

From Profit to Purpose...

Why Western Management Must Embrace Dharmic Management for Sustainability?

by

Lalith de Silva

Management Consultant | Business Coach

“Mind precedes all things. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never leaves.”

- The Buddha -

Dhammapada - Yamaka Vagga v 2 -

(Story of Mattakundali born as a Dewaputta)

In today’s VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world, organizations face unprecedented challenges. Climate change, social inequality, declining well-being, rising corruption and fraud, increasing resource scarcity, and growing workplace dissatisfaction are testing the limits of traditional Western management. With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, these challenges will intensify, reshaping industries, jobs, and human interactions. While Western models have delivered efficiency, innovation, and growth, they have also contributed to a culture that often tolerates excessive greed, short-termism, and self-interest. Too often, they overlook a deeper question: At what cost? The need for a more ethical, balanced, and sustainable approach has never been greater.

This shift is especially critical for business and public sector leaders. Many operate under intense pressure to deliver short term results, often at the expense of long-term sustainability and human well-being. Employees increasingly live with chronic stress, affecting their mental, emotional, and physical health. In Sri

Lanka, both public and private sector organizations invest heavily in technical and professional training, yet minimal attention is given to developing mindfulness, emotional intelligence, compassion, gratitude, and resilience etc. This gap has become one of the most pressing leadership challenges of our time.

Dharmic management offers a powerful solution. Rooted in the timeless teachings of the Buddha particularly the Noble Eightfold Path. It emphasizes right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, and right mindfulness. The Buddha clearly taught that the mind is the forerunner of all actions. If the mind is not trained and purified, even the best Business strategies and systems will fail. I believe that over 95% of leadership challenges originate from an untrained mind driven by ego, conceit, fear, greed, and ignorance. Therefore, the most critical management discipline today is mindfulness.

Dharmic management encourages leaders to move beyond short term profit and consider the long-term well-being of all stakeholders, investors, customers, employees, society, and the environment. It is not anti-profit, rather it places profit within a broader framework of purpose, ethics, and sustainability.

A key strength of this approach is its stakeholder-centric perspective. Investors benefit from ethical governance and long-term value creation. Customers are increasingly drawn to organizations that demonstrate authenticity and responsibility. Employees thrive in environments where compassion, fairness, empathy, trust, and purpose are prioritized. When leaders consciously invest in employee well-being through mindfulness and emotional intelligence, organizations experience higher engagement, reduced burnout, and improved performance, innovation and creativity.

Importantly, Dharmic management expands the definition of stakeholders to include the planet. Unlike extractive models focused on short term gains, it promotes harmony with nature and responsible resource use. While aligned with ESG (*Environment, Social and Governance*) frameworks, it goes deeper by addressing the root causes of harmful behaviour greed, ignorance, and lack of awareness.

Another transformative dimension is inner leadership. Many organizational failures arise not from poor strategy, but from unexamined human tendencies. Through mindfulness and self-awareness, leaders develop clarity, emotional balance, and wisdom. Teachings such as the *Sigālovada Sutta* highlight ethical responsibilities and balanced relationships principles highly relevant to modern corporate life.

Dharmic management is not about religion, but about universal human values, integrity, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom. As AI transforms the external world, leaders must equally transform their inner world.

The future of sustainable growth lies in integrating Western management systems with Dharmic wisdom. Systems alone are not enough organizations need emotionally intelligent leadership.

Dharmic management offers that path - a path where organizations not only perform, but also care; not only grow, but also uplift; and not only succeed, but also contribute meaningfully to humanity and the planet.



[Go to Table of Content](#)