indulgence, and between violence and peace” (Sharma and Tewari 2017). Thus, Vālmīki’s Rāmāyana provides scientific and practical solutions to environmental and ecological issues.

The seed of sustainability can only be planted in the hearts of people through a proper education system. “A basic training in philosophy, ethics, economics and political science was considered indispensable” (Ghoshal, 1962). This training should be imparted in

such a way that each one strives hard for their inner evolution and develops an awareness of ecological wholeness. A sustainable human community is one that has learned to live as a part of the ecosphere, and these scriptures, like that of Rāmāyana can help us evolve from the business-as-usual of the modern world which leads us to prioritize Self – oneself, our own family, own country, own species – instead of finding Self in the context of the greater wholeness.

It is high time for India to choose a path of development, as she has yet not chosen, one that is her own and at the same time unique and universal in approach. If India can adopt a path tailoring it to her needs and is sustainable, it will open up new vistas and inspire the world to follow it for their own benefits.

This paper advocates that revolution in consciousness, or rather restoration of Indian spiritual tradition is needed to tackle environmental crisis. Through rituals and prayers, it has long been established in Indian culture that our relationship with earth is not only physical but also spiritual. More than any time in the past, today's escalating ecological crisis seems to be calling for the urgent rise in human consciousness representing the urgent evolution in our inner commitment.

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## HBR's 10 Must Reads: The Definitive Management ideas of the Year From Harvard Business Review

Anuj Aggarwal\*



The book begins with the bonus article **“Begin with Trust”**, written by Frances Frei and Anne Morriss. The two eminent authors have strongly emphasized and accentuated the need for inculcating trust in the organization among all stakeholders. Trust is initial and foundational to practicing ‘Empowerment Leadership’ that is unlike traditional leadership which only focusses on leader’s talents or charisma, instead this form of leadership necessitates and entails creating the conditions for people to feel empowered and fully realize their own potential. According to Frei and Morriss, there are three core drivers of trust such as authenticity, logic and empathy, lacking in any one of them will create a “trust wobble” which will serve as a hindrance in the achievement of long-term organizational goals.

The first article titled **“Cultural Innovation”** written by Douglas Holt is a cautionary tale for the dominant incumbents (Coca-Cola, Proctor & Gamble, Nestle Purina) in the market place as their deeply ingrained and entrenched brand authority is challenged by the new breed of “cultural innovators” (Blue Buffalo, Ford Explorer) as they have failed to formulate a strategy on how to respond to these emerging threats. The author spells out in detail the innovation paradigm practiced by established players, known as *better mousetraps*, which is based on improving the functionality, reliability, convenience or user experience of the products or line extensions offered by the existing firms. The author debates that in the long run, the new competitors will likely outsmart the old incumbents as they are driven by qualitative ambitions instead of quantitative metrics. In 1995, the great American academician and business consultant, Clayton Christensen coined the term “disruptive innovation” which aligns well with the strategic objectives of “cultural vanguards” who are

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able to redefine the notions of value and transform the value proposition.

The next article entitled **“The Rules of Co-opetition”** written by Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff underscored the need to develop a flexible mindset which calls for exploiting new opportunities through cooperative arrangements with industry peers who otherwise would only be seen as rivals and competitors. The authors have formulated a practical framework to guide the thought process of firms or governments to help them determine if cooperating with competitors is in the best interest of their long-term organizational goals. Further, the authors have outlined four categories in which the deal could fall, should the organization decide to move ahead with cooperation after weighing the potential risks and returns: Firstly, if the two rivals have nothing special but their combination could add substantial value, for instance, Apple and Google decided to cooperate with each other to create contact-tracing technology for Covid-19. Secondly, if the two rivals have something special, which they could combine, to get far ahead of their other rivals, for instance, Ford and GM decided to share their transmission technologies which saved both money, allowed their engineers to work on next-generation EV's. Thirdly, if a particular rival has a competitive advantage and sharing it will increase it even further, for instance, Amazon allowed its competitors to access its customers and warehouses through Amazon Marketplace, which made it almost indispensable for e-commerce. Fourthly, if one party shares its value proposition with the rival, only to reach its customer base, for instance, Google agreed to do an ad-placement for Yahoo in 2008 that allowed search-engine giant generate revenues and reach to an entirely new customer base.

The third article titled **“Negotiating Your Next Job”** written by Hannah Riley Bowles and Bobbi Thomason, encourages professionals to think strategically during their career negotiations with the employer. A successful career negotiation goes way beyond asking for higher pay or benefits, instead it encompasses demanding broader scope of authority, developmental opportunities, flexible work arrangements etc. The authors draw on organizational research conducted at the global level to offer four steps to prepare for career negotiation;

Firstly, one should negotiate keeping in mind long-term goals in order to fulfill both professional and life aspirations; Secondly, one must have clarity about the substance of negotiation and accordingly design an argument, for instance, an employee could either demand a standard increment/promotion or something that defies the organizational norm or literally reshaping the organizational environment; Thirdly, one must be armed with the maximum amount of information instead of walking blind into the career negotiation to generate desirable outcomes; Fourthly, it's critical to build a “coalition of support” with the key stakeholders to be able to enhance your negotiation through relationships.

The next article authorized **“Leading Through Anxiety”** written by Morra Aarons-Mele adds to the discussion around anxiety in the workplace and how we can effectively deal with this new variant of ‘global pandemic’ during uncertain times. She argues that anxiety is not always counterproductive, instead if directed meaningfully, it can make better leaders, make our teams more productive and allow us to respond promptly to threats, but if unchecked, it can drain our energy, weaken our resolve and drive us to make bad decisions. The article suggests a compelling prescription for organizational leaders on how to lead during nervous and turbulent times and lift the employee morale even though livelihoods are in jeopardy. It advises leaders to avoid use of negative language, taking erratic actions, displaying emotional volatility, being pessimistic or selfish in times of enormous distress as it might accidentally trigger anxiety in the workforce.

The fifth article entitled **“When Machine Learning Goes Off the Rails”** written by Boris Babic, I. Glenn Cohen, Theodoros Evgeniou and Sara Gerke sheds light on the potential downsides of the machine-learning, based AI offerings, across industries with special focus on healthcare sector. The authors argue that the difference between machine learning and other digital technologies that preceded the rise of ML, is its ability to independently make complex decisions and continually adapt with the booster of new data. As the usage of machine-learning based tools proliferate, the likelihood of errors, biases, losses etc., in the decision-making also increase due to a range of factors: firstly, ML based systems arrive at decisions based on estimated probabilities which

may lack accuracy; secondly, the environment in which algorithms were developed may vary from the environment in which ML based tool is operating; thirdly, the sheer complexity of the systems in which its embedded may lead to inaccurate decisions. Further, the authors offer a guide to corporate executives on how to manage and mitigate the current and emerging risks of deploying machine learning tools & processes and formulate appropriate practices to address these risks.

The next article **“Getting Serious About Diversity”** written by Robin J. Ely and David A. Thomas makes an empirically robust case for promoting gender and racial diversity in the modern corporate workplaces. The authors claim that today’s business leaders have largely ignored the abundant research done on how ‘diversity’ could add substantial value to reshape organizational culture and boosts its effectiveness, instead, they are articulating an unsubstantiated version of the business case, which believes that by increasing the representation of traditionally under-represented social groups would automatically yield results. The article builds a credible and powerful case for organizations to pursue the “learning and effectiveness” paradigm that entails cultivating learning orientation towards diversity and harnessing it to the fullest extent possible to maximize firm’s profitability. This approach calls for building trust, creating psychologically safe workplace, install systems to combat discrimination and marginalization, embracing wide range of views & styles and drawing on cultural differences to increase organizational learning.

The seventh article titled **“How to Promote Racial Equity in the Workplace”** written by Robert Livingston is a sincere effort to spell out an important issue which organizations often relegate it to the back burner as it’s deemed intractable. The author argues that with the right mix of investment, information and incentive; racial equity is an achievable ideal if organizations are willing to do the hard work to revise institutional policies & practices, rethink cultural norms and create an inclusive environment to effect change in people’s attitudes towards race. The author has designed a five-stage model to promote racial equity, which he calls it as ‘PRESS’ i.e. Problem Awareness (generating awareness about the problem in corporate workplaces); Root-

cause Analysis (understanding the reasons why the problem exists); Empathy (instilling empathy instead of sympathy among white community folks to create genuine concern for the people of color); Strategy (meaningful organizational interventions on the individual, cultural and institutional fronts); Sacrifice (investing time, effort & resources to push for real progress).

The next article titled **“Our Work-from-Anywhere Future”** written by Prithwiraj (Raj) Choudhury highlights the pros and cons of ‘work from anywhere’ (WFA) culture that has become an intrinsic part of knowledge-based organizations in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic. The author points out notable benefits of remote working to individuals (geographic flexibility, lessens commuting time, better work-life balance); companies (reduction of real-estate costs, tapping global talent pool with ease, productivity gains) and society as a whole (in terms of less pollution and brain-drain), while also red-flag concerns emanating from the increasing adoption of all-remote or majority-remote work practices by top corporate brands such as TCS, Facebook, Twitter, Siemens, SBI, Shopify etc. The challenges of implementing ‘WFA’ are enormous as it forces organizations to rely upon asynchronous communications across time zones, socially isolate workers, makes performance evaluation and compensation negotiations difficult, may potentially undermine clients’ data and create regulatory hurdles for the firms.

The ninth article entitled **“A More Sustainable Supply Chain”** written by Veronica H. Villena and Dennis A. Gioia has brought to light the sheer disconnect between the MNC’s expectations from their suppliers in terms of adhering to the sustainability standards and the reality through their supply networks. The authors argue that despite the commitment of MNC’s to procure materials and services from suppliers who implement sustainability practices, the lack of compliance on the part of their first-tier and lower-tier suppliers, exposes them to serious social, financial and environmental risks. The two authors have studied three MNC’s who are deemed as “Sustainability leaders”, they found a series of best practices that enable them to climb the sustainability ladder, while also discovered how difficult it is to enforce standards.

The last article titled **“How Apple Is Organized for Innovation”** written by Joel M. Podolny and Morten T. Hansen outlines the broad contours of Apple’s organizational design and leadership model which could be a useful guide for other companies competing in the rapidly changing globalized environments. The conventional organizational theory suggests that as entrepreneurial firms grow in size and scope, they must shift from a functional to a multidivisional structure, but Apple defied the norm, and CEO Steve Jobs put the entire company under one P&L by combining the different departments of business units into a single functional organization. The functional structure continues even till today when Apple is far more complex and 40 times large in revenue terms as compared to 1998. Further, Jobs laid down the three leadership characteristics that must be possessed by Apple’s managers at all levels: deep expertise to meaningfully engage, immersion in the details and collaborative debate during collective decision making.

The book triumphs in putting across relevant and contemporary ideas related to all branches of management, which serves as an effective guide for corporate leaders, business managers, policy makers and researchers.