

Zoroastrian Ethics in Business

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ABSTRACT

Almost every religious tradition has provided some highly pertinent and useful moral and ethical tenets that if embraced in business thinking and action can contribute to sustainable business practices focusing not only on the financial aspects of business organisations but also benefit the society and the community at large. This article attempts to dig deep into some of the salient values of Zoroastrianism that could contribute to the field of business ethics and it is proposed that the wider application of these values could be beneficial for business leaders and professionals regardless of their religious affiliations. Tenets of Zoroastrianism ethics that have wide applicability to various business contexts have been presented in the article by first developing a normative framework of Zoroastrian ethics for business followed by an explanation of the desirable virtues of a leader or manager. The virtue and normative frameworks are mutually dependent on each other for developing a more responsible and practical view of business where morality and ethicality is never compromised but rather seen as a means towards creating a meaningful and profitable business. This article attempts to create an illustrative framework that might be useful for future research in Zoroastrian ethics as it still remains a less understood and under-researched area in the context of business ethics.

Keywords: Ethics, Golden triad of Zarathustra, Moral irrationality, Virtues, Zoroastrianism

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INTRODUCTION

Ethics guide humans towards morally right behaviour (Lewis, 1985). All religions lay emphasis on moral behaviour and prescribe frameworks, principles, codes or norms for the same. The insights provided by religion often become the basis of developing understanding of what is right and wrong (Turner, 1997). So, it seems difficult to ignore the impact of religious beliefs on one's ethical behaviour in various situations including business and that's why many studies have been conducted exploring relationship

between religion and business ethics (Weaver & Agle, 2002; McMahon, 1985; Magill, 1992; Pava, 1998a; Calkins, 2000). According to Parboteeah *et al.* (2008), although there seems to be obvious connection between religion and ethics but mixed results have been found for this relationship by scholars. Few scholars (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003; Kidwell *et al.*, 1987) have found no such significant relationship; small positive relationship was found between corporate social responsibility and religious beliefs (Agle & Van Buren, 1999); whereas the significant contribution of religious values to

business ethics has been observed by some scholars (Epstein, 2002; Pava, 1998a; Calkins, 2000).

Epstein (2002) has cited some examples of corporate leaders such as Max DePree, Tom Chappell and Aaron Feuerstein who have been influenced by religious beliefs in their business operations laying emphasis on the point that religion does influence business ethics of people. According to Pava (1998a), many business practitioners are increasingly attempting to find answer to ethical dilemmas from religious sources. According to Calkins (2000), in earlier times, the teachings of Judaism and Christianity influenced the ethics of business in the west as perception of the appropriateness of particular business practice was developed on the basis of narratives mentioned in these religions.

The mixed results for relationship between religion and business ethics is basically the result of different methodologies and conceptual frameworks used by scholars (Parboteeah et al., 2008). But to assume that religion does not influence people in business decision-making is a mistake as religious values are an important antecedent for choices opted by many business leaders and employees in professional life. Ethics and religion are closely intertwined in the history of humankind and its evolution. To ignore the teachings and beliefs of world religions by presupposing their inability to influence or guide ethical business practices is a notion equivalent to accept 'sleepwalking'.

Business is a societal activity. The sustainability of the business and the business organisations depends upon their acceptance by the stakeholders in the long run. This acceptance comes largely on the basis of value systems being followed in business thinking and functioning. Almost every religion has provided some highly pertinent and useful moral and ethical tenets that if embraced in business thinking and action, could in all probability, would lead to sustainable business practices benefitting not only the balance sheets of

business organisations but also the society and the ecosystem as whole.

Many studies have been done so far and ample literature exists about the role that various prominent religions such as Christianity (Friedman, 2000; Chase, 2004; Longenecker et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2009), Islam (Rice, 1999; Beekun, 2004; Abuznaid, 2009), Judaism (Green, 1997; Pava, 1998b), Hinduism (Corner, 2009; Chakraborty, 1987, 1995) or Buddhism (Gould, 1995; Marques, 2010) could or had played in the development of ethics and how their ethical frameworks and moral cannons can be used in developing ethical businesses. One religion on which very little scholarly work has been done in relation to business ethics is Zoroastrianism and there is a need to bridge this scholarly gap by throwing more light on how the ethics of this religion might contribute to a business logic strongly driven by both economic and moral responsibility towards the stakeholders.

If we trace the history of businesses and the development of corporations in India, there are two giant business groups that have lived for over a century and have been able to show immense resilience amidst economic turbulence and social instabilities; and have consistently emerged as respected business groups with a prominent image of being ethical and socially responsible. First is the Tata Group founded by Jamshetji Nusserwanji Tata in 1868 (148 years ago) and has a consistent image of trust and 'being' responsible to the various stakeholders (both internal and extended). Tata is a name that has become synonymous with 'trust' in India. Second is the Godrej Group which was founded in 1897 (118 years ago) and is known for its transparency and good corporate governance practices. Godrej not only has created successful businesses with some products like Locks, Hair Dyes, etc. enjoying market leader position for ages, but also has been the pioneer in implementing stringent corporate governance reforms along the lines

of Sarbanes-Oxley standards even before many of its counterparts. As Adi Godrej, Chairman of the Godrej Group puts it

Our strong emphasis on corporate governance has helped us get high ratings on both corporate governance and shareholder value creation....I also feel that the markets have recognised and rewarded our pioneering corporate governance initiatives. (*Knowledge@Wharton, 2005*)

There are two very prominent similarities between Tata and Godrej. First, both these business groups have consistently maintained an image of being ethical and socially responsible businesses with strong philanthropic pursuits. Secondly, both these companies have Founders who belong to the same religion, Zoroastrians (commonly called 'Parsis' in India because of their Persian origin). Also, they are into their third and fourth generation of business and the successors to these large professionally managed corporations have been from the Zoroastrian communities only. It may seem ordinary, but if we look into the demographics of Indian population, Parsis constitute less than 100,000 people (around 0.0006% of the population) and 4 of the 16 companies that have a century-old history in India have founders from this community.

This article attempts to dig deep into some salient values of Zoroastrianism that could contribute to the field of business ethics and it is proposed that the wider application of these values could be beneficial for business leaders and professionals regardless of their religious affiliations. India has already witnessed the immense positive contribution of Parsi community in its economic and social development over the years. Tenets of Zoroastrianism ethics that have universal applicability to various business contexts have been presented in the article by first developing a normative framework of Zoroastrianism ethics for business followed by an explanation of the desirable virtues of a leader or manager. The virtue and normative

frameworks are mutually dependent on each other for developing a more responsible and practical view of business where morality and ethicality are never compromised but rather seen as a means towards creating a meaningful and profitable business.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism is a religion that was founded by the Prophet Zarathustra in the Indo-Iranian region which was then Persia. His (Zarathustra's) date of birth is placed anywhere between 6000 B.C. and 600 B.C. (*Dhalla, 1938*). Prophet Zarathustra preached this monotheistic religion where the followers worshipped the fire as a manifestation of their God Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda literally means the 'Wise Lord'. The followers of the religion saw the whole Universe as a moral reality that manifests out of the interplay of the opposing forces of good and evil. The good was called the Asha which is because of Ahura and the evil is because of the demon *Angira Manyu*. To a certain extent, this looks equivalent to the philosophy of Tao which also talks of the world in harmony where the opposites (yin and yang) co-exist. The Zoroastrians gained prominence at various times in the history of the Persian Empire achieving the greatest height during the Sassanian Empire. The Sassanian period forms a brilliant page in the history of the Zoroastrian religion. But a spirit of indifference came over the people in the time of the later Sassanians. With the success of the Arabs, brought about the downfall of the faith: only some thousands remained followers and many of these migrated to India (*Buch, 1923*). Today most of the surviving followers of this religion live in Mumbai as the *Parsi* community (because of their *Persian* origin). Today the religion has just about 200,000 followers left in the world and they constitute only around 0.0006% of India's population. Some of the prominent names in Indian corporate history which have a history of more than 100 years in India viz.,

Tata, Godrej, Wadia Group (owners of Bombay Dyeing and Britannia Biscuits which is the market leader in the biscuit industry in India), Taj Group of Hotels, Shapoorji Pallonji Group (owners of the Eureka Forbes and many construction businesses in India), all have founders who belong to this particular (*Parsi*) community. All these groups or conglomerates are professionally run businesses but into their third generation, the leadership of these companies has remained with a person from the community itself. People normally try to study it from a family business perspective, but family businesses of a particular community (which is a minority) striving for more than a century, surely call for a deeper introspection of the underlying values of the community. Because great companies are not just made by great economics, but by great values that they preserve for generations, which constitutes the 'DNA' of such companies.

WHY ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS?

A closer study of Zoroastrian ethics and its various tenets suggests that it is a synthesis of the two competing approaches to ethics—Normative as well as Virtue. Zoroastrian ethics prescribes a set of norms of behaviour for individuals acting under a given circumstance and at the same time also proposes a set of virtues that every individual should strive to nurture in himself/herself. It advises the individual subject to constantly self-introspect the choices it makes and encourages to always make the 'right' choice which enhances the sense of fulfilling the duty of the individual towards being socially and ecologically responsible. However, in doing so it doesn't ignore or reject the challenges that afflict any situation where the subject is in an ethical dilemma. Zoroastrian ethics prescribes human conduct be always tilted towards the 'morally' correct choice and so promotes a notion of being 'morally irrational', that is, moral choice should always dominate any 'rational' alternative where the

meaning of 'rationality' is misinterpreted as one that only considers profit motive or shareholder wealth maximisation as the primary motive of any business and tends to justify decisions which could ignore the moral and ethical considerations.

The ultimate aim of life as proposed by Zarathustra was to attain wisdom and the starting point of this wisdom was to acknowledge the moral reality of this world being perfect with its inherent imperfections. That is indeed what is required even in the context of contemporary management where leaders need to acknowledge the inherent complexity and uncertainty of the system of which they are a part too, co-creating the dynamically evolving reality that they co-witness being part of the system. Today, the world needs wise leaders and leaders that strive to attain excellence through always choosing the right path with their intelligence and wisdom. In our subsequent discussion, we will see how Zoroastrian ethics helps every person in a responsible position (in business or society) to attain the essential virtues to cope up with the inherent complexity of any situation that they might face in the dynamic real world. But making a choice of the right virtues that will act as essential skills to deal with complexity requires an understanding of an inherent normative framework that creates the context in the society or business. So, we begin the discussion by first establishing a normative framework based on the Zoroastrian ethics.

A NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK BASED ON ZOROASTRIAN PHILOSOPHY

As discussed earlier, Zoroastrian philosophy takes a concurrent approach towards building an ethical framework which is both normative and virtue based. The normative tenets of the Zoroastrian ethics which could be relevant for society and building up responsible businesses would be discussed now. An understanding of the normative part of Zoroastrian

ethics would be significant towards building an integrative approach to the practical wisdom of the practitioner.

The Golden Triad of Zarathustra

The most important as well as the central point of Zoroastrian ethical framework is the *golden triad of Zarathustra* which proposes every individual to have good thoughts, good words and good deeds. This is the essence of Zoroastrian way of living. Good thoughts are borne out of good intentions and so would always lead to good words which are central towards building up and maintaining lasting relationships based on mutual trust and respect. The ethical crisis that businesses face today is that of a sense of trust and respect. Responsible businesses continuously strive to maintain an image of trust by respecting the contributions of the various stakeholders, that is, employees, society, environment, etc. Words and intentions are not enough. They should convert into good deeds and meaningful actions.

According to Dhalla (1938) in his book, *History of Zoroastrianism*

Every man and every woman that lives this earthly life will have to stand at the reckoning one day to receive his or her own desert, and Zarathushtra teaches them all the laws of the requitals of human conduct in which Ahura Mazda himself has instructed him. Ahura Mazda is the lord who knows and watches and judges the deeds of mortals. He holds the destinies of mankind in his hands and apportions reward and retribution unto the righteous and the wicked. (Dhalla, 1938)

This is a moral principle strongly related to the *Golden triad of good thoughts, good words and good deeds*, that lays emphasis not only on the actions of the individual that constantly shape his/her individual destiny but also play a key role in shaping the personality of an individual. The most interesting part of this principle is that it is not restricted to good deeds

only, but also the intentions that guide those deeds (borne out of good thoughts). The desirable virtues of any manager or employee in an organisation (viz., accountability, sense of responsibility, selflessness, etc.) are nurtured because of

1. Good thoughts that create the right intentions driving the right actions.
2. The dominant narrative ('Good words') that exists in the various communications of both a formal and informal type inside and outside the organisation (which will be discussed later in detail while explaining the role of *Vohu Manah* or 'pure mind').

Righteousness above Individual Self-Interest

Zarathustra also described the way to determine the 'ethicality' of actions. Actions should be based on the decisions of a 'good mind' whose intentions are consistently moral and above one's individual self-interest. The mind is clouded because of the existence of self-interests which tends to override any situation of dilemma. But Zarathustra proposes that any action can be termed as a 'good action' or 'good deed' if it is driven by moral intentions and not for the sake of creating a pseudo-moral image to gain social acceptance or trust which can be potentially exploited subsequently to achieve one's own self-interest. This clearly calls for a revisit of the Adam Smith's notions of self-interest as the key motivator for economic activity.

Individual Moral Responsibility for One's Choices

Finally, Zoroastrian ethics doesn't affect the freedom of choice of any individual. In fact, according to Zarathustra, every individual is having the freedom to make a choice but once they make a choice, they also would be responsible for the consequences of those choices they made. But this poses a challenge to any individual who is divided between the utility of the

choices made (the end result) and the morality of the means applied to arrive at a choice. Zarathustra further resolves this dilemma by proposing to always making the moral choice because the final consequence of a moral choice is always 'good' as it is accounted for ultimately on the *judgment day* of the individual. This is clearly a strong moral imposition that promotes a constructive *moral irrationality* in the individual choice. Such *moral irrationality* is particularly important in contexts of business where increasingly *economic rationale* and individual self-interest overrides the *moral sentiments* of the individual and forces the individual to make a choice that would be economically *optimal* but morally *suboptimal*.

Accepting the Co-Existences of Moral Opposites

The co-existence of moral opposites, similar to the opposing forces of *Yin* and *Yang* in Taoism, is a duality that creates a unified moral reality. If there is good, there would be bad; if there is pain, there would be pleasure. The two opposing forces of good and evil have been personified as two different spirits viz. the *Spenta Mainyu* (the Holy Spirit) and the *Angira Mainyu*.

This notion is quite practical because, by this, Zoroastrian ethic acknowledges the complexity of the evolving reality which may appear to be dual or unified at the same time and where good and evil will both exist. But as discussed earlier, once an individual (or the Spirit and its intellect as we will see later) has the capability to discern between good and evil, it should always make the choice for 'good' as that is the path to righteousness. And the capability of moral discernment, as we will subsequently discuss, depends on the existence of a 'good mind' (*Vohu Manah*) and not just a 'mind'. Zarathustra makes a clear distinction between a 'mind' and a 'good mind' (*Vohu Manah*) which we will see while discussing the Zoroastrian virtue ethics.

The notion of acknowledging the co-existence of moral opposition to create a unified reality is also a theme that is being acknowledged increasingly in the emergent view of strategy nowadays which proposes not to avoid or ignore complexity but to rather embrace complexity as we all are integral part of a complex adaptive system that is constantly creating the reality that we witness. Many current strategy literatures are also putting forth arguments to embrace complexity (*Weick, 1979; Tsoukas & Dooley, 2011; Boulton et al., 2015*).

THE ZOROASTRIAN VIRTUES

A study of the Zoroastrian virtues requires the understanding of the various psychological conceptions that emerge from the study of the *Avesta* (the principal religious texts of the Zoroastrians) and its *Gathas*. According to the *Avesta*, the human personality consists of five elements—'vitality' (*abu*), 'ego' (*daena*), 'perception' or 'sense' (*baodha*), 'soul' (*urvan*), and *Fravashi* (the Guardian spirit) (*Buch, 1923, p. 43*). However, these *Avestan* words have sometimes multiple meanings. Like *daena* also means conscience (*Buch, 1923, p. 47*) or to gain understanding (*Clark, 1998*) and so may not have the negative connotation that the word 'ego' might carry. The word *baodha*, means 'intelligence' or 'consciousness'. It participates in the responsibility of the *Urvan* (soul). The *boi* or *bod*, of the Pahlavi literature, corresponding to the *baodha* of the *Avestan* period means also consciousness, the faculty by which a man knows himself (*Buch, 1923 p. 48*). The most important virtues that can be observed to emerge from the various ethical tenets of the Zoroastrian tradition are:

- Being Mindful (of one's thoughts and intentions) by having *Vohu Manah* or *Good-Mind*
- *Moral irrationality* (always in favour of *Asha*)
- Benevolence

Being Mindful with Vohu Manah

According to Zarathustra, a Good-Mind or *Vohu Manah* is fundamental to the nurturing of these virtues in an individual who can be a divine instrument of the creator *Ahura Mazda* for maintaining harmony in the overall Universal existence.

In Zoroastrian ethics, there is a clear distinction between 'mind' and the 'good mind'. A mind is an instrument of analysis of a situation or practising a skill to achieve a task at hand. For example, to solve a mathematical problem, we apply mathematical tools which are registered in our mind. However, a mind capable of analysis doesn't necessarily mean that it has the capability for moral discernment. Zarathustra preaches the importance of *Vohu Mana* or the Good-Mind for the nurturing of a spirit of benevolence in an individual which contributes towards the overall social and cosmic development towards the ideal state of existence which is termed as *Asha* as against *Daruj* which is a state of utmost confusion and frustrations. *Asha* has been conceived as equivalent to a heaven and *Daruj* means hell. *Asha* can also be conceived as a state of righteousness and can only be attained through *Vohu Manah*. The Prophet envisioned the Divinity, Ahura Mazda, as Creator of a scheme of Perfect Goodness, the enunciation of a deep Truth for the totality of creation in accordance with which existence would evolve in perfection and harmony. This Truth is called *Asha* in the Gathas, the hymns of Zarathushtra (Irani, 2006). The Good-Mind enables us to recognise the flawed world for what it is, the Spirit of Benevolence inspires us to better this world and ultimately to transform it towards perfection, that is, bring about the actualisation of the Ideal Truth, the vindication of Right and Justice (Irani, 2006).

Further, the golden triad of *Zarathustra* can only be actualised with the instrument of *Vohu Manah* and according to Dhalla (1938):

The ethical system of Zarathushtra has the triad of good thoughts, good words and good deeds as its basis. Good words and good deeds proceed from good thoughts and good thoughts are inspired in man by *Vohu Manah*. In all his waking hours man thinks and thinks incessantly. He thinks useful thoughts and wise thoughts and great thoughts and wholesome thoughts and kindly thoughts and virtuous thoughts and good thoughts. But he thinks also idle thoughts and foolish thoughts and mean thoughts and malicious thoughts and cruel thoughts and vicious thoughts and evil thoughts. The mind soars high and wings its way in the realm of righteousness or it sinks low and grovels in the mire of wickedness. Man thinks thoughts, but thoughts make man. Thoughts make him a human being, a saint, and an angel; and thoughts make him an animal, a sinner, and a demon. Man is thought materialized in word and deed. *Vohu Manah* is the ideal that man as a thinking being has to realize.

Moral Irrationality

In the Gathas, there is a prayer dedicated to righteousness. In the Yasna Ha XIX XX XX of the Avesta doctrine, the *Ashem Vohu* is a prayer for righteousness and it says:

Ashem Vohu Vashistem asti
Ushtā asti, Ushtā ahmāi,
Hyat ashāi Vahishtāi ashem.

which means that

Holiness (*Asha*) is the best of all good: it is also happiness. Happy the man who is holy with perfect holiness! —(Darmesteter & Mills, 1884)

Holiness or *Asha* actually means morally correct which is also termed as righteousness. In this prayer, clearly, the Zoroastrian follower has to internalise the habit of always choosing the moral path and the path of perfect righteousness. By 'perfect' Zarathustra means that the righteousness is not driven by any self-interest and this provides an important normative guideline for the practice of righteousness. Any ethical theory should be able to identify a morally good person (Audi,

2012, p. 280) and the concept of *Asha* provides an idea of a virtuous person and virtuous actions. The Zoroastrian virtues are comprised, in general terms, as purity alike of body and soul, uprightness, charity, generosity and benevolence (Jackson, 1896).

However, Zarathustra and the Gathas of the Zend Avesta consistently reflect a notion of 'moral irrationality' which should be the actual nature of the virtue of any individual. For Zarathushtra, it is we who will perfect social existence, because through our wisdom and benevolence we shall make the right choice, without any externally imposed prescriptions or injunctions; and in that process finally eliminate evil; for when evil is not chosen by free-willing individuals through their own rational choice, then evil loses its influence, it is destroyed (Irani, 2006). Every good deed that a person involves in increases the power of good, and his/her every evil act augments the evil (Jackson, 1896). But in business, the motive of profit maximisation is the dominating premise for any major business decisions based on rationality and any decision which is for stakeholder welfare and against profit maximisation may be thought of as irrational and impractical. The concept of *Asha* in Zoroastrian ethics is a dominating premise that governs human conduct and leads people (who are the most important element of any organisation) to truth, honesty, loyalty and courage (Naidoo, 1989). We need truth and honesty to create trust in organisations, we need loyal employees who will always conduct ethically and for the stakeholder welfare, and finally, we need employees who have the moral courage to make difficult decisions that are morally correct. Though it all sounds rational it is important for organisations to have maintained a moral and ethical order which only comes through a certain sense of 'irrationality' in favour of morality and stakeholder orientation as against shareholder primacy and a dominating profit motive.

So, a great leader in the light of Zarathustra is one who will choose the greatest right and will always choose the extreme moral outcome and will always exhibit moral courage in the face of any ethical dilemma or adversity posed by an ethical challenge where the evil forces are at work. In great organisations too we see reflections of good work culture, employee-friendly policies, and good corporate governance as a natural outcome of knowingly or unknowingly following the principles of Zarathustra. For example, as per the 2016 rankings by *The Economic Times* India's Best Companies to Work survey 2016, Godrej ranks among the top five best places to work. In fact, Godrej has ranked consistently in the previous years too.

Tata Group has been consistently regarded over the years as one of the most (in fact the most) trustworthy companies in India. The name of Tata has become synonymous with 'Trust' in India. In a narration of the unwavering commitment of Taj Mahal Hotel's employees (of the Taj Group owned by the Tatas) to customer-centricity, Deshpandé and Raina (2011, p. 120) highlighted the immense moral courage and sense of duty exhibited at the time of a brutal terrorist attack. In their article 'The Ordinary Heroes of the Taj', they write:

During the onslaught on the Taj Mumbai, 31 people died and 28 were hurt, but the hotel received only praise the day after. Its guests were overwhelmed by employees' dedication to duty, their desire to protect guests without regard to personal safety, and their quick thinking.... the Taj Mumbai's employees gave customer service a whole new meaning during the terrorist strike. What created that extreme customer-centric culture of employee after employee staying back to rescue guests when they could have saved themselves? Our studies show that the Taj employees' actions weren't prescribed in manuals; no official policies or procedures existed for an event such as 26/11. Some contextual factors could have had a bearing, such as India's ancient culture of hospitality; the values of the House of Tata, which owns the Taj

Group; and the Taj Mumbai’s historical roots in the patriotic movement for a free India. (*Deshpandé and Raina, 2011*)

Benevolence

According to the various Gathas of Zarathustra, the spirit of benevolence is highlighted as an important virtue of an individual who will constantly contribute towards the idea conception of existence and promotion of righteousness (Asha). Morality is not a mere private individual concern, it refers essentially to others as well as oneself. All relations between man and man are to be regulated by mutual goodwill (*Buch, 1923*). The importance of benevolence has been cited in various places in the Gathas and the Zoroastrian texts. For example, it is said that—‘That man is most venerable who stores up acts of charity. He who is very rich should use his superfluous riches in supporting (others) and in other good deeds pertaining to higher relations. A man gets respect and glory among men through charity by which the world becomes easy and happy.’ (*Dhalla, 1938*)

The spirit of benevolence, over the years, has been strongly reflected in the various philanthropic pursuits of J. N. Tata, the founder of the Tata Group though

such a strong Zoroastrian ethic of benevolence was strangely camouflaged in the guise of nationalist and patriotic feelings towards the Indian nation. There are clear instances in the history of Tatas when the profit amassed could have been reinvested or used for only shareholder’s benefit but was rather spent in building various social infrastructures for the nation like educational institutions, hydro-electric power plants, hospitals, etc. As Worden (2003) narrates:

By 1899, Tata had amassed an impressive fortune from his textile mills ...could have consumed it in luxury, reinvested it in textiles, or sought a high return alternative investment. Instead, he offered a gift for establishing a research institute, built a generating plant for hydro-electric power and decided to construct a steel plant and town from the jungle’s ground up - literally from scratch. This strategy is consistent with the Parsee ethic of benevolence and furthering life, (*Worden, 2003*)

The above narration clearly depicts the Zoroastrian virtues of *Vohu Mana* (Good Minded), moral irrationality (of not pursuing an economic rationale for the greater good) and spirit of benevolence being exhibited and silently followed by the founder of the Tata empire, J N Tata.

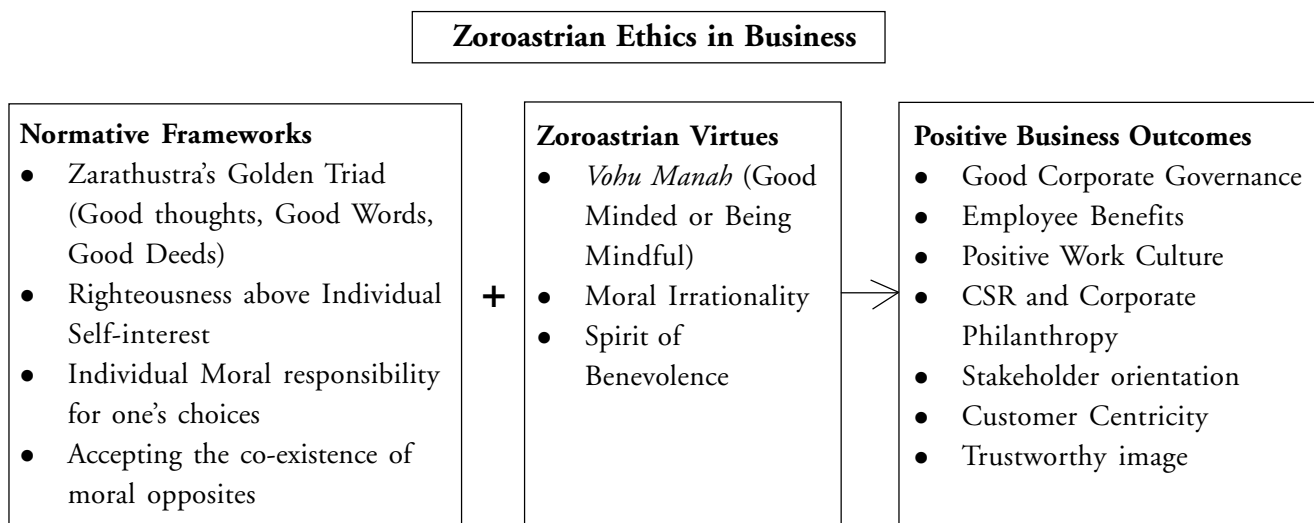


Figure 1: The Framework for Zoroastrian Ethics in Business

CONCLUSION

We would like to conclude this article by an illustration in Figure 1, which will sum up the way Zoroastrian ethic's normative and virtue framework may lead to positive business outcomes. This would help businesses develop a simple and practical view of responsible businesses which has been proven to be effective over the years by some of the highly respected responsible business houses in India that have consistently

produced positive business outcomes such as good corporate governance, positive work culture, increased CSR activity, customer centricity, etc. Also, there is a need for future research in this direction as Zoroastrian ethics still remains a less understood and under-researched area in the context of business but in practice, it has consistently proven the hypothesis of positive impact of religious ethics for creating responsible business practices.

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