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Case Study

Rajayoga: Renewing Sustainable Innovation Through Spiritual Values and Ancient Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This case study explores Rajayoga as a case for renewing sustainable innovation through Spiritual values and ancient wisdom. It is based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Systems Thinking involves seeing the system as a whole, i.e., the inter relationships among the parts of a system rather than focusing on the individual parts of the system. The Iceberg model is commonly used to understand different levels of thinking including the mental model. The mental model comprises our own beliefs, values, and assumptions about the system. A transformation of the mental model often provides the solution to complex problems such as sustainable development that is long-lasting with the highest leverage.

Findings: Through this transformation of the mental model, the self (soul) becomes virtuous and the resulting contentment gives way to vices like greed. Rajayogaprovides simple solutions to complex problems including sustainable development based on spiritual values and ancient wisdom.

Research Limitations: The research is based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya. In future, there is a need to carry out more empirical studies.

Managerial Implications: Practically it emphasises the fact that along with the short-term strategies to deal with sustainability, we need to develop the spiritual values as a long-term strategy.

Originality/ Value: The study highlighted the importance of the Ancient Wisdom of Rajayoga for sustainable innovation and to bring Prosperity, Peace, and Fulfillment in one's life.

Introduction

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not any man’s greed”

—Mahatma Gandhi

The above quote from Mahatma Gandhi is the essence of sustainability and he has demonstrated it through his simple living. Systems Thinking or Holistic Thinking can be used to find simple solutions to complex problems in Today’s VUCA world. Systems Thinking involves seeing the system as a whole, i.e., the inter relationships among the parts of a system rather than focusing on the individual parts of the system. The Iceberg model is widely used to understand different levels of thinking including the mental model. The mental model comprises our own beliefs, values, and assumptions about the system. A transformation of the mental model often provides the solution to a problem that is long-lasting and has the highest leverage. This case study explores Rajayoga as a case for renewing sustainable innovation through Spiritual values and ancient wisdom. It is based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through [Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya](#) and concludes that a subtle re-connect with the soul – the seed of values (a consciousness transformation of the self from body to soul) followed by a re-connect of the self (soul) with the Supreme self (soul), these seed of universal values can provide the highest leverage for the sustainability innovation, based on practical examples. Through this transformation of the mental model, the self becomes virtuous and the resulting contentment gives way to vices like greed.

Systems Thinking & the Iceberg Model

Holistic thinking or systems thinking ([Senge, 2006](#)) involves seeing the system as a whole, i.e., the interrelationships among the parts of a system rather than focusing on the individual parts of the system. The Iceberg model is a systems thinking model that is useful for understanding global issues ([Maani and Cavana, 2007](#)). Only about 10% of the total mass of icebergs is above water but their behaviour at the tip is decided by the remaining 90% where the ocean currents act. The visible tip of the iceberg above the water’s surface represents the events occurring within the specified system, while the portion below the

surface reflects the systemic patterns followed by systemic structure and then by the mental models held by individuals within the system (Figure 1). The mental model comprises our own beliefs, values, and assumptions about the system. A change of mental model often provides the solution to a problem that is long-lasting and has the highest leverage.

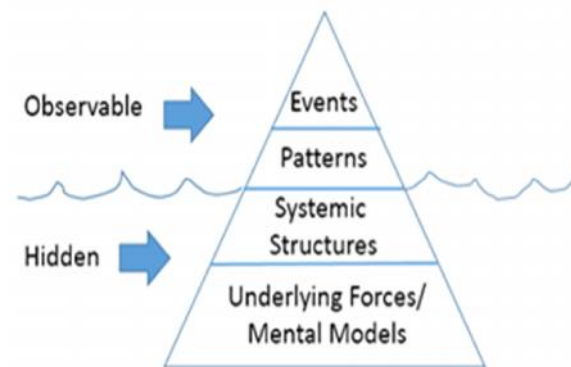


Figure 1: The Iceberg Model

Systems Thinking for Sustainability

Leverage points are those points in a system where a minor intervention when applied, results in major changes in certain system outcomes ([Meadows, 2015](#)). The interventions that are easier but have limited potential to trigger major transformation are called ‘shallow’ leverage points and those that are difficult but have enormous potential to trigger major transformation are called ‘deep’ leverage points.

[Williams, A. et al. \(2017\)](#) argue that sustainability management needs to be addressed through a multi disciplinary systemic lens capable of appreciating the inter connectivity among various disciplines such as ecology, social, political, economic etc. The authors addressed this gap by reviewing the systems thinking and sustainability literature from 1990-2015 and finding evidence that though there is an emerging body of work on systems thinking for sustainability rapidly growing since 2011, it is still not part of the mainstream management literature.

[Abson, D.J. et al. \(2017\)](#) contend that despite the attention given to sustainability issues by both science and politics, humanity continues

to pursue unsustainable development paths. This situation primarily arises from the inability of sustainability science to pinpoint the fundamental causes of unsustainability. Furthermore, the authors assert that numerous sustainability initiatives concentrate on highly visible, yet ‘superficial’ leverage points, highlighting the urgent need to investigate less apparent but more profound leverage points. They propose three areas of leverage: reconnecting individuals with nature, restructuring institutions, and re-evaluating the methods by which knowledge is generated and applied for sustainability.

Joern Fischer & Maraja Riechers (2018) argue that the leverage points perspective based on human-environment systems has great potential in sustainability science as well as practice.

Voulvoulis, N. et al. (2022) argue that a system thinking approach to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2030 is gaining the attention of both academicians and policymakers and makes a case for integrated, holistic and multi disciplinary thinking. A sustainability transformation requires a paradigm shift meaning a change in the components and structures that are causing unsustainability. This involves interrelated changes in social practices, technologies, business models, societal norms and regulations etc.

Ehrenfeld, J. (2004) argues that the conventional approaches to sustainable development are quick fixes to unsustainability. Fixing its root cause involves a re-examination of our behavior and our assumptions about technology, consumption and personal satisfaction.

The literature suggests that there is an urgency to explore the root cause of unsustainability and identify less obvious but ‘deeper’ leverage points for intervention. As stated by Mahatma Gandhi, the underlying forces are every subtle human values and recently there has been an increased interest to look at the eternal spiritual wisdom from scriptures like Srimad Bhagavad Gita. For example, Srimad Bhagavad Gita is being explored to find solutions to complex problems in the VUCA world (Low et al., 2011). Self-thinking and

self-management as advocated in scriptures like Srimad Bhagavad Gita would provide a framework to manage during uncertain situations. Self-management enables one to face challenges during uncertainty through self-transformation and contribute their best to the self, family, organization, and society in general.

This case study explores Rajayoga as a case for renewing sustainable innovation through Spiritual values and ancient wisdom. It is based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya (Donnel (1996), Usha (2002), Sareen (2012), Pillai et al. (2015)). A Rajayoga lifestyle is prescribed to practice Godly wisdom in day-to-day life.

Methodology

The Godly wisdom imparted and the simple living promoted by the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya is analysed using the Iceberg model of systems thinking. Since Godly wisdom focuses on shared beliefs, mind-sets, attitudes, values etc., the focus of this case study is on the mental model layer of the Iceberg model. Section 3.1 explains the Godly wisdom and Section 3.2 explains how sustainability is achieved by following the Rajayoga lifestyle.

The Godly Wisdom

The Rajayoga lifestyle being practised for spiritual empowerment at the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya (Donnel, 1996) is briefly discussed here for experiencing the transformation of the mental model in practical life. Various steps involved in Rajayoga meditation are illustrated in Figure 2 (Pillai (2021)). According to the *Godly Wisdom on Rajayoga*, imparted through this system, three major powers in the world interact with each other – the Soul, the Supreme Soul, and the Five Elements of Nature (Pillai (2022)).

As per the Godly wisdom, the soul is a conscious energy manifested as a small divine light located in the forehead. The soul is distinct from its instrument – the body along with its organs, and is the master of the body. The soul is eternal and indestructible. Its innate virtues

are wisdom, purity, love, peace, happiness, bliss, and strength. While being in the body, the soul always desires to experience and sustain these eternal virtues. In the soul consciousness, the soul is aware of its nature and the original virtues emerge naturally. The Supreme Being, or God, is the highest entity among all souls and is also characterized as a subtle, infinitesimal point of light. However, unlike a soul, He does not come in the cycle of birth and death. Various religions depict Him through images, idols, or memorials that carry names symbolizing His form of light. He is revered under various names, such as 'Shiva,' which signifies the benefactor, as well as other significant names like The Father, Allah, and Jehovah among others. His original dwelling place is known as Paramdham or Brahmlok or the Incorporeal World, which also serves as the original home for all souls. This realm is an infinite expanse of golden-red light that exists beyond the confines of the physical world.

Soul consciousness is essential for self/soul realization and God's realization. As shown in Figure 2, through the Rajayoga meditation practice the soul establishes a subtle connection or bond or knot with God. This has four steps – withdrawal of attention from body consciousness to soul consciousness, contemplation on spiritual or eternal truth, concentration on the Supreme Soul and Realization. This enables the Soul to get rid of the vices and regain its innate virtues. This subtle connection serves as the protection of the soul with the Supreme Protector God and leads to virtuous or pure actions by the soul. The souls go through a cyclic transformation from a pure/perfect stage to an impure/imperfect stage and again to a pure stage in the Cycle of time. The harmony among the Souls and between the Soul and the External Nature is dependent on the purity of the Soul in the Cycle of Time (Pillai (2022)).

Sustainability Through Rajayoga Lifestyle

As shown in Table 1, Rajayoga is an active area of research and is well-studied for its impact on mental, physical, social, and environmental well-being. The findings from

the chosen research outcomes indicate that the Rajayoga lifestyle, grounded in divine wisdom, is highly effective in various aspects of self-management. This includes self-control, mastery over vices, personal transformation, enhancement of physical health, improvement in interpersonal relationships, and the ability to transform one's environment.



Figure 2: Rajayoga Meditation

As discussed in the previous section, the subtle connection between the soul and the Supreme Soul through Rajayoga enables the soul to get rid of the vices and regain its innate virtues (Pillai (2021a)). This subtle connection also serves as a protection of the soul and leads to virtuous or pure actions by the soul. The souls also go through a cyclic transformation from a pure/perfect stage to an impure/imperfect stage and again back to the pure stage in the Cycle of time. The harmony among the Souls and between the Soul and the External Nature comprising of 5 elements (earth, water, ether, fire and air) is dependent on the purity of the Soul in the Cycle of Time. The positive transformation of the soul impacts the transformation of the body, relationship, society, and the environment in a positive way as shown in Figure 3.

The unsustainability can be compared with the disconnect of a tree from its roots. The root cause of unsustainability is the lack of values in our actions. The seed or root of values in a human being is the soul and the root or seed of universal values is the Supreme soul. Therefore, the subtle re-connect with the soul

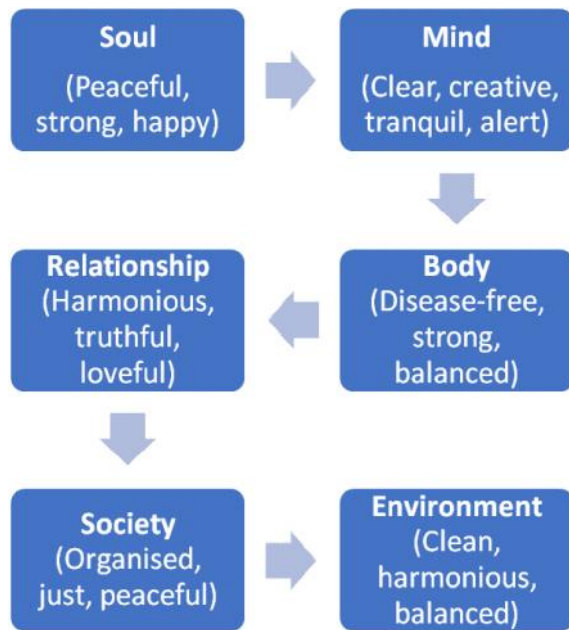


Figure 3: World Transformation Through Self-Transformation

– the seed of values (a consciousness transformation of the self from body to soul) followed by a re-connect of the soul with the Supremesoul (the Super self, the seed of universal values) can provide the highest leverage for the sustainability innovation, based on practical examples. Through this transformation of the mental model, the self becomes virtuous and contented giving way to vices like greed.

Practical Examples

A few practical examples of practicing Rajayoga as leverage for sustainability are discussed in this section. The institution [Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya](#), along with promoting the practice of Rajayoga believes and practices the following principles to achieve sustainability – living with simplicity, buying compassionately, using economically, learning continuously, and sharing generously. For more than two decades, they

Table 1: Summary of selected research on the impact of Rajayoga based on the Godly Wisdom

Author	Impact of Rajayoga Meditation
Impact on Mental Health	
Prachi, R. & Manju, S. (2021)	Emotional Intelligence Competencies Developed
Ranjay (2014)	Self-mastery and Spiritual Freedom
Pillai et al. (2015)	Self-managing Leadership in Crisis Management
Sareen (2012)	Self-control
Impact on Physical Health	
Misra et al. (2013)	Affective & Cognitive Functions
Usha, K., Suruchi, L. (2017)	Anxiety and Serum Cortisol
Ghar et al. (2016)	Cardiorespiratory parameters
Babu et al. (2020)	Grey matter volume changes
Chawla et al. (2020)	Type II diabetes mellitus
Manisha et al. (2014)	Pulmonary Functions
Sharma et al. (2020)	Brain-electric activity
Phatak et al. (2017)	Glycaemic status in type 2 diabetes mellitus
Agung et al. (2019)	Innovation of prevention and therapy in pedophilia
Mandape et al. (2015)	the lipid profile of healthy adults
Social Impact	
Dharm (2018)	Meditation And Spiritual Education
Impact on Agriculture	
Jensen (2021)	Sustainable Yogic Agriculture as a Mind–Matter Farming Approach
Sain et al. (2020)	Sustainable yogic farming for enhanced productivity and farmers' well being

have been actively involved in the R&D of alternative renewable energy. For instance, the India One is a 1 MW electrical Solar Thermal Power Plant equipped with 16 hours of thermal energy storage, enabling continuous operation throughout the day. This captive power facility provides electricity to the Brahma Kumaris headquarters located in Abu Road, Rajasthan, with a total capacity to serve 25,000 individuals. Sustainable Yogic Agriculture that combines organic farming with meditation has shown that the seed quality and the crop yield have been improved apart from lower costs to farmers and reduced the pressure on the environment (Jensen (2021), Sain et al. (2020)).

Conclusions

The Iceberg model is widely used to understand different levels of thinking including the mental model. Leverage based on an intervention in the mental model can have a profound impact on addressing unsustainability. This case study explores Rajayoga as a case for renewing sustainable innovation through Spiritual values and ancient wisdom. It is based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya. The unsustainability can be compared with the disconnect of a tree from its roots. The root cause of unsustainability is the lack of values in our actions. The seed or root of values in a human being is the soul and the root or seed of universal values is the Supreme soul. A subtle re-connect with the soul – the seed of values (a consciousness transformation of the self from body to soul) followed by a re-connect of the self (soul) with the Supreme self (soul), the seed of universal values can provide the highest leverage for the sustainability innovation, based on practical examples. Through this transformation of the mental model, the self becomes virtuous and the resulting contentment gives way to vices like greed. The study highlighted the importance of the Ancient Wisdom of Rajayoga for sustainable innovation and to bring Prosperity, Peace, and Fulfillment in one's life.

Implications and Outlook

Practically it emphasises the fact that along with the short-term strategies to deal with sustainability, we need to develop spiritual values

as a long-term strategy. The research is based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya. In future, there is a need to carry out more empirical studies.

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Appendix

Teaching Notes

Synopsis

This case provides a simple solution to complex problems including sustainable development based on the Ancient Rajayoga wisdom (Godly wisdom) imparted through Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya. Sustainable development means to “fulfil the present needs without compromising the needs of future generations.” As stated by Mahatma Gandhiji, “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not any man’s greed”, the vice “greed” is the root cause of unsustainability and he has demonstrated it through his simple living. Rajayoga promotes a simple living that is essential for sustainability. It also involves a subtle re-connect with the soul – the seed of spiritual values (soul consciousness) followed by a subtle re-connect of the soul with the Supreme soul (the Super self, the seed of universal values). This subtle re-connection of the soul with the Supreme Soul leads to the renewal of spiritual values in the soul and the removal of vices like greed. This reinforces simple living. It can provide the highest leverage for sustainability innovation, illustrated through practical examples. Through this transformation of the mental model, the self (soul) becomes virtuous and the resulting contentment gives way to vices like greed. Practically it emphasizes the fact that along with the short-term strategies to deal with sustainability, we need to develop spiritual values as well, as a long-term strategy.

The Target Learning Group

The case is suitable for undergraduates, post-graduates and executives who are interested in sustainability in general and the subtle aspects of sustainability such as the role of values and ethics in particular.

The Learning/Teaching Objectives and Key Issues

1. To explore the role of Rajayoga, an ancient wisdom for sustainability
2. To apply the Iceberg Model of Systems Thinking and use Rajayoga as a Leverage for sustainability

3. To understand how self-transformation through Rajayoga leads to world transformation including sustainability

The Teaching Strategy

Introduce the systems thinking concept and the Iceberg model of systems thinking, emphasizing the leverage points and mental model. Next, explain how systems thinking can be effectively used to address the sustainability problem. Then explain the Godly wisdom of Rajayoga, highlighting the characteristics of its three components namely the Soul, the Supreme Soul and the physical matter comprising of five elements of nature – earth, water, air, fire, and ether. Then map the mental model in the Iceberg model to the spiritual dimensions of Rajayoga. Explain how the Rajayoga is practiced by re-connecting the Soul with the Supreme Soul in a Soul-conscious state. Then let participants experiment with Rajayoga and experience the innate qualities of the soul namely purity, wisdom, love, peace, happiness, power and bliss. Then explain the Rajayoga lifestyle and how it leads to simple living. Using practical examples, demonstrate how the Rajayoga life leads to sustainability. Towards the end of the session, the individuals can share their experience of practicing the Rajayoga.

Questions For Discussion

1. What are systems thinking and how it can be used to address the sustainability problem?
2. What is the Iceberg model of systems thinking and leverage points? How does the mental model act as the highest leverage?
3. What is the Rajayoga and Rajayoga lifestyle and how does it lead to a simple lifestyle to support sustainability?
4. What is the role played by Rajayoga as leverage in the Iceberg model of systems thinking? Explain the benefits of using Rajayoga as a leverage using practical examples.
5. How world Transformation can be achieved through Rajayoga by using it as a Self-transformation tool.