

**BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA:
EMERGING TRENDS AND ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

United Nation's Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined sustainable development as, "Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable Development requires a multi-stakeholder approach where business leaders, their organizations and corporate houses have an emerging role. This research study seeks to contribute theoretically to the field of business leadership and sustainable development. This study is an attempt to analyze the emerging trends in India among the business leaders for sustainable development using three Indian business conglomerates as case studies.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Business Leadership, Leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Our preferences of the past have left the world today ridden with the most critical challenges of all times – the rising socio-economic inequalities among people, the global health risks, the escalating pressure on earth's limited resources, besides others and the greatest of all - climate changes. With these exceptional challenges striking in its face, the world today wants new and strong solutions that are innovative. The resource-intensive and flawed production and consumption pattern of the past can "no longer sustain the world of today". Hence the idea of sustainable development comes into play. Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while simultaneously sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. Sustainability can be described as the optimum utilization of resources keeping in mind the necessities of the future generation. It means becoming conscious of choices and behaviors that influence the intricate balance of the earth's social, ecological, and economic systems, and then expanding that consciousness through conservation that can lead to joint action.

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There are three basic areas of sustainability that explain the relationship between environmental, economic and social aspects of the world. When the fundamental concepts of the spheres are applied it is a win win situation for all. Sustainable development requires multi stakeholder approach to yield successful results for all the current as well as generations to come.

Leadership is the capability to innovate, make decisions, influence and inspire others to accomplish results. "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." - Bill Gates. Leaders lead by example, in all situations in a similar way. There are many leadership methods that come handy in a variety of circumstances in businesses, but there are some traits that every leadership style shares like self-awareness, decisiveness, integrity, fairness, enthusiasm, knowledge, creativity and imagination, and endurance. A leader inspires, motivates and encourages people to attain their goals and objectives by inculcating in them faith in their own abilities. A leader plays an active role in the victory and failure of a venture. Leaders are often portrayed as those who inspire a shared vision, build consensus, provide direction, and promote beliefs in actions among followers required to achieve the goals of the institution or enterprise. Inherent in this viewpoint is the assumption that leaders have a progressive view about what is required for success of the enterprise. From this viewpoint, leaders are capable in engaging others in process for creating a vision and making it a reality through the advancement and execution of actions to support goals inherent in the vision.

INDIAN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: EMERGING TRENDS

Nations across the world accepted the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, in the year 2015, committing to the objective of delivering better human well-being, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, while conserving the planet and its limited resources. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, through its 17 Sustainable Development objectives, calls upon the nations to take courageous steps that change their future choices. On one hand, there are massive challenges in the realization of these goals and objectives, but on the other hand, the current times also offer greater opportunities to leverage innovative approaches and new models to achieve these goals. The Sustainable Development Goals pushes us to critically rethink our present approaches to deal with the social, economic and environmental challenges on the way to 2030. Increased stress will now be on developing and transitioning to economic systems that provides superior human well-being through sustainable utilization of primary resources. While the Governments will have the prime responsibility for implementation, follow-up and assessment of their progress at national, state and regional levels, the role of businesses cannot be undermined in routing and determining this transition. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the role of the ‘diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals,’ in understanding of the outlined goals and objectives.

Indian private players have taken initiatives to ensure the environmental sustainability of their ventures in order to achieve the SDG targets by 2030. This research study focuses on three such business groups which have led by example and the initiatives taken by their business leaders to walk the talk.

1) Case study-WIPRO

Environmental degradation is at an alarming stage today. It can have far-reaching unfavorable effects on the environment if not dealt with straight away. It is our liability to leave a clean and rich environment for future generations. Wipro Limited, a top player in Global IT and R&D services headed by Mr. Azim Premji, is devoted towards environmental sustainability by reducing the usage of dangerous substances and chemicals which have potential impact on the ecology. It has joined hands with WWF India, one of the largest conservation association in the country, to straightforwardly deal with issues of climate change, water and waste management and biodiversity conservation.

Energy efficiency: 25% enhancement in energy efficiency in the last 6 years due to implementation of green building standards based on LEED framework 44% decline in use of printing paper through effective automated controls and behavioral changes.

Water efficiency: 32% of water requirement is met through water recycling and harvesting.

Waste management: Four biogas plants convert food waste to cooking fuel translating into a net decline of 100 tons per annum

2) Case Study - Mahindra group

Mahindra group headed by Mr. Anant Mahindra continues its pledge to reduce its carbon footprint. In 2016, M&M became the first Indian company to publicize its in-house carbon price of \$10 per tonne of carbon emissions. The move was in line with its business pledge to reduce its GHG emissions by 25% over the next three years. They have taken on emission and carbon footprint reduction targets as per the SBT framework, which is an evidence of their continuing efforts to fight climate change.

3) Case Study - Tata Group

Businesses and Biodiversity are mutually dependent; as businesses depend on the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services, which form the base of all economic activities and provide essential for businesses to function. Moreover, businesses also have major impact on the biodiversity which may limit future business opportunities and profits significantly. Business risks associated with biodiversity loss include ceasing of operations, reputation loss and financial woes. Tata group headed by Mr. Ratan Tata identifies the strategic significance of Biodiversity conservation and is dedicated to the valuation of business impacts on Natural Capital as part of Tata Sustainability Policy.

Biodiversity conservation:

- 1) More than 13 million saplings have been planted by tata group since 1970's in the locality of their hydro power facilities.
- 2) The Dharti Ko Arpan program at Tata Chemicals runs several initiatives for ecology preservation, species conservation and protection of biodiversity.

Energy conservation

1. Tata Consultancy Group:

Energy and Carbon Performance (baseline year 2007-08):

- 51.4% decline in particular electricity consumption

- 13 LEED-certified campuses
- Achieved the target PUE of 1.65 across 13 key data centers. Power usage effectiveness of 1.71 across 23 key data centers
- 52.5% reduction in specific carbon footprint
- 8.45% of total power from renewable sources

2. Tata Motors

Similarly for Tata motors, 10.49% of water has been recycled in its facilities and 20.76% of the total energy consumed has been sourced from renewable energy.

ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERS (CASE STUDIES)

It can be inferred on the basis of the three case studies mentioned that the present business leaders do not limit sustainability to mere philanthropy but it has been adopted as a major agenda in their organizations. Private players and corporate sector now play the role of flag bearers in the country w.r.t. achieving the sustainable development goals. A strong business leadership is instrumental in attaining the set of goals and vision earmarked for sustainability initiatives. The conviction of the leader to commit to sustainability programs ultimately reflects in the success of the programs undertaken. In the case study-1, Wipro leadership has collaborated with WWF India to tackle issues related to climate change, waste water management and biodiversity conservation. The leaders have worked on managing the energy efficiency, water efficiency and waste management in their organization. In case study-2, Mahindra group is focused on combating climate change, by targeted reduction of GHG emissions. In case study-3, Tata group has strategically drafted the Tata Sustainability Policy which has worked towards biodiversity conservation via its sapling plantation drive and 'Dharti ko Arpan' program for species conservation. The Tata leadership has been committed to energy efficiency by increasing the usage of renewable energy.

CONCLUSION

The research study highlights the innovative measures undertaken by the leaders of Wipro, Mahindra Group and Tata Group and their aligned efforts to achieve the SDG targets of Agenda 2030. The new

trend of sustainable leadership has been witnessed in the Indian businesses, which shows the commitment of private players to sustainability. They have inspired a shared vision, built consensus, provided direction, and promoted beliefs in actions among followers required to achieve the green targets. The sustainable efforts are likely to enhance the profits of the businesses in the long run as they will end up prolonging the life of the resources by efficient usage and consumption.

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