

Chapter 3

LEADERSHIP

*‘Whatsoever a great man does, the other men also do;
whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world follows’
—3.21. Bhagvad Gita*

Leaders make the impossible possible. They set the benchmark for rest of the people to look up to and follow. They are the people who are committed to excellence in all spheres of life. They redefine the limits of achievements; they cherish the challenges and like to be tested than to be rested. Leaders see things differently. They see things at a distance which are difficult and seem impossible, they make them possible. They are busy, pushing the people up the ladder of achievement, with themselves behind. They are the people who work for a bigger cause rather than only for themselves. They have the ability to thrive under pressure and uncertainty. They have the ability to transform the lives of people. They have the ability to make an impact by their sheer presence. They work with conviction and self-confidence when the going is tough. They inspire others. Leaders are beyond name, fame and glory, absorbed in their cause and mission. They are the people who make a difference. They are the leaders.

Spirit of work

Among the Navratnas (nine jewels) of Akbar’s court was one of the most talented musicians, called Tansen. He had great prowess as a singer; when he used to sing people became spellbound, his singing touched the soul of one and all; it is often said about him that he could even light lamps by the power of his singing.

Akbar was very fond of his singing. Once when Tansen finished his mesmerising and soulful, singing, Akbar called him and told him that he was simply the best and there was nobody who could be better than he. To this Tansen replied, ‘You should listen to my guru, Haridas.’ Akbar

agreed and asked Tansen to bring him to his court, but Tansen told him that his guru did not go anywhere. Hence Akbar decided to meet him personally at the place where Haridas resided. When the king went near the temple, where Haridas used to reside, he heard him singing. Akbar was stunned and awed to hear Haridas singing. When he met Haridas he said to him, 'I thought that nobody could sing better than Tansen, but when I heard you singing, I thought it was something out of the world. Tell me, what is the difference between you and Tansen? Haridas gazed at Akbar for a few seconds in silence and then replied, 'Tansen sings for you, I sing for the Lord.'

Leaders work for a higher cause

Leadership is not about going through the motions or for making a living; it is something beyond these; it is about working for a higher cause, for a larger good. It is catering to your highest needs and working as if work is worship.

***The spirit with which you work is more important than
the tools with which you work.***

The way you do your duty is very important; some may do it just as a burden, others as their duty, but the blessed is the one who does it as service. Service to Lord makes it even more special, for whatever He does has an element of magic in it. Do your duty for a purpose, for a cause. Let it be your motivation and you will move the world. Never settle for anything less than the best that you can offer, and that is the secret of great success.

According to Abraham Maslow, a great psychologist, the human needs are divided into five categories. The lowest needs in such a hierarchy are Biological, such as hunger, thirst and sex. Next are the Safety needs that include security, stability and order. Then come Belongingness, such as affiliation, affection, and identification. Thereafter Self-esteem needs follow which include prestige, success, and self-respect. Finally at the top in the hierarchy comes the need for Self-actualisation that refers to a person's need to *develop his full potentialities* in whatever field he works.

Leaders align people for a cause; they work for more than just the occupation. Leadership is beyond survival, beyond the routine hours of work. It is to work for something which gives meaning and direction to the lives of people. A great leader is the one who caters to the needs of the people and takes them to the level of self-actualisation. He takes them to the highest level of excellence and fulfilment. He believes what a man can be, he should be. He who does this is a true leader.

Making a successful leader

Successful leaders are the ones who act as the driving force for individuals as well as for organisations. They act as a beacon light and make others tick. A lot of research has gone into the making of a successful leader. Here are some of the qualities, which differentiate successful leaders from others.

Successful leaders

Take calculated risks.
Right amount of supervision.
Know the people they lead.
Delegation according to strength of people
Openness to ideas and information.
Trust the right people.
Open to feedback and change.
Know how to get the best out of people.
Acceptance of the best ideas, irrespective of who it comes from.
Process-centric approach.
Empathy.
Empower people.
Influence.
Inspire.
Willing to trust right people.

Others

Safe approach.
Too much or too little supervision.
Lack knowledge about people.
Delegate according to their Perceptions.
Closed mindset, unwilling.
Lack trust.
Indifferent to feedback.
Monotonous approach.
More concerned about where the idea comes from.
Result-centric approach.
Indifference.
Dominate people.
Power.
Humiliate.
Have biases towards certain people.

Why so many leaders fail?

***‘Leadership is not about where you are,
it is about what you can do’***

To lead people you must be willing to lead the way. You must realise that it is not the position that matters but it is your ability and your work that eventually count. You must be able to lead by setting example. That is the meaning of a leader; you cannot ride on the shoulders of others and lead. A leader has an unflinching commitment which serves as a performance bar for others. A leader always sets the bar quite high and the rest of the people follow suit.

The greatest companies and the best leaders are those who take chances. Many leaders fail because they adopt a safe approach and thus they do not give space to creativity and learning in trying to play safe. They lack trust in the people. They want to take credit for the achievements and blame people for failures. They want to hog the limelight. They are egoistic and misuse their positions; they are the people who particularly favour those who are flatterers. They do not recognise the skills of their people and have a biased attitude when it comes to dealing with people; they provide opportunities based on their own perceptions rather than on the basis of the ability of individuals. They fail as leaders because they fail to inspire people; they are not able to develop the talents and use the skills of men whom they lead. Here are the most common reasons for the failure in leadership.

Same approach with everybody.

Lack of compassion.

Flattery.

Avoiding responsibility.

Want to hog the limelight.

Communication gap.

Ego-centric.

Manipulative approach.

Unable to recognise people.

‘Great leaders are known not by what they do for themselves but by the things they do to others’

The great leaders leave their impress on the people with whom they associate; some people have something magnetic about them; they create a spell on the people. They are the leaders, they are the people who wish good of others and help others. They are the people who believe in speaking the truth rather than speaking pleasing things. They make people strong by motivating them to achieve excellence.

The making of a leader

When the journey is rough it is a time to show that you are tough. The test of leadership takes place when the going is tough. It is often difficult situations that produce great leaders. History tells us that the greatest leaders that the mankind has seen have emerged from adverse situations, be it great leaders like Gandhi, who fought against the British and also against the racial discrimination in South Africa, or Martin Luther King,

who had to encounter slavery, or Mother Teresa, who worked for the poor in difficult situations, or even great corporate leaders like Jack Welch, who came forward when his company was suffering losses.

Problems are an opportunity for the leader. When others are busy complaining about the problems and being victims to them, a leader is the one who is busy looking for their solutions and fixing them.

A leader

Finds delight in distress.

Pushes the limits in victory.

Finds lessons in pain.

Strives for excellence in exertion.

Maintains order in chaos.

Remains humble in success.

Displays dignity in defeat.

Rises every time he falls.

Persists in failures.

Retains calmness in confusion.

Lead by example

A gentleman named William Story, the renowned sculptor, was once asked to make a speech when the statue of George Peabody was unveiled in London. He went to the stage and pointing a finger forwards the statue said, 'That is my speech.' Let your work speak. What you do is much more important than what you say. Let your work inspire others, and when you do that you are a real leader. What you say makes no difference unless you yourself do it. Leading from the front is an art which makes a leader. If you want to lead from the front let your work do the talking.

A famous athlete went to his coach and told him that he had reached a point of stagnation and was not able to improve on his timing any further in the 100m sprint. The coach gave him a pep talk, but in vain. Finally the coach asked him to wait for two days, and on the third day, when the training was about to start, the coach gave him a new pair of shoes and assured the athlete that he had ordered the best shoes for him, which would surely improve on his timing; he told him that it was because of the shoes which he had been wearing that he was not able to improve on his running speed. The athlete began with renewed vigour

and finished up getting his best timing for the season. He hugged the coach and thanked him for the special shoes. The coach looked at the athlete and just smiled. He said, 'It was not the shoes but your effort that did it, as the shoes were the same which you were wearing before, but just your attitude changed and thus you managed to get your best timing. You can achieve anything, just keep trying.'

Leaders brings out the best in people heven when they are down

Mental block is the biggest obstacle that keeps people down; it keeps them away from achieving big things. Leader, like the coach in the story, manages to get the best out of individuals by helping them come out of their mental blocks and give their best even when they are down. He works with the people and reinforces the winning belief in them.

Leaders help people realise their own potential

Leadership is about increasing the self-confidence in people and taking them to where they really belong. Leaders make people realise their potential and make them do things which they themselves never thought of.

***'To be able to lead others, a man must
be willing to go forward alone'***

—Harry Truman

The initial step is the most difficult one. Leadership is about taking the initial step in the right direction. It requires a lot of self-belief, conviction in your ability and courage to start. A leader must be willing to go forward alone; he must not hold himself back in any situation. That is the beginning of leadership. To be able to lead and guide others you must move confidently in the direction of your dreams, your vision. To be able to lead people you must know who you are; what you want and where you need to start. You must have convincing answers to all these and that is where leadership starts.

Responsibility

An executive was once asked, what was his formula for success. He replied, 'It's very simple, Just ten simple two-letter words: If it is to be, it is up to me.'

The strength of the shoulders is determined by the responsibility they can bear. Great leaders are those who can bear the responsibility of an ever-increasing circle of people. Their ability to take responsibility

keeps growing. Leaders always work harder and are more determined than anyone else. They set the tone by taking the responsibility; they are ready to bear the pains and put in the best effort by accepting responsibility.

Leadership is about backing people during tough times. A person who is successful and doing well requires very little support, but the hallmark of real leadership lies in supporting the people even when they are not doing well, because that is the time when support is required the most. A successful leader creates an environment in which effort and learning are rewarded; he understands that failure is part of the process. He backs people when they are struggling and are down; he makes them rise by providing them all the encouragement and support they need. That is leadership.

Commitment to core

In his autobiography, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, narrates an incident of a remarkable act of courage and leadership. In 1979, when the Indian scientists were working on creating the SLV-3 satellite launch vehicle, a 6-member team working on launching SLV-3 mission was preparing for the simulated tests and evaluation of the second phase in the launching of the satellite. They were all waiting to see the response with anxiety but found that a technical problem had arisen. There was some problem in one of the valves. To rectify it the team members went to the test site. And all of a sudden a burst occurred; the oxidiser tank filled with red fuming acid had blasted, and hot and fuming acid was spread all over the members, causing severe acid burns and lots of pain to the team members. The scenes were nasty, the agonising suffering was evident. A disaster had struck the mission. Abdul Kalam and one of his associates rushed to the hospital and pleaded to get 6 beds in the hospital.

Siva Rama Krishnan Nair was among the six persons injured. The acid had spilled on his body at several places. He was in a state of severe trauma with burns and was unconscious. Around 3 a.m. in the morning he regained consciousness.

Just when he regained consciousness, he saw alongside his bed Abdul Kalam; you would expect someone in this condition to express pity over his own condition but the first thing Nair did was to give an assurance to Abdul Kalam that he would make up for the slippage in schedules caused by the accident. Abdul Kalam was deeply moved and greatly impressed by his intensity and drive for the mission.

What a spirited attitude, what sincerity, dedication and optimism! They are the leaders, the people who show great drive and commitment

in achieving their targets; they are the people who show total commitment. They are the men who inspire others around them and bring out the best in everyone. They are the leaders.

Clarity of mind

‘A leader is a follower, follower of his own heart’

With the clarity of mind, your vision begins to expand. Your decisions are made easily if you have clarity of thinking. If the mind is not clear, it is like seeing in the muddy water; you cannot see things at the bottom. With purity of conduct and practice comes clarity, and then vision becomes clear. The best advice comes from the depth of the heart, as it knows what you want in life.

Never underestimate people

When a silkworm makes cocoon, it spins more than 800 yards of silk in one unbroken length. Even though a silkworm is tiny, yet, amazingly, it spins such a huge length of silk. Similarly, no matter however insignificant one may seem, never forget that everybody is potentially capable of achieving anything and everything, provided he has the right motivation, skills and time. Never underestimate the human potential, for it is always capable of producing extraordinary things; great leaders never underestimate anybody; they make people believe in themselves. They repose faith in people and help them fight against all odds.

The Facets of Leadership

Research by Daniel Goleman of Harvard University has confirmed that it is EI, Emotional Intelligence, which plays a major role in making a leader successful. He coined the term EI. Basically it means to know yourself, knowing your real personality and also to control emotions, how to deal with various situations in life, etc.

There are basically 5 aspects to it, namely

Self-awareness

‘The first step of being a leader is not to command others but to have command on yourself’

Self-awareness is imperative for the growth of a person. It basically helps to know one’s strength and weaknesses. By being aware of one’s weaknesses, one can always strive to remove his weaknesses and build up his strength. Thus by knowing yourself, self-growth becomes easy. You know

the direction in which you have to move in order to grow. A leader has a high degree of self-awareness.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation is a subjective term; the greatest leaders the world has seen have had shown great levels of self-regulation. Be it people like Newton and Gandhi or even business tycoons like Bill Gates, Henry Ford, etc. It is about control of your speech, actions, emotions, feelings, and control of your routine. It is the ability to channelise your energy for a cause or a purpose instead of just letting it go waste in useless activities; self-regulation makes one reach the pinnacle of success.

Empathy

It is about respecting the feelings of others. It is all about being connected to people. The leader is someone who is grieved more by the agony suffered by his team and is willing to work to mitigate the same. A great leader first puts himself in the shoes of the members his team, understands their concerns and circumstances and then comes up with solutions.

Motivation

A leader has to be self-motivated; leadership is not a 9 to 5 job. A leader has something greater to observe than just the routine hours of work. When you work for a cause, as the great leaders do, you are respected as a leader. That is what motivates people. It is not about what you get, it is about what you have to offer. A leader is the person who can move people with sheer passion. He is the person who is guided by strong sets of core beliefs and values; often a leader makes a remarkable impact on the productivity of people and also of an organisation.

Social Skills

It is the ability to get along with people. It includes various facets, like communication skills and building rapport with others. All the great leaders of the world have been excellent orators; knowing and believing is one thing and ensuring that you convey the same message and enthusiasm is another. Great leaders not only communicate well, but also network well.

Abraham Lincoln was great at communicating with people; he always used to entertain people by narrating interesting anecdotes and jokes. He used to identify himself with people quite easily to the extent

that people shared their feelings with him. One important aspect of being a leader is the fact that you have to let go your ego. An egoist is seldom liked and he does not easily identify himself with people.

Attributes of a leader

All leaders have personal charisma, they have their own style, yet there is a lot of similarity in the attributes of great leaders. They are the people who make a significant contribution in the lives of people they meet, they guide them and take them to where they belong and at times without their knowledge. Leadership is about giving more than a hundred per cent, it is about taking the responsibility without expecting a reward for it, it is about having interest in what you do and also inspiring others to do the same.

A leader communicates his vision.

A leader connects himself with people.

A leader lives his dreams.

A leader spreads his passion.

A leader cherishes his commitments.

A leader shares his wisdom.

A leader inspires growth.

Leadership Attributes

Decision-making and personal competence.

Ability to recognise a problem.

Optimism, especially when things are not going well.

Receptive and a good listener.

Clear objectives.

Pleasing personality.

Compassionate.

Responsibility.

Builds people.

Ability to follow through and execute.

Stimulates creativity.

Definite plans.

Open to feedback for improvement.
Coordination.
Willing to go the extra mile.
Brings out the best in people.
Always enthusiastic about other people's success.
Goes out of the way to help people.
Keeps promises.
Makes others feel special.
Publicly praises and privately criticises.
Communication.
Inspires change.
Ability to follow his convictions, his heart and principles.
Translates vision into action.
Ready to face the blame when things go wrong and praises the team for success.
Always strives to make the impossible possible.

Impact of leadership

A great leader is the one who

Teaches him who does not know.

inspires him who knows but does not apply his knowledge.

Praises him who knows and applies his knowledge.

History is full of leaders who have transformed the world. Look at the people who have reigned and ultimately it is the impact that they have made on people, on companies and on nations that really stands out and makes them great. The leaders create a climate for people to grow in. They build the inner drive in people to succeed, they make people come out of their shells and aim at something big. They create an environment in which people grow and transform themselves; they help them to change. Inevitably the mark of a great leader is to inspire change. People begin to follow him and tend to change for the better in his presence, almost subconsciously. No one likes anybody's intrusion into his personal life and habits; most people defend themselves even when they know that they are doing wrong. But a leader is the one who does it effortlessly, thereby inspiring changes. This cannot be achieved by forced leadership, but by leadership by consent.

A great leader is he who can

Inspire.

Transform.

Direct.

Trust.

Empower.

Enhance and bring out creativity.

Provide support.

Encourage innovation.

Motivate for doing big things.

Make effective changes.

Ability to manage people

When Sir Humphry Davy, a great scientist, was asked about his greatest discovery, he replied, 'Michael Faraday'. Leaders value people more than anything else, they know and realise that there is no substitute for human talent. Great leaders create new leaders, they recognise people, lead people, and build people. They are true leaders.

Andrew Carnegie said, 'Take away my people, but leave my factory, and soon grass will grow on the factory floors. Take away my factory, but leave my people, and soon we will have a new and better factory.'

Carnegie was a great leader; he was once asked the reason for his fat salary; he was one of the highest paid individuals of his time in America; he answered that it was for his ability to manage people. Great leaders recognise the value of men; they realise that the most important asset is the human being. They are able to lead people. They just do not build factories but also build men, men of courage and vision, and move along with them in the direction of growth and prosperity.

***'If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain,
If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees,
If you want hundred years of prosperity, grow people.'***
—A Chinese proverb

Awaken the leader within you; each and every person is a leader but not everybody is willing to take the responsibility. You can be a leader; leader is not just the person who leads but leader is also the person who is driven by values and is in pursuit of a personal mission in life. Be a leader in your life.