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Karma-Yoga, the technique of performing action such that the soul of the actor is not bound by the results of the action, constitutes the Indian work ideal. The relationship of Karma-Yoga with the dimensions of empathy was explored through a study done on 108 students in a postgraduate programme of business management. Karma-Yoga was found to be related to some dimensions of empathy. The results highlighted the differential impact of dimensions of empathy. Empathic concern was found to be related to Karma-Yoga only for those individuals who were low on personal distress. For individuals high on personal distress, empathic concern was not related to Karma-Yoga. Findings indicate that Karma-Yoga is very similar to altruism motivation in the Indian context. Individuals who are high on empathic concern and low on personal distress are more likely to take actions for the benefit of others rather than for their own benefit.

Karma-Yoga, the Indian Work Ideal, and its Relationship with Empathy

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For efficient functioning, organisational members are assigned different tasks and roles in the organisation having implicit status differences. Leaders in an organisation are expected to provide direction, exercise control and influence other organisational members to work towards the organisation's

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objectives (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Leaders influence organisational members both directly and indirectly. The direct influence of leaders is through personal example and instructions to subordinates, while leaders indirectly influence organisational behaviour through the design of policies, processes and structures. Hence, leadership is a key variable in the study of organisational behaviour and if Indian economy is to grow, we will surely need leaders who understand the unique needs of the Indian people and use styles and strategies which are customised to meet Indian conditions.

When we review the traditional theories and conceptions of leadership, we find that most of our understanding of leadership reflects a distinct US/American bias and there is a strong need to develop culturally relevant models of leadership (Dumdum et al., 2002; House & Aditya, 1997; Lowe & Gardner, 2000; Pillai et al., 1999). The knowledge of an ideal is useful to leaders in two ways. First, leaders who personify the work ideal serve as role models and inspire their followers to emulate them. Second, the crucial task of leaders is to raise the awareness and consciousness of their followers to higher levels of conduct and morality (Burns, 1978). This is possible only if leaders are aware of the work ideal of a group of people. This ideal is derived from the people's culture which represents their deepest assumptions and beliefs about the nature of mankind, nature of the world and the goals of life (Krishnan, 2003).

In the Indian context, the *Bhagavad Gita*—which is part of the epic *Mahabharata*—is the scripture which provides answers to the basic questions of what we are and what our goals ought to be, and has inspired generations of Indians (Prabhavananda, 1960; Vivekananda, 1972). The *Gita* explains the philosophy of right action or Karma-Yoga using the situation of Arjuna, a warrior on the battlefield, who finds himself helpless when he is called to action. The text of the *Gita* is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, where the latter explains the meaning of life, the place of work within life and the right way in which to work. The path recommended by the *Gita* is Karma-Yoga. Hence, achieving excellence in Karma-Yoga constitutes the pinnacle of moral development for a person having an Indian worldview.

Mulla and Krishnan (2006a) studied the relationship of Karma-Yoga with personality factors which are enduring patterns of behaviour. Similarly, Mulla and Krishnan (2006b) studied the relationship of Karma-Yoga with values, which form a part of the cognitive domain. This article attempts to

explore the relationship of Karma-Yoga with empathy, an important construct in the affective domain.

The two facets of empathy, namely, empathic concern for one's fellow beings and personal distress at the pain of others are especially relevant in this context. Studies on spontaneous helping behaviour have found that it is the presence of empathic concern and absence of personal distress that leads to genuinely selfless or altruistic helping behaviour (Batson et al., 1983). In this study, we have collected data from 108 students and have studied the differential impacts of the dimensions of empathic concern and personal distress on the construct of Karma-Yoga in order to validate if Karma-Yoga is similar to altruistic motivation in the Indian context. However, before we understand Karma-Yoga, it is important to have an overview of the basic beliefs of Indian philosophy which constitute the Indian worldview.

The Indian Worldview

The Indian worldview is characterised by three fundamental beliefs which are common to all the six systems of Indian philosophy (Dasgupta, 1991, p. 71; Prabhavananda, 1960, p. 201). First, the belief in the *karma* theory, that is, all actions that are done have the power to ordain for their doers joy or sorrow in the future depending if the action is good or bad. Often, individuals may be required to take birth in another body to experience fully the joy or suffering that is due to them because of their past actions. The second belief is in the existence of a permanent entity, the soul (*atma*), which is our true unknown nature, pure and untouched by the impurities of our ordinary life. The third belief is about the doctrine of salvation (*mukti*). Since actions lead us through the endless cycles of birth and death, if we could be free of all such emotions or desires that lead us to action, there would be no fuel (in the form of joys or sorrows to be experienced) to propel us into another birth and we would be free of this eternal cycle.

The Doctrine of Karma

The doctrine of karma is perhaps the most widely known and misunderstood aspect of the Indian worldview (Mahadevan, 1958) and is an Eastern

equivalent of the belief in a just world (Connors & Heaven, 1990; Hafer & Bogue, 2005) which states that individuals get what they deserve (Connors & Heaven, 1990). Karma extends the concept of justice to other worlds and other births, thereby implying that all good and bad deeds of all previous lives are accounted for cumulatively. Accordingly, in every life one reaps what one has sown in his/her previous lives (Radhakrishnan, 1926). Similar to belief in a just world, the belief in karma reaffirms one's faith in natural justice and makes every person responsible for his or her own well-being and suffering. Thus, positive deeds are believed to lead to good outcomes, while tragic happenings are explained as an outcome of negative deeds done in the past (Agrawal & Dalal, 1993; Dalal & Pande, 1988).

Studies have shown that the belief in karma is highly correlated with belief in god, belief in a just world (Agrawal & Dalal, 1993) and is an enabler for psychological recovery of accident victims (Dalal & Pande, 1988). Kejriwal and Krishnan (2004) also found that the belief in karma enhanced transformational leadership.

The metaphysical explanation of the law of karma is derived from the concept of spiritual law (*satya*) and law in its working process in the cosmos (*rita*). Conformity to this law leads to material and spiritual progress, while its violation is punished with a series of transmigrations. Actions which are motivated by a sense of personal individuality, or which are incongruous with the universal order, create disequilibrium in the cosmos which is then set right by inflicting the effect of action upon the doer of it. This metaphysical, ethical and psychological regulative force is called *Karma* (Krishnananda, 1994).

Freedom from the Cycles of Birth and Death (*moksha*) or Self-realisation as the Supreme Goal

The law of karma is not a blind mechanical framework in which man is trapped for eternity. Freedom from the cycle of karma is possible and is the ultimate goal and destiny of every being (Mahadevan, 1958). This freedom from the cycles of birth and death is termed as *moksha* or liberation. It results when the bonds of ignorance have been broken and is a state which is free of all imperfections and limitations (Prabhavananda, 1960).

The Potential Divinity of Every Being (*atma*)

In the Rig Veda, the soul or self is denoted by the word *atma* (Ghanananda, 1958). The soul is the eternal subject which is free from all impurities like sin, old age, death, grief, hunger and thirst. The soul is complete and, thus, is free from all forms of desires (Radhakrishnan, 1940).

When one is convinced of the law of universal cause and effect, the existence of an eternal soul and the objective of life as liberation of the soul from the eternal cycles of birth and death, one seeks opportunities for eternal salvation. Indian philosophy suggests that the path to be selected for liberation must be suited to the temperament and disposition of the seeker. Karma-Yoga provides one such path for freedom from the cycles of birth and death, which is suited for people with an active temperament who have chosen to remain in the world and aspire for liberation.

What is “Karma-Yoga”?

The word “karma” comes from the Sanskrit root *kri*, which means, “doing, affairs or activity” and includes all actions that a person performs, whether they are of body, speech or mind. The word “yoga” comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, which means “to join”. However, in the *Mahabharata* it is used in three ways: as a special skill, device, intelligent method or graceful way of performing actions (*Gita*, Chapter 2, Verse 50); as equability of mind towards success or failure (*Gita*, Chapter 2, Verse 48); and as the device for eliminating the natural tendency of karma to create bondage (*Gita*, Chapter 2, Verse 50). Since the later two definitions of yoga speak of the relationship of yoga with action, the terms “yoga” and “Karma-Yoga” are used interchangeably at various instances in the *Gita* (Tilak, 2000). For the purpose of our article, we will use the word “yoga” to mean “device” or “intelligent method” and hence the term “Karma-Yoga” would be “a technique for intelligently performing actions”.

Since the ultimate goal of all beings is to free the soul from the cycles of birth and death, any method that enables release from this perpetual cycle is preferable to any other method that is likely to bind the human soul to

the cycle. Hence, whether we define Karma-Yoga as “a technique for intelligently performing actions” or “a technique for performing actions in a manner that the soul is not bound by the effects of the action”, we mean the same thing (Tilak, 2000).

Dimensions of Karma-Yoga

Mulla and Krishnan (2006a) identified the dimensions of Karma-Yoga using a contemporary version of the *Gita* (Gandhi, 2001). Each verse was content analysed and classified into three categories, namely, activities prescribed to reach the ideal state (69 verses), description of the ideal state of a person (145 verses), and outcomes on achieving the ideal state (76 verses). Since Karma-Yoga is the path to reach the ideal liberated state through work, Mulla and Krishnan (2006a) further analysed the types of activities prescribed to reach the ideal state and found that five types of activities were described in the *Gita*: devotion to god or seeing god in all beings (22 verses); performing actions without attachment (16 verses); meditation or focusing on the soul (10 verses); being neutral to opposites or keeping senses under control (10 verses); and doing one’s duty in society (8 verses). These five activities were then matched with the four equivalent paths to reach the ideal state, namely, the path of meditation (Raja-Yoga), the path of knowledge (Jnana-Yoga), the path of devotion (Bhakti-Yoga), and the path of action (Karma-Yoga). In this manner, Mulla and Krishnan (2006a) categorised “devotion to god” as the path of devotion and “meditation or focusing on the soul” as the path of meditation or the path of knowledge. From this they deduced that Karma-Yoga must be described by one or more of the remaining three items, namely, performing action without attachment, doing one’s duty and being neutral to opposites.

The essence of Karma-Yoga is given in the *Gita* (Radhakrishnan, 1993), Chapter 2, Verse 47, which says, “To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction.” This verse of the *Gita* is also mentioned by Tilak (2000, p. 895) as giving the entire import of Karma-Yoga in a short and beautiful form. Later in the *Gita* (Radhakrishnan, 1993), Chapter 3, Verses 12, 13 & 16, Arjuna is told that persons who survive on this earth and use its resources without working are living in sin and, hence, man is obliged to work selflessly in order to fulfil his duty towards the world.

Hence, based on the results of our content analysis and the interpretation of the *Gita* verses, we take Karma-Yoga as made up of two dimensions: a sense of obligation or duty towards others and an absence of desire for rewards.

Sense of Obligation or Duty towards Others

The body has a natural tendency to act; the *Gita* states that actions motivated by a desire bind the soul into the cycles of birth and death. Hence, the only way one can function in society without being bound by the results of one's actions is to consider all actions as a repayment of past dues. This essentially means developing a sense of obligation or duty towards others. In this manner, all actions become a repayment of past debts and the actor is free of any extrinsic motive for the actions.

Absence of a Desire for Rewards

When an individual is able to discriminate between what is eternal (soul) and what is transient (the body) and is able to increasingly identify with the soul, his/her actions are more spontaneous and not motivated by any material gratification. Besides, reduced identification with the body creates resilience towards physical pleasures and pain. As a result of this identification with one's eternal nature, there arises in the individual an absence of desire for extrinsic rewards.

In addition, since the outcomes of one's actions are dependant on an elaborate chain of cause and effect, all that is in the individual's control is performance of that action. Hence, one ceases to have a feeling of ownership towards one's actions and believes that the actions happen naturally and the bodily organs are just an instrument for their execution. This lack of ownership for actions, coupled with the sense of obligation to others, creates a complete disinterest in the mind of the seeker for any form of material or social rewards.

Validation of the Karma-Yoga Construct

According to Rokeach (1968), human personality consists of three distinct domains. The behavioural domain consists of observable behaviours; the

affective domain consists of feelings, emotions and attitudes; and the cognitive domain consists of the intellect which reasons and evaluates. Our validation of the Karma-Yoga construct must address each of these three domains of human personality.

An earlier study (Mulla & Krishnan, 2006a) identified two dimensions of Karma-Yoga, namely, sense of duty or obligation towards others and an absence of desire for rewards. The dimensions of Karma-Yoga were then validated using two facets of the personality trait of conscientiousness, namely, dutifulness and achievement striving, using hierarchical regression and a test for moderation. They found that a belief in the basic tenets of Indian philosophy enhanced duty orientation and absence of desire for rewards enhanced life satisfaction. There was moderate support for their hypothesis that dutifulness was more strongly related to Karma-Yoga when achievement striving was low than when it was high.

Another study (Mulla & Krishnan, 2006b) validated the dimensions of Karma-Yoga using Rokeach's (1973) universal values and found that individuals who were rated high on Karma-Yoga showed a distinct terminal value system which was characterised by a high emphasis on other-oriented values like "a world at peace" as compared to self-oriented values such as "mature love". Individuals rated low on Karma-Yoga showed exactly the opposite prioritisation of these values. High Karma-Yoga individuals also gave a significantly stronger emphasis on the other-oriented value of "national security". In addition, they found that individuals who scored high on Karma-Yoga rated being "responsible" as the most important instrumental value. Responsibility means being dependable and reliable. Individuals who are highly duty-oriented are likely to be highly responsible and dependable. High Karma-Yoga individuals also rated the value of "obedience" significantly higher than low Karma-Yoga individuals. Both these values are moral values and are likely to arouse feelings of guilt if they are violated. In contrast, low Karma-Yoga individuals rated being "broadminded" significantly higher than high Karma-Yoga individuals. In fact, for low Karma-Yoga individuals, it was more important to be "broadminded" rather than to be "responsible". Another interesting observation in the aggregate value systems of the two groups is that for low Karma-Yoga individuals, being "forgiving" (rank = 15) was more important than being "obedient" (rank = 18). On the other hand, for high Karma-Yoga individuals, being "obedient" (rank = 10) was more important than being "forgiving" (rank = 17).

The core of Karma-Yoga is being duty-oriented and being able to follow one's duty even though it may be personally uncomfortable. We have some support for this in Mulla and Krishnan's (2006b) findings that high Karma-Yoga individuals had a higher preference for being obedient as compared to being forgiving. This finding reminds us of McClelland and Burnham's (1976/1995) classic article which emphasised that an effective manager was one whose need for using socialised power was greater than his or her need for being liked by subordinates. This article attempts to further validate the Karma-Yoga construct using the dimensions of empathy.

Empathy

Even though empathy has always been recognised as an important human characteristic, there has been some disagreement on its formal definition (Choplan et al., 1985). Some of the early definitions of empathy describe it as sensitivity to the affective experiences of others (Choplan et al., 1985) or a willingness or tendency to put oneself in another person's place (Hogan, 1969). For some time there were two streams of research: one focusing on the cognitive aspects of empathy involving an accurate perception of others, and another focusing on the emotional reactivity of empathy (Choplan et al., 1985; Davis, 1983). These two views of empathy, on one hand, are considered to be distinct while, on the other hand, they are known to coexist as empathy (Duan & Hill, 1996). Both the cognitive and affective aspects of empathy were incorporated into a broader definition of empathy given by Davis as "the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another" (1983, p. 113). Davis (1980) adopted a multidimensional approach to empathy and developed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), a collection of four distinct constructs concerning responsiveness to others. The IRI contains 28 items made up of four, 7-item subscales, each tapping a distinct aspect of empathy. The Perspective-Taking (PT) scale measures the tendency to adopt the psychological point of view of others. A sample item from the PT scale is, "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective." The Fantasy scale (FS) measures respondents' tendencies to transpose themselves imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies and plays. A sample item from this scale is, "I really get involved with the feelings of

the characters in a novel". The Empathic Concern (EC) scale assesses "other-oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others. A sample item from this scale is, "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me". Finally, the Personal Distress (PD) scale measures "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal settings. A typical item from this scale is, "Being in a tense emotional situation scares me". Thus, perspective-taking and fantasy measure the cognitive aspect of empathy, while empathic concern and personal distress measure the emotional aspects of empathy (Brems, 1989; Davis, 1980).

Davis (1983) established the convergent and divergent validity of the IRI by relating each of the four components, namely, PT, FS, EC and PD, to distinct psychological constructs. For example, while higher PT scores were found to be associated with better social functioning and higher self-esteem, higher FS scores were not associated with these measures. Similarly, high EC scores were found to be weakly related to self-esteem while high PD scores were strongly associated with lower self-esteem and poor interpersonal functioning (especially, shyness and social anxiety). In addition, EC scores were found to be positively related with a non-selfish concern for others while PD scores were strongly associated with feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty and fearfulness. Finally, PT scores were positively related to EC scores and negatively related to PD scores.

The three facets of perspective-taking, empathic concern and personal distress were related to positive relationship behaviours and positive perceptions by partners (Davis & Oathout, 1987). Similarly, empathy has been found to be related to a wide range of prosocial behaviours (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987) and negatively related to aggressive and antisocial behaviours (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). Other measures of emotional empathy have been shown to be positively related to creativity (Carlozzi et al., 1995), forgiveness of others (Macaskill et al., 2002), and intrinsic religiosity, that is, viewing religion as the central end goal around which life is organised (Watson, Hood, Jr. et al., 1984) and negatively related to narcissism (Watson, Grisham et al., 1984) and dogmatism (Carlozzi et al., 1995).

Is Empathy Mutable?

On one hand, studies have shown that the trait of empathy is partially influenced by hereditary factors (Davis et al., 1994), parental disciplinary

styles (Lopez et al., 2001) and parental attachment styles (Britton & Fuendeling, 2005). On the other hand, it has been found that empathy can be significantly improved through training (Black & Phillips, 1982; Herbek & Yammarino, 1990). Specifically, closeness and trust have been found to be positively related to empathic concern and perspective-taking, and anxiety has been found to be positively related to personal distress (Joireman et al., 2001). It has also been seen that even if empathy is aroused by a particular target, the emotion may be transferred to other targets and may subsequently enhance prosocial behaviours for targets other than those who aroused the empathy initially (Barnett et al., 1981).

The Empathy–Altruism Hypothesis

Altruism is defined as “a motive to increase another’s welfare without conscious regard for one’s self-interests” (Myers, 1999, p. 474). The distress of another person may trigger two very different types of helping behaviour. The first mechanism starts with the emotion of distress which includes being alarmed, upset, worried, disturbed or distressed. The emotion of distress leads to a motivation to reduce one’s distress, which in turn may lead to either a helping behaviour or an escape from the situation. The helping behaviour, which is directed towards the end goal of increasing the helper’s own welfare, is known as egoistically motivated helping. The second mechanism starts with the emotion of empathy which includes being empathic, concerned, warm, soft-hearted or compassionate. The emotion of empathy leads to an altruistic motivation to reduce other’s distress, which in turn leads to a helping behaviour directed towards others (Batson et al., 1983). This behaviour directed towards the end goal of increasing the other’s welfare is known as altruistically motivated helping. Since the external behaviour—helping—remains the same and direct observation of an individual’s motives is difficult, the only way in which to ascertain the motivation is to identify some point at which the egoistic and altruistic motivations differ at a behavioural level (Batson et al., 1981).

The mechanism which explains altruistic helping behaviour, that is, helping behaviour triggered by the emotion of empathy and motivated by altruism, is known as the empathy–altruism hypothesis (Batson et al., 1981). A number of studies have validated the existence of empathy as a source of

altruistic motivation (Dovidio et al., 1990; Sibicky et al., 1995). There have been some criticisms of the empathy–altruism hypothesis, most of them giving egoistic alternatives and claiming that the true motivation behind the so-called altruistic helping was some hidden self-interest on the part of the helper (Cialdini et al., 1987). Batson and his colleagues have systematically defended most of the criticisms like social evaluation, empathy-specific reward, empathy-specific punishment, negative state relief and empathic joy (Batson et al., 1988; Batson et al., 1989; Batson et al., 1991; Fultz et al., 1986).

Empathy induced altruistic motivation may also have some undesirable effects such as going against the principles of justice by allocating disproportionate resources to an individual for whom empathy is felt and thereby reducing the collective good (Batson, Batson et al., 1995; Batson, Klein et al., 1995).

The Empathy–Altruism Hypothesis and Karma-Yoga

Karma-Yoga is a technique of performing actions as a duty without any expectation of rewards. The concept of duty arises in relation to others and an absence of desire for rewards implies an altruistic motive. Thus, the actions of a Karma-Yogi are necessarily altruistic. In other words, Karma-Yoga can also be termed as a generalised disposition for individuals to engage in altruistic helping.

Only when an individual has genuine empathic concern for others can he/she be sensitive and be aware of his/her duty. Empathic concern and role-taking with respect to individuals affected by one's actions constitutes moral sensitivity, which is the first step towards moral development (Narvaez & Rest, 1995). Individuals who have more empathic concern for individuals around them are more likely to be triggered by altruistic motives and in turn engage in altruistic helping.

Hypothesis 1

Individuals who are high on empathic concern will be high on Karma-Yoga. While empathic concern is likely to generate a motive to help others, those who are prone to personal distress are more likely to harbour feelings of personal anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal settings. In a situation

which requires them to act, they are more likely to focus on reducing their own feelings of distress rather than focusing on the needs of others. Hence, empathic concern is not sufficient to generate altruistic behaviour; it is also required for individuals to have low levels of personal distress.

Hypothesis 2

The relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga will be moderated by personal distress in such a way that the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga will be stronger in the presence of low personal distress.

Method

Participants

One hundred and eight students, from ages 20 years to 27 years (Median = 23), who were attending a course in organisational behaviour at a business school in Mumbai, India, were studied. The sample included 52 male and 44 female respondents (12 undisclosed). There were four arts graduates, 56 graduates in commerce or business management, 11 graduates in science and 36 graduates in engineering.

Measures

The scale for Karma-Yoga, which was first developed by Mulla and Krishnan (2006a), contained two dimensions of Karma-Yoga. This scale was later revised by Mulla and Krishnan (2006b) based on inputs from a panel of experts in Indian philosophy and it contained an additional dimension of Karma-Yoga, namely, equanimity to opposites. However, only the dimension of sense of duty or obligation to others was found to be reliable. For this study we used an 11-item scale based on the first two dimensions of the revised scale prepared by Mulla and Krishnan (2006b).

The four dimensions of empathy, namely, EC, PD, FS and PT were measured using the IRI developed by Davis (1980), which consists of four subscales of seven items for each of the dimensions.

Data Analysis

The reliabilities of the dimensions of the IRI were found to be acceptable and Cronbach alphas of EC, PD, FS and PT scales were 0.73, 0.74, 0.80 and 0.62, respectively. The reliability of the consolidated scale was 0.75. Factor analysis of the empathy scale with varimax rotation and extraction of four factors showed that the items loaded on each of the four factors were as expected. Earlier studies have found that females score higher than males on all dimensions of empathy (Davis, 1980, 1983; Lopez et al., 2001). In this study, we found that females scored significantly higher than males on all dimensions of empathy except personal distress.

The reliability of the Karma-Yoga scale was found to be acceptable (Cronbach alpha = 0.66) after dropping six items. Factor analysis showed that all the five items of Karma-Yoga loaded on a single factor. Since the two dimensions of Karma-Yoga were not distinguishable, Karma-Yoga was considered as a single consolidated variable.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for and correlations between all variables in the study—Karma-Yoga, empathic concern, personal distress, perspective-taking and fantasy. It also presents reliability coefficients for the variables. Each variable was constructed by computing the mean of the items comprising the scale.

Test of Hypothesis 1: Empathic Concern and Karma-Yoga

To test our hypothesis of the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga, we conducted a regression analysis with Karma-Yoga as the dependent variable and the dimensions of empathy as independent variables. Results of the regression are reported in Table 2.

As is evident from Table 2, empathic concern is significantly related to Karma-Yoga. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Additionally, we find that demographic variables such as age and sex are not significant.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach Alphas and Correlation Correlations

(N = 108)							
Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Karma-Yoga	4.23	0.74	(0.66)				
2. Empathic Concern	5.04	0.71	0.32**	(0.73)			
3. Personal Distress	3.83	0.71	0.09	0.17	(0.74)		
4. Perspective-Taking	4.55	0.66	0.34**	0.16	-0.14	(0.62)	
5. Fantasy	4.86	0.91	-0.18	0.30**	0.18	-0.08	(0.80)

Note: Cronbach alphas are in parenthesis along the diagonal.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2
Results of Regression Analysis to Test the Effect of Dimensions of Empathy on Karma-Yoga

(N = 108)						
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	β	t	Model R ²	Model F	
Karma-Yoga	Constant		2.55**			
	Empathic Concern	0.25	2.45**			
	Personal Distress	0.05	0.51			
	Perspective-Taking	0.23	2.28*			
	Fantasy	-0.26	-2.54**			
	Age	-0.09	-0.94			
	Sex (Males = 1, Females = 2)	0.12	1.17	0.14	3.67**	

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Test of Hypothesis 2: Empathic Concern, Personal Distress and Karma-Yoga

To test the moderating affect of personal distress on the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga, we performed a test for moderation. First, the scores on empathic concern and personal distress were centred (that is, by subtracting the mean from each score) and the interaction term was calculated. Empathic concern, personal distress and the interaction term were entered as independent variables in a regression with Karma-Yoga as the dependent variable. Results of the regression are reported in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, the interaction term is significant ($p < 0.05$) and hence, Hypothesis 2 is supported. To investigate the interaction further, we did a median split of the sample on personal distress, that is, the sample was divided into two sets depending on whether the values of personal distress

Table 3
*Results of Regression Analysis to Test the Interaction
 Effect of the Dimensions of Empathy on Karma-Yoga*

(N = 108)

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Independent Variable</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Model R</i> ²	<i>Model F</i>
Karma-Yoga	Constant		4.61***		
	Empathic Concern	0.29	3.23**		
	Personal Distress	0.06	0.70		
	Empathic Concern \times Personal Distress	-0.20	-2.18*	0.12	5.95**

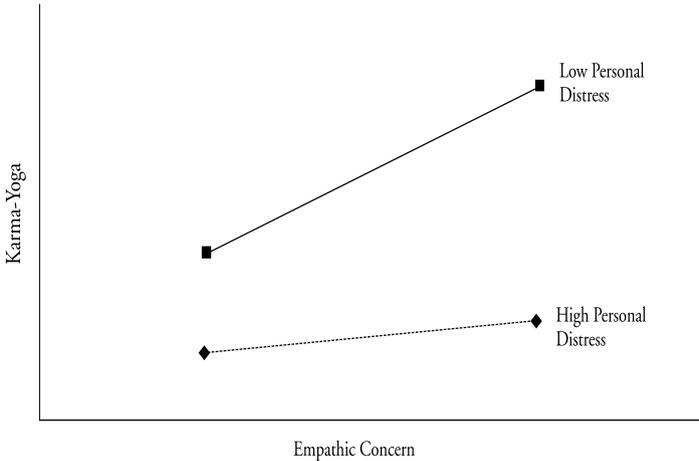
Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

were greater than or less than the mean. When personal distress was high (that is, greater than or equal to 3.85), the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga was almost non-existent ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.52$) and when personal distress was low (that is, less than or equal to 3.71), the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga was very strong ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). The moderating effect of personal distress on the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga is represented in Figure 1.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between Karma-Yoga and the dimensions of empathy. The first hypothesis was that empathic concern was related to Karma-Yoga and the second hypothesis was that this relationship was moderated by personal distress, such that the relationship would be stronger when personal distress was low. Both the hypotheses received support from the data. The data revealed that the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga was substantially stronger for individuals who were low on personal distress as compared to those who were high on personal distress. Hence, we found some support for our hypothesis that Karma-Yoga is similar to altruistic motivation in the Indian context. Coupled with the earlier findings of Mulla and Krishnan (2006a, 2006b), this study completes the profile of a Karma-Yogi by describing the

Figure 1
*Chart Showing the Moderating Effect of Personal Distress
on the Relationship between Empathic Concern and Karma-Yoga*



relationship of Karma-Yoga to the affective domain of an individual's personality. The common theme across the three studies is a distinct orientation towards others even at the cost of personal benefit. This is strong support for Karma-Yoga being the Indian equivalent of altruistic motivation.

An overall limitation of this study is that all the variables studied are self-reported. Self-report measures are ubiquitous and, simultaneously, the most vulnerable aspect of research in organisational behaviour and human resource management (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). This is especially true for non-verifiable data, like personality traits, behaviour, feelings, attitudes and perceptions, which may be erroneous due to lower self-awareness (Wohlers & London, 1989) of the respondents. Also, it is likely that use of self-ratings of Karma-Yoga, along with self-reports of dispositional variables like empathy and emotional intelligence, may have led to spurious correlations confounded by common method variance. One of the remedies suggested for the common method bias is the use of independent sources for predictor and criterion variables (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Hence, future studies should try to incorporate some peer reported measures or try for experimental verification of hypotheses.

Despite the limitations, this study makes some valuable contributions to the literature. First, it validates the two scales, namely, Davis' (1980) IRI and Mulla and Krishnan's (2006b) Karma-Yoga scale in the Indian context. Second, it identifies a concept which is identical to altruism in terms of its affective antecedents. According to the empathy–altruism hypothesis (Batson et al., 1981), altruistic motivation to help is triggered by high levels of empathic concern and not personal distress. In this study, we found that the relationship between empathic concern and Karma-Yoga was stronger when personal distress was low. Hence, Karma-Yoga is the Indian equivalent of altruistic motivation. Finally, this study completes the validation of Karma-Yoga in terms of all the three domains of human personality, namely, the behavioural, the cognitive and the affective (Rokeach, 1968). Mulla and Krishnan (2006a) found that Karma-Yoga was related to high dutifulness and low achievement striving. Mulla and Krishnan (2006b) found that Karma-Yoga was related to other-oriented values and moral values. This study describes the relationship between the affective aspects of personality, namely, empathy. When taken together, these three studies adequately describe the personality profile of a Karma-Yogi. In the light of these studies, the Karma-Yogi comes across as an individual who highly values the welfare of others, is empathic, who can understand the feelings and emotions of others without getting personally ruffled, and who executes his or her duty without worrying about personal achievements.

These findings have significant implications for organisations and for management education. Karma-Yoga constitutes the Indian work ideal and can be harnessed by leaders to motivate their followers. Leaders who possess attributes of Karma-Yoga are likely to be role models for their subordinates and thus enhance their charismatic potential. Rather than adopt the conventional western models of motivation which have an individualistic–hedonistic bias and are largely based on cognitive calculative processes (Shamir, 1991), Indian managers can use more indigenous motivational models like Karma-Yoga. Studies have shown that self-sacrifice and altruistic behaviours are extremely effective leadership behaviours in the Indian context (Singh & Krishnan, 2005a, 2005b).

Since we now have a fair idea of the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of Karma-Yoga, these can be incorporated into leadership selection criteria and into education for leadership development. Individuals who have genuine empathic concern for addressing genuine needs of others and

who are not unduly personally distressed by the pain of others, are ideal candidates for leadership. Training programmes on leadership must generate the aspects of empathic concern in participants and help them to overcome personal distress so that they are able to achieve the ideal of Karma-Yoga.

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Appendix

Scale for Karma-Yoga: Sense of Duty or Obligation towards Others

1. I hesitate to do what is expected of me (negative).
2. I willingly do whatever task is assigned to me, even if I do not enjoy it.
3. I am aware of my obligations to society.*
4. I willingly perform all duties, which are expected of me.
5. I feel it is my duty to contribute to society.*

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Scale for Karma-Yoga: Absence of Desire for Rewards

1. I work only in order to get some personal benefits* (negative).
2. While working, I keep thinking about success or failure (negative).
3. I expect to be rewarded for good work done* (negative).
4. I often dream of becoming very successful (negative).
5. I am disappointed when the outcomes of my efforts do not yield the results I expected (negative).
6. I strive to be selfless in whatever activity I undertake.*

* Items retained for the analysis.

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