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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Conscious Leadership for Modern Complexity**

**Jimmy Jain<sup>1</sup> and Vishwantra Sharma<sup>2</sup> ✉**

<sup>1</sup>*CEO of Square Sequel Consulting Pvt. Ltd., Thane and India*

<sup>2</sup>*Consultant at Square Sequel Consulting Pvt. Ltd., Thane and India*

**Corresponding Author:** Vishwantra Sharma, **E-mail:** [vishwantrasharma07@gmail.com](mailto:vishwantrasharma07@gmail.com)

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**| ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we aim to discuss the essence of the concept of conscious leadership, highlighting the necessity as well as the relevance of engaging in conscious leadership as a way of addressing the modern business environment. Conscious leadership is introduced as the set of key concepts and features that are relevant to leadership today, supported by historical knowledge and modern findings. Atma Bodha (self-knowledge), Atma Chintan (self-contemplation), and Atma Manthan (self-churning) are essential components, as are the 7 A's of conscious leadership: awake, aware, alive, alert, adaptable, accountable, and authentic. Reflective questions (RQs) serve as powerful tools for self-discovery, introspection, and critical thinking, leading to significant growth both personally and professionally. The study shows that conscious leadership promotes personal development, ethical decision-making, and collaborative teamwork. By embracing proactivity, problem-solving, and conflict management, leaders can effectively navigate challenges in today's business environment, leading to positive long-term organizational outcomes. Thus, this paper contributes to the construction of more enhanced leadership programs by establishing a clear outline of the path of conscious leadership.

**| KEYWORDS**

Leadership, Consciousness, Self Knowledge, Mindfulness, Awareness

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### **1. Introduction**

In the rapidly evolving business environment of the 21st Century, leadership has undergone a significant transformation. Previously, leadership studies prioritized the importance of visionary qualities, where leaders were celebrated for their ability to foresee and articulate a compelling future. However, with globalization, markets become more volatile and interconnected, and now the focus has shifted towards the leader's ability to execute strategy effectively. Leadership involves motivating individuals to work collaboratively towards common organizational objectives. However, the relationship between a leader's level of involvement and effectiveness in achieving goals is multifaceted and nuanced. The success or failure of a leader has a profound impact on the organization's decision-making process, projects, culture, and employee commitment. Ineffective leadership can significantly increase the risk of organizational failure. This complexity brings out the necessity of exploring different leadership styles and their efficacy in various organizational contexts.

The Bhagavad Gita is a key text in Hindu philosophy and an excellent guide for leaders. It provides timeless wisdom that crosses religious barriers while also providing significant insights into effective leadership practices. The leadership approach discussed in Bhagavad Gita can be considered a holistic approach as it focuses on integrating various aspects of leadership to create a well-balanced framework that meets the expectations of the organization as a whole. The Bhagavad Gita places a strong emphasis on the concept of dharma or duty. Leaders are encouraged to perform their duties with dedication and without considering the outcome. Leaders who focus on the process rather than the outcome may foster a more resilient and proactive work force. The Bhagavad

Gita promotes selflessness and sacrifice, urging leaders to prioritize the welfare of others over personal gain. This principle helps in fostering a supportive and collaborative organizational culture. The Bhagavad Gita also teaches to maintain composure in the face of success and setbacks. Leaders are advised to maintain a calm and steady approach in all circumstances. Leaders who exhibit equanimity are equipped to handle the pressures of modern business. Leading by example is another key aspect of Bhagavad Gita. Leaders exemplify the values and behaviors they expect from others. The Bhagavad Gita underscores the importance of wisdom and discernment in leadership. Leaders make informed decisions by knowing the big picture and anticipating the effects of their decisions. In today's complex business environment, leaders need to cultivate critical thinking and strategic foresight, which is done by continuous learning, seeking diverse perspectives, and making decisions that align with ethical standards and long-term goals. Furthermore, the Bhagavad Gita emphasized spiritual awareness as a vital aspect of leadership. Integrating spiritual awareness into leadership can enhance emotional intelligence, empathy, and holistic growth.

In addition to these principles, the concept of conscious leadership has emerged as a crucial framework in modern leadership studies. Conscious leadership emphasizes self-awareness, ethical behavior, and a deep understanding of one's impact on others. Conscious leaders aim to establish trustful, collaborative, and long-lasting environments by incorporating mindfulness with a purpose to ensure that leaders lead with integrity, compassion, and vision. Conscious leadership covers both the practical and personal development components of leadership.

In the next section of this paper, we discuss various types of leadership. This review will explore how different leadership styles, including transformational, servant, and others, contribute to effective leadership in contemporary organizations.

## 2. Literature Review

Leadership has been a central topic of scholarly research, evolving from early theoretical frameworks to modern model that address the complexities of today's organizational environments. This literature review systematically examines the trajectory of leadership studies, charting their progression from foundational theories to the most recent advancements. The evolution of leadership theories from the 19th to the mid-20th century reflects a growing knowledge of the multifaceted nature of leadership. The Great Man Theory of the nineteenth century, developed by Carlyle [1841], stated that some people are born to lead due to inherent attributes. This theory, while commonly viewed as outdated, laid down the foundation for subsequent concepts by stressing inherent traits in leaders. In the early 20th century, Trait Theory built on this premise, suggesting that specific personality traits such as confidence, intelligence, and perseverance predict leadership success. Stogdill's [2024] research underscored these traits but faced criticism for neglecting situational factors influencing leadership effectiveness. A significant shift occurred in the mid-20th century with the rise of Behavioral Theories, which proposed that leadership is a collection of learned actions rather than an inborn trait. This perspective democratized leadership potential, suggesting that anyone could develop into a leader through the adoption of effective behaviors. Notable studies, including those conducted at Ohio State and Michigan, have identified significant leadership qualities like consideration for one's team and the ability to initiate structure within the workplace. Hemphill and Coons [1957] stated that behavioral theories addressed the transformative potential of acquired leadership behaviors and emphasized that leadership is a skill that can be learnt rather than a quality that is exclusive to a small group of people. By highlighting the significance of context in determining leadership success, Contingency and Situational Theories marked a notable shift from the prevalent "one-size-fits-all" perspective. Fiedler argued that a leader's effectiveness depends on how well their leadership style fits the particular circumstance. According to Fiedler [1967] and Hersey and Blanchard [1969], leaders must be adaptable to varied conditions, underscoring the complexity and diversity of their roles.

The concept of Transformational Leadership was first introduced by Burns [1978] and then refined by Bass [1985]. It centers on leaders who inspire and encourage their subordinates to reach bigger goals. On the other hand, incentives and trades are the foundation of transactional leadership. According to Florek-Paszkowska and Hoyos-Vallejo [2023], transformational leadership is a style of leadership in which a leader motivates and inspires people to accomplish exceptional outcomes. Another significant development is Servant Leadership, introduced by Greenleaf [1970]. This approach underscores leaders prioritizing the growth and needs of their followers, with a focus on empowering team members and cultivating a culture of service and empowerment. Servant Leadership has gained recognition for its capacity to nurture highly motivated and dedicated teams.

Authentic leadership has been more prominent in recent decades in the ongoing research of effective leadership. This theory, advocated by George [2003] and further developed by Avolio and Gardner [2005], underscores the importance of self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behavior in leaders. It highlights how important it is for leaders to stay true to who they are and what they stand for, fostering cooperation and trust among team members and building a strong basis for success. Further research by Wang et al. [2022] highlights the positive impact of authentic leadership on team creativity, suggesting that leaders who promote open communication and psychological safety create environments conducive to innovation. The emphasis on ethical behavior includes ethical and moral leadership as well. Ethical and moral leadership goes beyond simply avoiding misconduct. It focuses on the leader's core values and emphasizes their responsibility to society as a whole. Palazzo et al. [2021] introduced the

concept of “responsible leadership,” which emphasizes ethical decision-making that considers the impact on stakeholders and society as a whole. This growing emphasis on integrity in leadership reflects the importance of both achieving positive societal impact and organizational success.

In the face of ever-changing environments and complex challenges, adaptive leadership has emerged as a powerful approach. This idea, developed by Heifetz et al. [2009], focuses on a leader’s capacity to adapt and respond successfully to unexpected situations. A recent study by Hertel et al. [2024] exemplifies this concept, examining how adaptive leadership plays a crucial role in crisis management. Their research underscores the importance of leaders who can adjust their strategies and effectively navigate challenging situations. Complexity leadership theory utilizes an approach that focuses on leading within complex adaptive systems. Farjaria et al. [2023] provide a practical example, showcasing how complexity leadership theory can be applied in healthcare organizations. Purposeful leadership, which focuses on inspiring and guiding teams towards a common goal rather than personal gain, has gained popularity in recent years CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) [2023]. This approach focuses on creating a positive impact and meaning within organizations. According to research, purposeful leadership may increase employee engagement and motivation EY [2023]. After exploring the significance and effectiveness of various leadership approaches, such as inspiring and guiding teams toward shared goals, fostering trust and collaboration, and promoting ethical decision-making, it is evident that the conversation naturally transitions to the critical importance of a leadership style that integrates all these aspects in today’s organizational settings. In the following section, we will address how the requirement for conscious leadership, which integrates these elements, fosters leaders who are not only effective but also deeply aware and ethically grounded.

### **3. Need for Conscious Leadership**

The need for conscious leadership arises from the evolving demands and challenges of the modern world. Conscious leadership extends beyond profit-driven motives to consider the broader societal and environmental impacts of business decisions. Addressing the gaps in conscious leadership research is crucial for leaders and organizations to fully grasp and implement this leadership style effectively. This study explores the understanding and application of conscious leadership, concentrating on the process of cultivating conscious awareness and using it purposefully in social and emotional ways in different situations. Heifetz and Linsky [2002] suggest that tackling these gaps empowers leaders to navigate complex situations, drive sustainable success, and positively impact their organizations and the broader community. Walumbwa et al. [2008] emphasize the crucial role of heightened consciousness and self-awareness for leaders striving for excellence in this paradigm. Uhl-Bien et al. [2007] argue that understanding how conscious leaders cultivate their awareness and implement it in practice will aid in crafting more efficient leadership development programs, thereby benefiting organizations dealing with the complexities of the modern business environment.

By examining the developmental journey of conscious leaders, this study aims to uncover patterns and practices that can be replicated and scaled to foster conscious leadership. Such insights are crucial for addressing the leadership challenges posed by today’s VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) business environment. Understanding how conscious leaders develop their awareness and apply it in practice will contribute to creating more effective leadership development programs, ultimately benefiting organizations navigating the complexities of the modern business landscape. Cultivating conscious leadership requires embracing a holistic approach that nurtures different types of intelligence. Emotional intelligence helps leaders develop empathy and self-awareness, allowing them to connect with their teams on a deeper, more personal level. Spiritual intelligence encourages reflection on life’s bigger questions, bringing a sense of purpose and ethical consideration into decision-making. Physical intelligence highlights the importance of health and well-being, ensuring leaders have the stamina and resilience to meet their responsibilities. Financial intelligence hones the ability to make wise economic choices that benefit both the organization and the wider community. Finally, networking intelligence enhances the ability to forge and maintain meaningful relationships that drive collective success.

### **4. Conscious Leadership**

Based on Jones [2012], conscious leaders encourage teamwork and partnership while sharing accountability and solving issues with their teams – a characteristic that can be referred to as “participative.” As Marincic and Maric [2018] have also noted, this focus on inner development contributes to the creation of a foundation that is built upon self-actualization, which could be described as a form of cultivation of knowledge to make a positive difference in the world. VUCA World [2017] postulates that conscious leaders do not run away from complications; they use both the heart and the mind, which contradicts traditional/binary models. In addition to the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) framework, the BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible) concept contributes to our understanding of the current challenges that leaders face. By integrating the VUCA and BANI models into conscious leadership, leaders can establish a solid foundation for addressing contemporary leadership challenges. This integration allows volatility and brittleness to be managed by fostering adaptability and resilience, while uncertainty and anxiety are addressed by cultivating a positive organizational culture where team members feel safe to express concerns and ideas. Additionally, systems thinking and complexity can be utilized positively, transforming ambiguity and incomprehensibility into opportunities where team members feel safe to express concerns and ideas. In this context, a conscious leader tackles

organizational problems with efficacy and integrity, aiming to make informed and ethical decisions that consider long-term impacts and interconnectedness that transform both their organizations and society.

Conscious Leadership is a leadership approach that integrates awakening of one-self, fostering empathy, compassion, feeling alive, and a deep sense of authenticity and accountability. It involves a deep understanding of one's own values, beliefs, and actions, as well as the impact they have on others and the organization. Conscious Leaders strive for personal and professional growth, aiming to create a Culture of collaboration, promote ethical decision making, and benefit all stakeholders. Conscious Leaders create a positive and inclusive work culture that fosters open communication, collaboration, and innovation. Leading with awareness, purpose, and integrity is the essence of conscious leadership. Making decisions that are not only profitable but also morally and environmentally sound requires awareness of how one's actions affect other people and the environment. In the rapidly evolving world of today, this kind of leadership is not only desirable but absolutely necessary. Renesch [2002] lays the groundwork for a practical understanding of conscious leadership, describing it as initially cultivating internal conscious awareness, which is then translated into intentional action. Scharmer [2018] proposes a framework emphasizing the integration of self-awareness, intuition, and systems thinking into leadership practice. According to Klopčič [2009], conscious leadership is not just about efficiency but about vocation and mission in an organization, taking full responsibility for an organization's development and outcomes. Potter et al. [2024] define conscious leadership as leadership that differs from other styles focuses further, promotes personal growth, understands the needs of others, and uses ethical reasoning. Conscious business leaders have the opportunity to leverage their influential positions to create positive reactions in the global network of relationships. Business executives should prioritize learning about and utilizing a moral framework that supports the growth of capitalism and promotes societal interests.

#### 4.1 Three Cornerstones of Conscious Leadership

Conscious leadership is an approach that covers the moral level, personal awareness, and empathy for others. This method is founded on the self-understanding and realization that comes in terms like **Atma Bodha** (enlightenment of the Self), **Atma Chintan** (introspection of the Self), and **Atma Manthan** (churning of the Self), cornerstones of Conscious leadership. All these values assist the leaders to be awakened, aware, alive, alert, adaptable, responsive, and genuine in responding to the call to enlightenment, understanding, and efficiency. In the field of leadership development, several studies have pointed out the importance of adopting ancient knowledge and practicing mindfulness. Mittal & Mittal [2012] point out how the Indian ancient legacy may help leadership, especially when focusing on self-knowledge, which is promoted by Advaita Vedanta. Kabat-Zinn et al. [2014] consider how mindfulness-based leadership programs lead to improved self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion among leaders. Moreover, using the self-reflection approach, Fry [2013] considers Atma Manthan (churning of the Self) as critical in enhancing decision-making, communication, and relations of the leaders. Altogether, these works focus on leadership, which is not only about external success and attainment but also about personal development and realization.

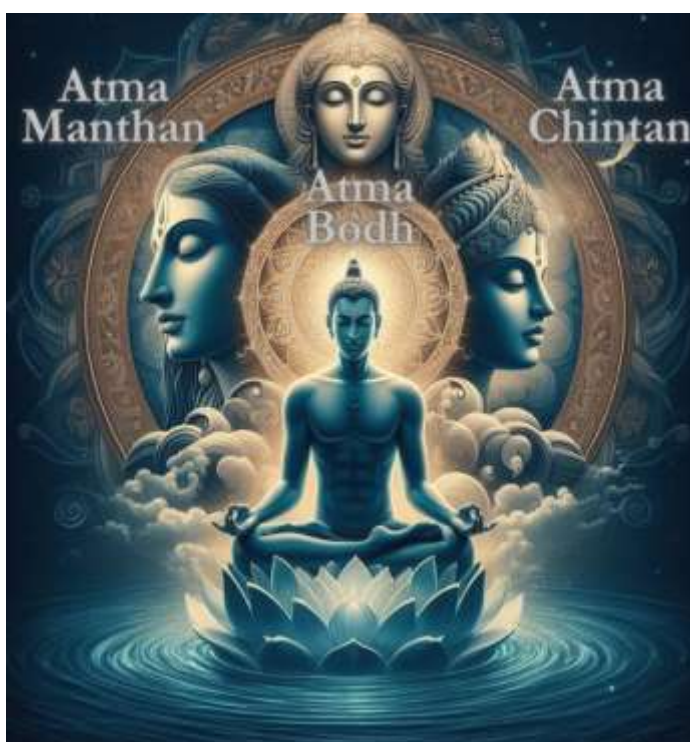


Fig. 1: Cornerstone of Conscious Leadership

#### 4.1.1 Atma Bodha (Self-Knowledge): Awake, Aware, and Alive

आत्मबोधाय हि जातानि वेदाः सर्वे हि वेदार्थः स्वात्मनोपलब्धिः ॥

ātmabodhāya hi jātāni vedāḥ sarve hi vedārthaḥ svātmanopaalabdhiḥ ॥

Source: Atma Bodha text attributed to Adi Shankara

**Meaning:** Each and every Veda is said to be revealed for the purpose of Self- realization, namely Atma Bodha. Attaining the Self is the outcome of all Vedic knowledge.

The main concern in leadership is self-knowledge, which can be seen as the first step towards gaining mastery. The foundation of conscious leadership is Atma Bodha or self-knowledge. According to the ancient Hindu scripture known as the Vedas, the aim of knowledge is to attain the Self—this means to be awake, aware, alive. Awake means being conscious of one's self and the environment. Awareness involves recognizing the self, including emotions, value, and beliefs, and also environmental awareness, all of which create a realistic, genuine, and moral character. Being alive means bringing life to everything and living with passion. These aspects of self-organization create trust, and that is critical for leadership.

#### 4.1.2 Atma Chintan (Self-Contemplation): Alert and Adaptable

यदा हृदये शुद्धे सर्वभूतहिते रतः । आत्मन्येव च रमेत तदा स मुक्तः ॥

yadā hṛdaye śuddhe sarvabhūtahitte rataḥ । ātmany eva rametha tadā sa muktaḥ ॥

Source: Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18 Verse 49

**Meaning:** One is freed when their heart is pure, they are concerned for the well-being of all beings, and they can find happiness only in themselves.

Being a leader involves more than just directing others; it also involves reflecting on oneself and connecting with one's inner self. Contemplation of the Self, or Atma Chintan, places a strong emphasis on having a pure heart and considering the well-being of all living things. It promotes alertness and adaptability in leaders. To be alert means staying vigilant to the needs and welfare of all beings. Being flexible and responsive to changing circumstances while retaining composure and happiness within oneself is what it means to be adaptable. These characteristics support leaders in maintaining empathy and responsiveness to their groups and surroundings, which promotes a dynamic and encouraging leadership style.

#### 4.1.3 Atma Manthan (Self-Churning): Accountable and Authentic

मननं मनसि कुर्वन्नात्मनोऽहंकारमात्मना । निरस्य द्वैतमभावेन भवतु स्वात्मनि स्थितः ॥

mananaṁ manasi kurvannātmano 'haṁkāramātmnā । nirāsya dvaitamabhavena bhavantu svātmani sthitaḥ ॥

Source: Yoga Vasishtha

**Meaning:** By thinking deeply about the Self, one can get rid of the ego. Through this practice, eliminating duality, one should remain firmly established in the Self.

Churning of the Self (through action), or Atma Manthan, is a practice that is crucial to the leadership path in order to dissolve the ego and embrace a higher purpose. According to the Yoga Vasishtha, this kind of introspection keeps leaders rooted in who they really are, which makes them genuine and responsible. Accountable entails owning up to one's mistakes and how they affect other people. It calls for a dedication to moral conduct and openness. Being authentic involves staying true to one's values and principles, avoiding pretense, and leading with genuine integrity. This leads to more equitable and effective leadership, where decisions are made in the best interest of all stakeholders.

Incorporating the principles of Atma Bodha, Atma Chintan, and Atma Manthan into leadership not only enhances personal growth but also fosters a more conscious and compassionate leadership style. These cornerstones guide leaders toward authenticity, empathy, and humility, ensuring that their leadership is rooted in self-awareness and service to others.

## 5. 7 A's of Conscious Leadership



Fig. 2: 7 A's of Conscious Leadership

Conscious leadership incorporates seven attributes that enhance leadership effectiveness. Awake (Sajag) means having deep self-awareness about one's capabilities, limitations, and desires and acting according to those standards. Aware (Sachet) extends this self-understanding to the external environment, ensuring leaders are attuned to team needs, organizational climate, and market conditions. Alive (Sadjeev) leaders bring energy and spirit, maintaining enthusiasm and commitment within the organization. Alertness (Satark) refers to being aware and prepared to respond, recognizing risks and opportunities early, and making timely decisions. Adaptable (Samayojya) leaders embrace change, adjusting processes as situations demand. Accountability (Satyanishtha) involves accepting responsibility for behaviors and decisions building trust and reliable standards. Finally, authenticity (Samiksha Yogya) is about honesty and openness and establishing trustful relationships. Together, these seven aspects enable leaders to create positive change, achieve success, and adhere to personal values.

### 5.1 Awake

Awake refers to the state of awareness and mindfulness. It involves being fully present, emotionally intelligent, and aware of one's surroundings, including organizational culture, market trends, and the impact of decisions on stakeholders. According to Goleman [2002], corporate training should focus on building a strong foundation in self-awareness. This equips conscious leaders and decision-makers to make sound decisions depending on the organizational circumstances and directions. Based on the work by Avolio et al. [2011], self-awareness driven by emotional intelligence allows leaders to regulate their emotions, decide independently, and improve team climate. Schein [2012] suggests that culture within an organization's culture is a reflection of its personality, which is frequently greatly influenced by upper management. It is a learned way of managing survival and growth. Organizational culture, including rules, norms, and basic assumptions about how people behave, evolves through collective effort arising from group experiences. Therefore, a predictable order is created in daily operations, which makes work meaningful. According to Mackey and Sisodia [2014], conscious leaders value and nurture diverse perspectives, resulting in breakthroughs that keep their organizations at the forefront of their respective industries. Smith [2023] discussed the characteristics and benefits of "Awake leadership." This leadership style emphasizes self-awareness with a sense of purpose and a keen understanding of one's impact on the team and environment. Hence, the quality of being awake in leadership offers a framework for leaders to cultivate self-awareness, purpose, and positive impact.



### 5.2 Aware

Being Aware in conscious leadership means having a deep understanding of oneself, including emotions, values, and beliefs (self-awareness), as well as being attentive to the external environment and societal trends (situational awareness). Ibarra [2014] explains that aware leaders go beyond merely reacting to situations; they actively analyze past experiences and current surroundings, enabling them to anticipate challenges and modify their strategies. By embracing cultural diversity, these leaders harness a wider range of perspectives, fostering innovation and building a more inclusive workplace. Conscious leaders cultivate a keen awareness of their surroundings by actively reflecting on and analyzing past experiences, which equips them to navigate future challenges with effective plans. Additionally, they demonstrate cultural awareness by incorporating diverse perspectives into decision-making, fostering teamwork and mutual understanding by interacting respectfully with people from various backgrounds, thus creating a more inclusive and innovative work environment. It involves recognizing and appreciating diversity, cultural nuances, and global perspectives and also being mindful of environmental impacts and risks. Leaders with cultural awareness promote inclusivity, try to collaborate across diverse teams, and make informed decisions with care and respect. Overall, awareness encompasses a holistic view of oneself, others, and the world.



### 5.3 Alive

Alive refers to being vibrant with energy and vitality. Leaders who prioritize their own well-being are more likely to maintain their mental and physical health, leading to increased job satisfaction. An alive leader is passionate and optimistic. He/She approaches situations in life with a holistic mindset. Alive also includes mental and emotional well-being, staying mindful, addressing stressful situations, and being willing to seek support when needed. Being alive is like being aware of one's physical and psychological health, and thus, such leaders have the potential to perform well. This approach is very relevant in today's work environment as it is characterized by frequent change, which requires understanding and flexibility. Leaders who are alive in their roles are more likely to inspire and motivate their teams, leading to increased engagement and productivity.





#### 5.4 Alert

Alertness is a significant concept in conscious leadership. Alert means being proactive and attentive, always looking ahead and taking action to address potential challenges. Carmeli [2020] explains that being mindful can help leaders identify biases and emotional triggers, and thus, they are able to make better decisions. It includes anticipating future needs and taking the initiative by considering the big picture. Dane and Lampton [2009] highlight that alert leaders are also socially aware, emotionally connected with their teams, and can anticipate conflicts. Ehrhart [2020] concludes that, ultimately, this mindful alertness helps leaders spot opportunities, address challenges quickly, and create a thriving and innovative team environment. It also involves being prepared to manage the risks and handling unexpected situations.



#### 5.5 Adaptable

Adaptable leaders are crucial in conscious leadership, demonstrating the ability to embrace change and make agile decisions. Flexibility and resilience are key traits of such leaders, enabling them to navigate adversity and foster an environment conducive to continuous learning and growth. Covey [2004] explains that these qualities help leaders stay open to new ideas, fostering adaptability and ensuring long-term success and resilience. Goldsmith [2015] emphasizes that adaptable leaders thrive in response to challenging circumstances, supporting their teams and promoting innovative solutions. Duckworth [2016] further highlights that resilience, a core component of conscious leadership, is essential for maintaining composure in difficult situations and effectively overcoming obstacles. By embodying flexibility and resilience, conscious leaders can better support their teams, promote innovative solutions, and drive sustainable progress (Dweck, [2006]). Brown [2018] believes that conscious leadership is essential for building resilient, adaptable, and purpose-driven organizations that positively impact the world and distinguish themselves from their competitors. Such leaders create a culture of adaptability, ensuring long-term success and organizational resilience. Adaptability includes being open to new ideas, strategies, and perspectives. Such leaders are resilient and have the ability to bounce back from any adverse situation.





### 5.6 Accountable

Being accountable means taking ownership and responsibility for one's actions, decisions, and outcomes. According to Goldsmith [2015], leaders take ownership of their actions and outcomes, learning from mistakes to foster continuous improvement. Conscious leaders foster a culture of accountability within the teams, encourage open communication, and provide constructive feedback to drive collective growth and success. Covey [2004] discusses the importance of fostering a culture of trust and collaboration. By providing constructive feedback and encouraging team accountability, leaders can enhance performance and create a positive work environment.



Conscious Leadership involves accountability towards the inner circle, which can be maintained by having open communication, mutual support, and respect within the circle. Brown [2018] highlights the significance of open communication and mutual support in creating strong relationships. By promoting these values within their inner circles, leaders can build stronger family and team bonds. Conscious leaders prioritize environmental conservation efforts, ensuring their actions contribute positively to the planet. Hawken [2007] emphasizes the role of leaders in integrating sustainability into their practices. Kahn [2016] also mentioned that conscious leaders also concentrate on environmental management and look for the long-term strategic organizational success of the organization as well as society. Scharmer [2018] argues that this approach enables firms to tackle global issues such as climate change and social inequality by emphasizing sustainable and responsible practices. Conscious leaders who embrace accountability across these domains create a ripple effect. Their conscious actions inspire others, fostering a culture of accountability within the organization, at home, and in the broader community. Responsible, conscious leadership contributes to a sustainable and conscious future for all.

### 5.7 Authentic

Authentic leaders entail transparency, openness in communication, and building trust within the team. Authentic leadership has a consistency between words and actions, fostering credibility. Authenticity also encompasses integrity, where leaders uphold ethical decision making and stay true to their values and principles. Leaders can improve their self-awareness, authenticity, and ethical decision-making, leading to enhanced employee engagement, trust, and collaboration (Gardner et al., [2005]). Gini [1998] and Pollard [2005] point out that leadership ethics are essential for fostering a moral culture in an organization, which will determine people's behavior and ethical choices in the workplace. Through thick and thin, they are authentic to their principles of practice and address issues of ethics responsibly.



## 6. Reflective Practices for Conscious Leadership

Reflective questions (RQs) are powerful tools for self-discovery, learning, and personal development. This practice encourages introspection and critical thinking, which leads to significant personal and professional development. RQs enhance learning by practicing deep thinking about experiences, which contributes to knowledge retention. They enhance problem-solving skills by encouraging evaluation from various perspectives, which leads to the creation of creative solutions. RQs also encourage self-analysis about feelings, ideas, and existing biases, which enhances self-awareness. This may result in improved decision-making and personal development. Furthermore, regular reflection helps identify areas for improvement, set goals, and track progress, promoting personal and professional growth. In the context of conscious leadership, continuous self-assessment and reflective practices significantly enhance a leader's knowledge of their experiences, equipping them to navigate future challenges more effectively. This ongoing introspection allows leaders to gain deeper insights into their actions, decisions, and their impact on others, fostering growth and development. By regularly engaging in reflective practices, leaders can identify areas for improvement, adapt to changing environments, and make more informed, ethical decisions. This heightened self-awareness and adaptability not only strengthen their leadership capabilities but also contribute to creating a positive, resilient, and forward-thinking organizational culture.

A leader can greatly benefit from all of the self-awareness processes in the conscious leadership self-antecedent and reflection exercises, as these prepare them for challenging circumstances in the future. These questions may include: "Did I do my best today?" or "Did I set a specific goal today?" Such questions promote reflection and enable leaders to see their actions, decisions, and the resultant impact on the people around them. The ability to check at the end of the day or at least on a weekly basis if the said activity was productive in speeding the achievement of the set goals and whether one was able to find meaning or stay awake or alert during the day helps one to improve areas of weakness. The question "Am I the person I want to be?" is useful because it allows leaders to refer back to the question and get back on track to leading as a person who possesses those attributes they wish to have. This increased self-awareness and flexibility help to build an optimistic, resilient, and forward-thinking organizational culture in addition to enhancing leadership abilities. Consequently, this way of thinking guarantees that leaders make decisions with knowledge, morality, and purpose for both the organization and themselves.

Leaders should continually ask themselves Self-Reflection Questions like: "To what extent are my behaviors aligned to what I would like to achieve and what is expected of me by my organization?" This self-assigned, critical question enables a professional to balance organizational and personal goals and objectives. "What are my motivations and the potential consequences of my choices?" This prompts leaders to be mindful of their internal drivers and the potential impact of their decisions. "Am I fully engaged in my role?" or "Does my work inspire both myself and others?" This question fosters passion and purpose in leadership. "Where are we headed?" or "What is our desired future state?" or "What needs to happen to get there?" This encourages leaders to be forward-thinking and strategically plan for success. "Do I anticipate potential challenges and the long-term ramifications of my actions?" This fosters a proactive leadership approach. "Can I adjust my course when necessary to meet new challenges?" This ensures flexibility and resilience in leadership. "Do I regularly evaluate my actions and their effectiveness?" This fosters accountability and continuous improvement. "Do my actions reflect my core beliefs and values?" This encourages leadership with integrity and authenticity.

As a result, by engaging in self-reflection using RQs, leaders can achieve a vital balance between organizational goals and team needs. This fosters a healthy work environment where individuals feel valued and empowered to contribute their best. In conclusion, through continuous self-assessment, guided by insightful RQs, leaders gain the knowledge, ethical foundations, and purpose necessary to reason effectively in the context of leadership and facilitate growth in themselves, others, and the organizations they serve.

## 7. Discussion and Conclusion

Conscious leadership becomes crucial in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. In this paper, we have discussed the essential components and practices that define conscious leadership, and we have tried to build connections between ancient wisdom and modern leadership challenges. By embracing self-knowledge (Atma Bodha), self-contemplation (Atma Chintan), and self-churning (Atma Manthan), leaders can cultivate deep self-awareness and strong ethical foundations. We can use the ancient wisdom texts in developing conscious leadership programs aiming to create more holistic and sustainable leadership. The discussion on these attributes, such as being awake, aware, alive, alert, adaptable, accountable, and authentic, paints a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted nature of effective leadership. Conscious leaders go beyond organizational efficiency and profitability. The practice of regular self-reflection guided by thoughtful questions equips leaders with the knowledge, ethics, and purpose necessary for effective decision-making and leadership. This comprehensive approach combines emotional, spiritual, physical, financial, and networking intelligence, creating a balanced and resilient leadership style. The business environment is continuously evolving; thus, the principles of conscious leadership will become increasingly vital. Organizations that focus on developing conscious leaders will be better prepared to navigate challenges, achieve sustainable success, and make a positive impact on their communities and the world. By applying the insights and frameworks discussed in this paper, leaders, and organizations can pursue more enlightened and effective leadership practices, contributing to a more conscious and compassionate global business environment.

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**ORCID iD (if any)**

**Corresponding Author:** 0000-0001-7387-0670

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