Chapter V

Norms of Leadership in the Primary Sources

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Norms of Leadership in the Primary Sources

This Chapter on the norms of Leadership propounded in the primary sources, *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*, has three sections,

(i) Listing the components of leadership as in the primary sources,

(ii) Analysing under ten heads the leadership norms and their subtleties

(iii) The import of the epigrams in *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*,
    and three fables from the epic.

The first section lists out the norms advocated in the primary sources.

The second section culls out the distinctive features in deference to the normative nature of *Tirukkural*, and the normative and illustrative nature of *The Mahabharata*.

The former speaks of rulers on an ideal plane and the latter on the state-of-the-world terms.

The third section carries an ensemble of epigrams (one-liners) from each text and probes into the metaphors comparing human beings through animal behaviour. Three fables from *The Mahabharata* are summed up as effective teaching aids to modern learners relevant to the realm of management.

A cluster of 50 catchy one-liners from each text is listed in the Appendices 1 & 2
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Section 1: The Common Quotient - Set the Man Right

Authors Valluvar and Vyasa lived in distant regions of India with a divide of centuries between them. They took to different literary forms. They differed in their religious leanings too. While Vyasa was an ardent Hindu, Valluvar was not pinned to a particular faith. If not a-religious or secular, it is certain that his religious leanings did not get reflected in his literary work.

In the monarchic regime Valluvar and Vyasa wrote on kings, generals, ministers, spies and others. Since responsibilities of rulers do not change in monarchy or democracy, the major premise of these writers is the same - that a good man makes a good leader. Both concur with the need for inward evolution of man. That is prescribed as the key component of leadership. They agree on adoptable virtues and avoidable vices. Their views on the duties for the man and the king are identical. They hold the specified duties as supplementary and complementary, not isolated.

Hence it would be rewarding to explore the subject leadership from idealistic and didactic angles, keeping the man in the leader at the epicentre.

Says, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

“One of the striking revelations ...(in) this text (Kural) is how little has changed in two millennia. People basically have the same worries, face the same fears and personal challenges, struggle with the same weaknesses and foible, cherish the same aspirations for goodness and nobility. And sadly, they have the same propensity for dishonesty and corruption.” 1

In explicating these values Valluvar is terse, objective and didactic. He compresses his views in loaded words. His expressions are catchy edicts. But Vyasa’s epic, with numerous characters of varying social strata locked up in an intricate plot, is presented on a large canvas. Set in pursuit of knowledge, power, wealth and pleasure, the debating characters advance arguments and counter them, providing the readers the dimensions of leadership. Vyasa presents in every episode leadership
lessons, which are relevant and applicable even now; so are the edicts of Valluvar. Over the centuries forms governance have changed, not human nature. Old postulates of leadership hold good even now. 'Mountains may wear down, rivers vanish, but the one thing that cannot change is the human nature,' says a Chinese proverb.

The edicts of Tirukkural and The Mahabharata dwell on fostering friendship, controlling anger, judicious dispensation of the law of chastisement, above all the inward growth in a ruler. That those who harness their head and heart succeed, others do not is vindicated through the characters of the epic. Interestingly both Valluvar and Vyasa employ strikingly similar expressions in elucidating the above norms. The couplets of Tirukkural are akin to Vidura Niti and the sermon of Bhishma in The Mahabharata. They express statements on life and leadership in stunningly identical terms. The phrases that matter in Tirukkural and The Mahabharata, touching leadership, are 210 -Valluvar (80) Vidura (68) Bhishma (33) and Lord Krishna (29). Majority of the components, specified by authors mean much the same.

The 80 Leadership Quotients in Tirukkural: (Alphabetised)

Ability, Assessing enemies’ strength, Attending to the basic need - food, Avoiding base people, Avoiding meat, Avoiding slander, Being aware of enemies within, Charitable to enemies, Charitable hands, Charitable mind, Choosing the right place and time to act, Constantly learning, Courtesy, Differentiating good people from bad, Easy accessibility, Educating and training others, Eloquence, Empathetically listening, Employing right type of envoys, Erudition, Evaluating friends, Face-reading, Forbearance, Fore-thought, Free from anger, Free from base desires, Free from hatred, Gaining wealth by the right means, Gathering intelligence through spies, Gratitude, Guided by elders, Health consciousness, Honour, Hospitality, Impartiality, Industriousness, Judging listeners, Just in administration, Keeping the right type of ministers for wise counsel, Knowing one’s own strength, Legitimate pride, Love, Maintaining army with its majesty, Mind-reading, Modesty, Never offending the great, No conceit, No extramarital affairs, No frauds, No ostentation, Nobility, Non-violence - not causing injury, mental or physical, Not being envious, Not being hasty, Not coveting, Not dreading the audience, Not giving room for faults, Not interfering,
Not resorting to meanness, Not taking liquor, Perfection, Perseverance, Pure in activities, Pure mind, Resoluteness, Respect for the rule of law, Retentive memory, Righteousness, Setting example, Speaking pointedly and with purpose, Straightforwardness, Sweet tongue, Taking good, timely food, Testing and trusting deputies, To dare destiny, To go at the root of hostility, Truthfulness, Unblemished family life, Using wealth in right channels and Virtuous conduct.

The 68 Leadership Quotients in Vidura Niti (Alphabetised)

Learning quickly, Listening patiently, Not being haughty, Never be indifferent to the minutest suffering of creatures, Not desiring hostilities, Not disregarding weak foes, Not entertaining desires, Not humiliating and insulting, Not quarrelling with friends, Not rejoicing at honours, nor grieving at slights, Not returning slander or reproach, Not using harsh words, Not wasting time, Perseverance, Prowess, Realising the importance of time, place and means, Rejecting the blamable, Relinquishing crookedness, Relinquishing disloyalty, Relinquishing enmity, Relinquishing folly, Relinquishing insolence, Relinquishing pride, Relinquishing sins, Remaining cool and unagitated, Reverence for others, Seeking advice from elders, Self-control, Sharing wealth, Speaking boldly, Straightforwardness, Strength, Striving till completion, Taking up praiseworthy acts, Tranquility, Trusting those to be trusted, Waiting for the right opportunity to strike, With senses collected.

The 33 Leadership Quotients in Bhishma's Raja Niti (Alphabetised)

Action-orientedness, Attention to mandates of time and place, Avoiding envy, Avoiding slander, Being far-sighted, Being brave, Cautious to avoid damages, Cleverness, Courage, Create, preserve and distribute wealth, Discriminating the righteous from the unrighteous, Exerting, Faith in ministers, Forethought, Health, Higher learning, Honesty, Humility, Intelligence, Know how to handle friends and foes, Mildness, Not having malice, Not procrastinating, Patience, Presence of mind, Respect to elders, Self-reliance, Self-restraint, Steadiness, Study of scriptures, Sweet-tongued, Tranquil mind and having wisdom.
The 29 Leadership Quotients in the Bhagavad Gita (Alphabetised)

Avoiding anger, Avoiding arrogance, Avoiding desire, Avoiding greed, Avoiding harshness, Avoiding hypocrisy, Avoiding ostentation, Avoiding pompousness, Avoiding pride, Avoiding vanity, Behaving as the best servant of society, Being free from ego, Charitable mind, Dispassionate discharge of duties, Faith in action, Full control of mind and senses, Gentle good food habits, Hard work, Having compassion, Humility, Modesty, Not coveting, Not being fickle-minded, Not seeking personal reward, Reverence for elders, Steady-minded in pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, Study of scriptures, Taking the right choices and living up to them.

The Jurist's thirty-four (Alphabetised)

Jurist P. Kodandaramayya, who views The Mahabharata as the magnum opus of India, identifies these 34 values from the epic as Vyasa’s norms of leadership:

Ability to punish the offenders, Acuteness of senses, Amiability, Austerity, Awareness to do the right thing at the right time, Bodily vigour, Compassion, inability to bear the agony of others, Composure of mind, Contentment, Controlling oneself even at the time of anger, Controlling organs, both of action and of sense, Dexterity, Dispassion, Evenness of temper, without making distinction - friend or foe, Exceptional intelligence, Following one's own duty, Forgiveness despite unmindful of injury caused, Fortitude, Gentleness, Guilelessness, Heroism, Independence, not to depend on others, Liberality – giving charity readily when help is sought, Loveliness, Majesty, Modesty, Power to rule, Purity, Quickness of the mind, Quietism, Self-realisation, Strength, Study of science, Truth, giving a precise account of a thing

These traits and much more cited by others defy finite numerical package; but they could be brought under one portmanteau word – Humaneness, as advocated by the primary sources. One leads to several, the several to many and the many to wholesomeness. Terminologies vary; but cultural cohesion holds the fundamentals together while interpretative nuances over the circumstances of application, of course, vary in a few components. Still, ancient authors Valluvar and Vyasa have espoused undoubtedly, centuries ago, what is agreeable to modern writers on leadership.
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Section 2: Valluvar and Vyasa: Subtleties in Import

The normative Valluvar is not burdened with illustrating what he wants to say. He has stopped with definitions, as a didactic could be expected of. Since he has not taken to the illustrative format of literature, he has not created characters in flesh and blood. Hence there is no room for any conflict in his work. He could afford to be strict in drawing the norms on an ideal plane. Yet, these authors espouse values of life on a common edifice.

An analysis under select heads of human interactions:

Just rule

Vyasa and Valluvar accord importance to just rule. Vyasa asserts, “He is the best of kings who even after his death is applauded by the inhabitants of city and country and by his counsellors and friends.” (Ganguli VII P. 46)

Valluvar touches the same subject thus:

‘That king is held Godly who protects his subjects judiciously.’ (Kural 388)

Brain above the belly

“He that is bereft of wisdom seeks much food for his stomach. Conquer thy stomach first. Thou shalt then be able to conquer the earth.” (Ganguli VIII P. 30)

Valluvar expresses Vyasa’s view slightly differently:

“Food for thought takes priority over food for the stomach.” (Kural 412)

Wealth

Acquiring wealth is man’s duty, more so for a ruler. The means of acquiring wealth matters; still the pursuit of wealth is a must, say the authors.

“Divested of prosperity and without resources, he can never win fame on earth or acquire sons and animals.” (Ganguli VIII-P. 12)

Valluvar says the world does not belong to those who lack wealth. (Kural 247)
Although the authors praise ascetics, they are unanimous that negation of wealth is no trait of the man of the world.

"Making no provision for the morrow is practice that suits rishis."

(Ganguli VIII- P. 12)

Valluvar explains the corollary:

"The Government should be capable of creating, conserving, preserving and distributing wealth." (Kural 385)

**Thieving**

Vyasa grants exception to a contingent situation of theft. Says he:

"A person by committing theft for the sake of his preceptor in a season of distress is not stained with sin. One that takes to thieving for procuring enjoyments for himself, however, becomes stained." (Ganguli Vol. VIII XXXIV P. 71)

But Valluvar says a blunt no to thieving. He forbids it summarily. He says one should not entertain even the thought of thieving. He cautions,

‘Even if thy starving mother is in the jaws of death, don’t do anything that the erudite would despise.’ (Kural 656)

In the Hindu social protocol mother takes precedence over the preceptor. Still Valluvar grants no exemption to thieving even to save the life of the starving mother. Thieving is totally banned. What is forbidden in *Kural* is forbidden summarily.

**Uttering lies**

Valluvar forbids lies irrespective of circumstances. Telling truth is the foremost duty. He says the virtue of telling truth be set aside only when one were to choose between not killing and not telling truth. (Kural 323)

In such a trite one could resort to lies, if those lies could save a life. *The Mahabharata* is tolerant to uttering lies if the liar had good intents and the lies, in the guise of truth, could usher in good things, which truth might not, under the given circumstances. Valluvar also accepts this stand of exigency:

“The untruth could replace truth provided it brings in unalloyed good.”

(Kural 292)
says Vyasa over serene detachment, which is *Kural’s* import too

‘No agony from those things a man keeps away from.’ (*Kural* 341)

**Pure and strong mind**

Purity of mind matters in inward growth and contribution. Says the *Gita*

‘Purity of action and heart is absolutely essential for further spiritual growth.’

(Gita V-11)

Much the same Valluvar’s dictum,

‘Keep the mind free from impurity; that is everything of virtue; all else is nothing. (*Kural* 34)

Vyasa says

‘Gold is tested by fire, a well-born person by his deportment: an honest man by his conduct.’ (*Vidura Niti*, Ganguli II–P. 70)

Valluvar also employs the same metaphor.

‘The strong-willed shine through hardships as gold out of smithy.’ (*Kural* 267)

**Charity**

On charity also, the views of these authors are identical; they warn against indiscretion. They say that only the deserving are to be helped. Vyasa says,

‘Gifts at the wrong time and place to unworthy persons - people of questionable character who squander their money or do not help others or gifts presented disrespectfully or accompanied by an insult are *tamasic* – low.’

(Gita XVII –22)

‘Handing over a gift with strings attached to it makes both the giver and the taker uncomfortable. Charity presented with the hint of desire for receiving a return is *rajasic.*’ (Gita XVII –21)

Valluvar too is categorical on unmerited charity.

‘The help is rated not in itself but by the worth of the recipient.’ (*Kural* 105)

‘Any help to the poor is gift; the rest is *quid pro quo.*’(*Kural* 221)
Pleasant speech

Valluvar and Vyasa hold that the tongue is a weapon.

“Use then a weapon that is not made of steel, that is very mild and yet capable of piercing all hearts. (Ganguli VIII P.176)

Still they extol the virtues of pleasant speech. They agree that pleasant speech is profitable and advise harsh words be avoided.

While Valluvar says harsh words are worse than burns,

‘Fire-burns heal, not the verbal attacks.’ (Kural 129)

Vyasa avers that harsh words harm even those who deliver them.

‘Harsh words burn and scorch the very vitals, bones, heart and the very sources of the life of the man.’ (Vidura Niti Ganguli II —P. 72)

No slander

Slander is another topic where Vyasa and Valluvar are in agreement. Vyasa tells,

‘Indulge not in slanders and reproaches.’ (Vidura Niti Ganguli II-P. 72)

While Valluvar advises not to be slanderous, Vyasa goes further to say,

‘Slander should never be spoken; if spoken, should never be heard and when slanderous converse goes on, one should close one’s ears and leave the place outright. Slanderous converse is characteristic of wicked man. It is an indication of depravity. (XXXII – 285 Bhishma’s Raja Niti)

Valluvar appears to be more rigorous than Vyasa in framing norms. There are reasons for it. From his general statements on life one can sense Valluvar knew very well the exigencies of real life and the hold of vices on mankind. He holds up the ideal standards and exhorts people to move toward them. Vyasa also projects ideals like Valluvar in the normative sections of the epic. Yet, he appears to be lenient to human foibles in the narrative part, where he presents mankind’s myriad types. Valluvar does not compromise. Vyasa also does not; but his characters do. His vicious, not so virtuous characters are only juxtapositions to illustrate how great are
Chapter V

Section 3: Epigrams and Fables as Teaching Aids

Both the primary sources offer epigrams on leadership. Ten epigrams (one-liners) from each work are listed here; fifty from each are given in Appendix.

One-liners from *Tirukkural*

Erudition is reflected in one’s expressions. (28)

May the ear be fed before the stomach. (412)

What does a tall public image count, if the heart is guilty? (272)

Overloading even with peacock’s feathers break axles. (475)

The persevering shall turn destiny aside. (620)

Ability is not planning, but execution. (640)

The unruffled trouble the troubles. (623)

Size matters little. (599)

Undo enmity at its infancy, as uprooting a briery plant. (879)

Aspiring for glory is light. Not seeking it is blight. (971)

One-liners from *The Mahabharata*

The man of procrastination is lost.

Long are the arms, which intelligent persons have.

He who exults not at honours, grieves not at slights.

A weak-minded king can never display wisdom.

Desires never say ‘Enough.’

Anxiety robs energy.

Greed is but desire swollen to grotesque size.

Right knowing leads to right doing.

What you do, others also do.

Anxiety results in far inferior work.
The Mahabharata has numerous fables of serious import. As Vyasa relates fables, Valluvar refers to animals and birds to interpret human conduct. Fish, tortoise crocodile, bull, bullock, cow, horse, deer, goat, jackal, rat, snake, elephant, tiger, crow, crane, swan, peacock and owl are among them. Elephant is cited for its girth and shrewdness, tiger for its valour; crocodile for locale-based strength; owl for its nocturnal nature. Valluvar is not a storyteller, but his imagery is powerful. Reference to these metaphors by leadership orators will make their presentations lively.

Story telling has had a hoary tradition in many parts of the world including India. Millions of men and women had heard them before they read them. The highest ethical, philosophical and metaphysical truths were couched in stories for the listeners to absorb, retain, recollect and transmit.

"The monumental epic contains many stories and legends...not essentially part of its central axis, following a format to be found all over India, that of a story within a story," says Juan Miguel de Mora.

The stories within stories, not pivotal to the central plot, are encapsulated messages. There are numerous stories that sum up the values of life in prescriptive and proscriptive terms. For crash course on management a string of such stories could be an impressive curricular content. That of relating stories is valid even now.

Religious leaders offering discourses, politicians firing invectives in election campaigns, management trainers conducting courses, writing books use stories as an effective medium to drive home their intent. One in the corporate den calls her a ‘Corporate Storyteller.’ That is Evelyn Clark. The blurb of her book, published in India (Macmillan) in 2005, describes her, ‘The Corporate Storyteller, works with leaders who want to develop their most powerful stories and tell them more effectively.’

"Great leaders, teachers, and public speakers have long recognized the power of storytelling. Two thousand years ago, Jesus told parables that were so universal in their meaning and appeal that they are still relevant today. We all know the stories of The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son, and The Lost Sheep."
It is believed that Vyasa dictated his epic of stories within stories to be taken down by a scribe, which implies that script and writing practice were in vogue in India during *The Mahabharata* period. Internal references reveal that sage Vyasa’s scribe was none but Lord Ganesha. That scribes lag behind the oral pace of dictators might be a mundane reality. But different was the epic context. The celestial scribe imposed a condition that Vyasa’s pace of dictation caught the speed of his stylus. Vyasa was cleverer in his counter condition that the scribe wrote each stanza only after grasping the meaning. That was his ploy to buy time to marshal his thoughts.

Thus Lord Ganesha is taken as the world’s first and the fastest stenographer! The epic has Sanjaya, who gives King Dhritarashtra a running commentary of the goings-on in the battlefield. A human CCTV to king Dhritarashtra, he is credited to be the world’s first War Correspondent. The world’s first distance education student also figures in the same epic; he is Eklavya, taking Dronacharya as his in-absentia teacher in archery. When he wanted to pay his fees, the master demanded his thumb and got it, dastardly fees that set at naught all his skills.

Stories attract persons of any age, messages driven home stay indelibly in the hearers’ minds. Those of the elder generation can recollect the tales they had heard as primary school students and the parables related at religious discourses. Some of them can quote the crux of expressions. This is akin to the anecdotal technique adopted by modern writers on management and self-improvement books.

Annette Simmons who says, ‘Just as knowledge can become wisdom, so do facts become a story,’ identifies six types of stories to influence others:


Further she cites Luigi Pirandello,

“A fact is like a sack – it won’t stand up if it is empty. To make it stand up, first you have to put all the reasons and feelings that caused it in the first place.”

Turning the pages of recent history, Gene Landrum gives an account as to how mythologies, fables real-life heroes, heroines could emulate the aspirants:
“Joseph Campbell spent his life researching myths and their influence on the great. Nelson Mandela had similar experience with African fables. He wrote, ‘These childhood fables enchanted me and fired my imagination for these African warriors.’ 8

Bhishma uses story telling effectively to explicate Raja Niti. Three stories on subtleties of leadership quotients are summed up here. Before going into them, a specimen story on the worth of story telling is worth going into. Both Valluvar and Vyasa have extolled the merits of charity; they have also cautioned against unmerited charity, even under convincing circumstances. Valluvar has said,

‘An inconsiderate generosity saps the giver and the stock. (Kural 480)

A story related by Robin Sharma drives home the lesson:

“The lighthouse keeper had only a limited amount of oil to keep up his beacon lit so that the passing ships could avoid the rocky shores. One night the elderly man, who lived close by, needed to borrow some oil to light his home, so the lighthouse keeper gave him some. Another night a traveller begged for some oil to light his lamp so that he could continue his journey. The lighthouse keeper complied with his request and gave him the oil he needed. The next morning the lighthouse keeper was awakened by a mother banging on his door. She prayed for some oil so that she could illuminate her home and feed her family. Again he agreed. Soon all his oil was gone and his beacon went out. Many ships ran aground and many lives were lost because the light-house keeper forgot to focus on his priority.” 9

Robin Sharma speaks only of priority. What matters is the propriety too. The oil was kept for a purpose, not to be gifted away to many and too frequently. The lighthouse keeper was only a custodian of the oils stock, not the owner.

As stories drive home lessons, some of Vyasa’s stories, through Bhishma’s explication of statecraft, are worth consideration because of their relevance to the times from the perspective of leadership. Three stories are summed up here:
A Dog is A Dog is A Dog

A sage of self-control was living in an uninhabited forest. Kind to all animals he was living upon fruits and roots. Lions, tigers and infuriated huge elephants, leopards, rhinoceroses, bears and other blood-mongering animals who come to the sage used to pay him their respects. A dog with a human heart lived at the feet of the sage. Weak and emaciated with fast, the dog also subsisted upon fruit, roots and water, remained tranquil and inoffensive. The sage treated the dog with affection.

One day a hungry and blood-thirsty leopard came there, with its jaws wide open to seize the dog as his prey. Beholding it, the dog sought the help of the sage who had supernatural powers. He blessed the dog, "Thou shalt have no fear of death from leopards any longer. Let thy natural form disappear; be thou a leopard." The dog then became a leopard. The hungry leopard seeing before him a fellow leopard gave up its animosity. Later came there a hungry tiger. The dog-turned leopard dreaded the tiger whereupon the sage converted him as a tiger. Seeing one of its ilk, the hungry tiger left the place. At this second stage of conversion the dog-turned-leopard-turned-tiger gave up eating fruits and roots and started taking flesh and blood. One day an infuriated elephant came to the hermitage. Seeing its huge trunk and tusks, the converted tiger shivered. He sought the protection of the sage. The kind-hearted sage turned the tiger an elephant. The elephant seeing one of its species there in a huge shape, got terrified and left the place.

The converted elephant one day had to encounter a fierce lion and the sight of it sent in shivers. The sage pitied his plight and transformed him into a robust lion. The wild lion, seeing one stronger than him, went on its way to seek his prey elsewhere. With its stage-by-stage elevation the dog-turned-leopard turned-tiger-turned-elephant-turned-lion was seen with fear and awe by other animals in the forest. They no longer ventured to approach the hermitage, for the safety of their lives.

At that stage came to the forest a Saraba, (an Indian mythical animal of huge proportions) with the very object of slaying the sage’s lion. Seeing this the sage transformed his lion into a Saraba. The intruder Saraba saw the transformed one stronger than him and fled away. Other animals also chose to leave, to save their
lives. The converted Saraba was feasting on any animal that came on its way. One day the strong Saraba turned ungrateful and plotted to kill the sage. The sage realised it and cursed the dog of quick and unmerited promotions to its original state of a dog.

A dog is a dog is a dog, regardless of the promotions. The CEO who wants to promote an employee should know the limits of jacking up and effect promotions upon merits. Any signal sent to others that the favoured promotee enjoys uninhibited clout with the chief of the institution would erode the morale of other employees and spoil the organisational culture there; ultimately, it would be detrimental to the CEO and the institution. Valluvar puts it succinctly:

“What matters is not the giver’s generosity, but the recipient’s gratitude.”

(Kural 105)

Be it noted that he places this couplet in the chapter Gratitude and not in Charity; he holds recipient’s deserts above the giver’s.

Strategic Pact: the Cutting Edge!

Bhishma tells a fable of a timely and strategic pact between a cat and mouse under the force of circumstances to portray that a foe becomes a friend and a friend becomes a foe. A cat living on a branch of a banyan tree in a forest once got caught in a hunter’s snare. A mouse in a hole nearby saw that and came out to loiter, but not for long. A mongoose chased it; on another side an owl was ready to strike it. The mouse was in a trite. With its presence of mind, the mouse struck a pact with its sworn enemy, the cat, which, of course, involved a risk.

The mouse told the cat: “Look, you are ensnared; you cannot come out. The hunter will soon kill you. If I move out now, I will be killed. But I have a plan for our safety. I will release you by tearing the net away by my teeth. But before that, you should protect me by keeping me on your lap. To save its life the cat was willing to accept any condition and consented to the refuge.

With a promise from the cat for its immediate refuge and safe passage, the mouse entered the net and perched itself on the cat’s lap in a friendly posture. The mongoose and the owl saw the strange sight of the foes abiding by and went off stupefied. Once his enemies had gone, the mouse started cutting the net to extricate
the cat, but was slow. The cat grew suspicious and asked why. The mouse said it feared the cat might prey on him if freed immediately. The cat said, grateful as he was, he would not kill the mouse. Still the mouse waited for the hunter to step in and tore the last knot at that strategic moment whereupon the cat climbed up the tree fast, without a moment to look at the mouse. The mouse ran off to its safety. By their timely pact the archenemies hoodwinked their chasers. The political message here be noted, by being alive to the contemporary situation of coalition governments.

**Food and Trust**

A tyrant king was born a jackal in his next birth. Regretting misdeeds he lived pure. Confined to a crematorium, he led an un-jackal way of life and took only fruits that dropped from tress. A tiger king who came to know of the jackal and invited him to join his ministry. The jackal joined the tiger on condition that his counsel would be one to one on and would be what was good for the king; he should not punish others on information from him and he should not act in rage any time.

The jackal detected the counsellors, who siphoned off the treasury by devious ways. They had a jealous hate for the jackal. Enraged they hatched a conspiracy. One day, they whisked away a parcel of meat kept for the tiger and placed it at the jackal’s dwelling. When the tiger sat for his meals, he found meat was missing. Told it was stolen, he ordered it be recovered and the thief be killed. Other animals then told the tiger that the culprit was the jackal.

But the tiger’s mother defended the jackal blaming the other ministers. The tiger revoked the death sentence. But the jackal said, the tiger had breached the pact by lending his ears to others; hence the suspicion and the sentence. Once the trust ceased to exist, it was improper to serve the king anymore, said the jackal and left, unwilling to reconsider his resignation. The breach of pact, the jackal’s response and the coterie’s villainy apart, the crux is the tiger’s decision taken when he was hungry, and the stolen item being his food. None seems to be fair in meting out justice in what affects his/her own interests.

Lesson:1-*Test and trust your counsellors*, as Valluvar says.

Lesson:2: *Decisions taken while being hungry may not be just.*
These fables are not outdated. In his Foreword to Franz Metcalf and BJ Callagher Hately’s book *What Would Buddha Do at Work* Kenneth Blanchard, known for his simple, intelligible ways of expression, says,

“Does Buddha have anything to offer non-Buddhists in the workplace? My answer is wholehearted, enthusiastic “Yes.” …As Chief Spiritual Officer of The Ken Blanchard Companies, every morning, I leave a global voice mail message to inspire our people to be their best and remember our mission and values. This is then posted on our intranet and made available to all the two hundred and eighty Blanchard Associates in the U.S., Canada and Great Britain. Why do we go to this much trouble? Because I believe that deep down in all of us is a little voice that cries out “Inspire me! Help me be the best kind of person I want to be.”

The spiritual leader may be demanding, yet he is humble. Say the two authors, “Buddha lived “servant leadership” long before today’s business writers and corporate consultants popularised the idea.”

**The servant leader**

The servant leader theory essentially brings the society’s interests to the fore and obliges the leader to be all the more modest, for his contributions rendered and intended as in the case of three American corporate giants who grew into multinationals – General Motors, Sears and At & T. Robert Greenleaf lauds the leaders of the three companies in his Servant Leadership:

“Each of them is what it is today because each at a critical period in its history, was headed by a building genius (not the founding owner) who gave the institution the stamp of his personal values. Each of these building geniuses was an adequate leader and a manager for his day… each brought unusual conceptual powers – in defining the institution and establishing his values as its values.”

The three business leaders, building geniuses as Greenleaf calls them, are Alfred Sloan of General Motors, Julius Rosenwald of Sears and Theodore N. Vail of AT & T. As their key leadership quotients/values, Greenleaf points out the following:

Julius Rosenwald - ‘Unusual humanness and trust.’

Theodore N. Vail –‘Dedication to service and relentless technical innovation.’

Such studies would help teach and learn leadership. To be noted in this context is Greenleaf’s mention of the combined role of leader and manager in the above CEOs. Though John Kotter and Warren Bennis have made subtle distinctions between a leader and a manager, their observations cannot be carried beyond the table of academic autopsy. What is required is synthesis, as Henry Mintzberg who sees a synthesis between these two roles/levels adumbrates candidly:

“I reject this distinction, simply because managers have to lead and leaders have to manage. Management without leadership is sterile; leadership without management is disconnected and encourages hubris.”²

This synthesis is extolled by the authors of the primary sources, Valluvar and Vyasa who hold that the man within a manager/leader should be integral.

Collective ethos is contributed to organisational culture through the initiative of individuals. Kenneth Blanchard does it commendably providing inspiration material to his staff everyday. Were he to be introduced to the epigrams and fables of Tirukkural and The Mahabharata he will have an inexhaustible wealth of motivational material. It is up to the Indian scholastic world to reinterpret all tales and fables.

Panchatantra of Vishnu Sharma, written long after The Mahabharata is a string of fables meant for a crash course on management, to educate three young princes who were almost given up as dunces as they might not gain anything by any length of education. With his fine fables, covering quite a few as related in The Mahabharata, Vishnu Sharma made the dull heads of princes as knowledgeable in six months.

If fables could be effective teaching aids toward leadership Panchatantra fits the bill exactly. Tailor-made it has just started attracting corporate circles; it deserves a full-fledged research before presented to the West in the modern management idiom; random relating of the stories would not do. The whole work must be approached as a unified manual of management, linking one fable to another, for cumulative gains.
Summary of Chapter V

Norms of Leadership in the Primary Sources

Though the authors of the primary sources *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata* Valluvar and Vyasa lived in different parts of the country in different times, speaking different languages, they espoused the norms of leadership in surprisingly identical terms. In profiling a leader they follow strict ethical cannons. They start from the basic premise that a leader should be a good man, before he is anything else.

Both use the same metaphors. They hold that the Man is the measure, to be specific, all living beings including the vegetation. They have their concern as much for ecology as economics. They expect the leader to foster the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom too. They speak in one voice on the need for practicing the virtues of charity, hospitality, sweet speech, forbearance and call for avoiding jealousy, covetousness and womanizing.

What is prescribed for the individual is prescribed for the leader too – perhaps more stringently - learning, listening, reverence for life, respect for elders, love unto all, pleasant speech, compassion, forbearance and scores of other components of leadership. The leader is not exempted from any of the mandates for an ideal living; on the other hand the norms for leaders are more rigorous.

Approached from their format, Valluvar takes to the epigrammatic form of poetic expression; his is abject brevity; but his reach is very far. Vyasa avails himself of the luxury of a larger canvas, the epic format of stories within stories; he has made use of every episode to deal with some aspect of man-making or the leader in the making.

Whatever they wrote during monarchic days is applicable even in this space age, especially in the post-industrialisation corporate arena. The celebrity-endorsement, as of here, vindicates the efficacy of epics, myths and sermons, religious and didactic.
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