Chapter IX

Summation

The dawn of the third millennium, year 2000, received with much fanfare across the world also ushered in a silent revolution in corporate literature. Serious-minded writers of this segment cracked a paradox that the best way to walk into the future is to carry the light that served the past.

Into the shelves, into the hearts

Biographies and autobiographies of war veterans and corporate captains found their way to bookshelves and into the hearts of people. The exponential growth of titles on leadership, some strikingly oriental warranted separate shelves for them. Airport bookstalls, catering mostly to the corporate clientele, display such titles prominently. When Leadership has thus become a buzzword in the corporate domain, it naturally raises the questions:

(i) Do writers and publishers expect leadership could be taught? If yes, how?

(ii) Would the bestsellers that enrich writers/publishers enrich readers?

(iii) How does the society stand to gain by these books on Leadership?

(iv) Is Leadership different from Management? If so, how?

This thesis has attempted to answer the above questions, substantiating that literature could be a potent source to study leadership, as

(i) Leadership could be learnt if not taught; the material to teach needn’t be written afresh; there is a mine of lessons in ancient literature.

(ii) Books do help, the recent ones too, especially those that prompt an inward journey; not so much the pulp that provides systems tips.

(iii) If leaders/leader aspirants could learn to be better leaders, by imbibing values and create worthy followers and leaders, the society will gain.

(iv) Leadership is really different from management in that it manages the managers by managing the self. The priority is to self-management.
At the applied realm, the above four factors demand of leader-aspirants:

(i) Initiative for evolution within the family and the academia,
(ii) Cultivating a willingness and curiosity to learn,
(iii) Selective and serious study of value-based books, and
(iv) Leading and developing leaders, to leave the baton on the right hands.

How to meet these demands for evolution as a leader? The process, again, has the following four steps:

(i) Orientation
(ii) Attitude
(iii) Conduct
(iv) Purpose

The first is facilitated by imbibing values in a good family background and direct interaction with wise elders; the second by cultivated study of wisdom books; the third through selflessness and image-consciousness and the fourth with a concern for posterity, a commitment to leave the world better than the leader found it. Leadership is a cultivated growth process and the above four facets are reflected in the four stages of a man’s growth, as rightly pointed out by motivator Denis Waitley:

“The child: What can you do for me?
The adolescent: I want to do it alone.
The adult: Let us do it together.
The leader: What can I do for you?” ¹

Adverting to Waitley’s four stages of evolution, as above, be it noted that the purpose of teaching/learning leadership is to coax those in stage one to ask, instead of - what can you do for me – Can I do anything? Those in the second stage be prompted to say what those in the third stage do, “Let us do it together.” Let those in the third stage say unprompted, what those in the fourth stage say, “What can I do for you?” Then the fourth could tell others: “You do well; keep doing so.”
That should be leadership evolution by study. A good family head would strive to move the child to the second stage; elders outside the family circles can elevate those in the second stage to move to the third, with a little bit of motivation those in the third stage can move to the fourth stage. The last move will have to be volitional.

One aspiring to prepare himself/herself for such an evolution shall take note of ten traits that Satish Khanna, an executive who has served the Indian corporate sector, commends – Stay Plugged-in, Visualise Totality, Imagine Possibilities, Student Forever, MPS (Mental, Physical and Spiritual) Strength, Travel Inside, Be Yourself, Love Nature, Always Contribute and Live Life. 2

All these and much more are taught by both Valluvar and Vyasa.

The transformation and the portmanteau

As an individual grows from childhood to adulthood, mankind should also grow. The progress depends upon change in the mind set. It is all a process of continuity; the growth of the individual and the society is interlinked. The transformation, as expected, could be facilitated by a four-fold portmanteau package of lessons on Leadership, as picked up from Valluvar and Vyasa:

1. Family, the orientation field
2. Attitude formation for growth
3. Conduct quotients: Pure mind and self-control
4. Purpose: Mind the next generation

Being a portmanteau, these traits calls for the associated quotients, and together they make one a wholesome leader.

1. Family, the orientation field

The authors of the primary literary sources chosen for this research, Tirukkural in Tamil and The Mahabharata in Sanskrit say in one voice – Leadership starts at home. One has to pick up values of life that would stand him in good stead in his later years from his family background.
That makes it incumbent on the family head to be good himself in every way. Author of *Tirukkural* insists on the following factors regarding the family:

‘The father’s duty is to project his son as *prima donna* in assemblies.’ (67)
‘So shall the ward be that people exclaim: how blessed the father!’ (70)
‘The family’s more intelligent progeny is of great benefit to the world.’ (68)

These directives enjoin on the leader to live so well as a householder as to help the next generation fare better in the larger interests of the society.

Writer Robin Sharma, who projects visionary leadership, advocates,

“‘The best leaders recognize leadership is a craft, not a gift.’”

To Sharma, leadership is a craft; to Valluvar and Vyasa, leadership is the bounden duty at every stage in one’s life, not simply a role.

*The Mahabharata* illustrates how leadership’s failure at the individual level could affect the institution and the society. King Santanu, great grandfather of the heroes of the epic, failed in his duty as an individual, as a man and as a father. That cost the peace of three generations culminating in a war, killing many. King Santanu fell in love with a fisherwoman, yielded to her condition to crown her progeny, denying his son by the first wife, his legitimate rights to rule the country. Consequently the third generation members did not live in peace and at the end a reluctant heir Yudhishtra is installed and to him all advice is given on what is leadership, ironically by his grandfather Bhishma, a victim of Santanu’s failure as a man.

2. *Attitude formation for growth*

Reading and guidance by elders help one cultivate the right attitude. Knowledge is always one’s best friend, no matter where he goes and what he does. That is why Valluvar and Vyasa prescribe learning as a continuous process in life. Both the authors say learning is not enough, one should stand up to his learning. Both say the attitude decides the altitude. Valluar says a man could reach heights that his mind conceives, even as flowers of water plants shoot up to the height of the water body.

“Minds rise just as high as lotus to the surface of the water.” (Kural - 595)
3. **Conduct quotients: Pure mind and self-control**

Both the authors are called sages. But they are not kill-joys. They do not forbid pleasures summarily. They lay the condition that wealth and pleasures be gained by the right means. Both commend, as virtues for leaders, compassion and forbearance. Vyasa tells in *The Mahabharata*:

"Kindness towards even the children in the womb make thy subjects happy." 4

Valluvar who proscribes meat eating in the interest of reverence for life, agrees with Vyasa with regard to covetousness. He says the very thought covetousness should be quelled, be it coveting somebody’s wealth or wife. Both aver the pure mind matters; that is everything and that will not allow anyone to go astray. Scriptures help one cultivate compassion and pure mind.

4. **Purpose: Mind the next generation**

*Tirukkural* calls for one’s growth is within the family fold, followed by learning, listening, seeking the counsel of elders and abiding by it, keeping the mind pure, speaking pleasantly and functioning fair and above board, cherishing forbearance and upholding truth and non-violence. A man evolving into a leader through these traits and objectives, knowing individual’s transformation helps society’s progress, shall swear within himself, in the words of Robin Sharma:

“I vowed I would change. My employees deserved a calmer leader. My wife deserved a better husband. My kids deserve a better father. And, I deserved a lot more peace.” 5

Selflessness should start from family and be fostered by academia and the society. When the leadership swerves from its avowed purpose of selfless service toward refined altruism institutions suffer irreparable damages. Hence ideal leadership is placing the society before self. That is what wisdom books all over from *The Mahabharata* to the Bible including *Tirukkural* adumbrate.

Should idealism catch up with leaders of all levels, the progress of the society would be ensured. Not just India, most countries have a lot to teach others with their wisdom books of the past. The natives should learn and teach avid overseas
enthusiasts that there is more material. For the Indians it could be *Tirukkural* and the epic *The Mahabharata* presenting complex characters, trickier situations, more complicated problems in life and sagacious debates and sermons on leadership.

Robin Sharma suggests, reading old books by visiting shops selling used books.

"How about planning to spend an hour in a used bookstore, just flipping through great books and enjoying some time alone? Books will keep you connected to the fundamental leadership principles that all too often get forgotten in the crush of daily activities." 6

Sharma is right; one might hit upon old textbooks of moral instruction there. The costly new age illustrated books on epics and classics cater to extra-reading in for wards of affluent parents. The consequences of the exile of ‘Moral Instruction’ from classrooms calls for a separate research, to take stock as to what the society has missed. That might prompt the academics and the powers that be to revert to the ancient texts, in the interest of the posterity.

Taken that the family has been conducive to the growth of one as a leader, and the academia and the off-campus association helped him with cultivable components of leadership, theoretical quotients stood by him in the rigorous realities of the world, can a leader stop learning? Acclaimed U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt has said:

"(As) soon as any man ceased to be able to learn, his usefulness as a teacher is at an end. When he himself can’t learn, he has reached the stage where other people cannot learn from him." 7

Roosevelt implies that a leader is obliged to be a student and a teacher; as he has to be a teacher, he should always be a student. Not finding time is no excuse. Holding that continuous reading is self-renewal Robin Sharma uses an effective imagery:

"Failing to devote time to the discipline of self-renewal is like saying that your are so busy driving that you don’t have time to stop for gas." 8

Only continuous learning will help the leader transmit what he has learnt, which is his duty and his obligation to the posterity.
God to Man

Of the lack of willingness to learn and transmit ancient knowledge on leadership quotients, no less a personage than Lord Krishna, regrets in the Gita:

"I taught these same eternal truths to Surya (the Sun God)... He passed them on his son Manu, the very earliest man, and he to his son Ikshvaku, who was the first king, so that he could better handle his worldly duties. Handed down in this way through the ages, eminent sages learned these great secrets. But through time, the right type of people became scarce, and the practice of this knowledge dwindled." (Gita IV 1,2 & 3)

Devil to Man

Pitting man against a devil in argument over what is perceived progress Bernard Shaw makes his devil question the man in his Man and Superman, “What is your clumsy typewriters, locomotives and the like, which a greedy dog could have invented, if it had wanted money instead of food?” Noted critic A.C.Ward commends,

“The discussion between The Devil and Don Juan and the others is a serious philosophical argument such as no other dramatist would have dared to write for the stage, since no one but Shaw would have thought it possible to make an audience listen to pure argument so long.” 9

Inventing gadgetry apart, the efforts to develop the right type of leadership would depend on reinventing the man in man and the man in the leader. Help in this direction could be drawn from ancient literature and with the right ensemble the academia should kindle self-motivated study of the values of literature at every stage in one’s life. Referring to Tolstoy’s War and Peace and Cervantes’ Don Quixote, Management consultant Sampat P. Singh says,

“As books, which prepare individuals to play the leadership’s role both have been used successfully at Stanford (Business School) for the courses on leadership. They ought to get high ratings. They are too long; but one has to read the original texts.” They mould the man in the leader with right inputs.” 10
"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blame it on you;
If you can trust and yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can dream and not make dreams your master
If you can think and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run
Yours is the Earth and everything that is in it
And, which is more, you will be a Man my son."
Academia’s additional responsibility

Gratifyingly, this poem of Kipling *If* finds its way to textbooks. The one who reads it in the undergraduate course can get at its meaning, with motivated teaching; he will gain more out of the same poem while pursuing his postgraduate course, even more while entering career or doing research. More and more to understand as the years progress; that is the greatness of what is called value literature or wisdom literature. If the above poem’s import sinks into the psyche of the young ones, while being taught with references to leaders of the past and the present, value inculcation in the academia will facilitate social transformation.

The society being a unit of different types of organisations that are integral, leadership should bind them together for a common purpose. Followership begins the day the people sense the leader has the best interests of his people in his mind. As for dynamic and contributing leadership Robin Sharma points out,

“Leadership is not about popularity, it is about integrity. It is not about power, it is about purpose. And it is not about the title but rather talent.” 11

Here is a dynamic leader, Woodrow Wilson, one of the distinguished Presidents of the United States of America and one of the world leaders as well. He has put in the choicest words what is life and what should the leadership to elevate it. Worth remembering and following are his inspiring words, as cited again by Robin Sharma:

“You are not here to make merely a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live amply, with great vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself, if you forget the errand.” 12

For the rising generation to know the mission and the errand, students should be oriented to leadership’s values. Academia should offer students of all the branches of study a non-examination package of wisdom literature, as the parents once did.

With regard to value imparting mission for the right type of leadership, this thesis commends ancient texts *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata* as gospels and places the academia in the tutoring slot vacated by the home front.
Cradles of learning

To this end the curriculum developers should update themselves and keep their students in tune with the times. Funds should not be a constraint to strengthen the staff and the library. Sad, but true that this researcher found neither the American Center Library nor the British Council Library in Chennai, supposed to be richer than others, stack even one percent of the latest titles on leadership during the year of publication.

An industrialist friend of this researcher who is a philanthropist and a bibliophile procured over 200 post 2000 AD titles on Leadership and Management. Any new title soon found its way to the scholar. If he were to depend on external libraries, this thesis on the post-2000 AD leadership scenario, covering even the books published in 2005, would not have been completed with such copious contemporary references.

If funds are constraints to educational institutions, bureaucracy bars acquisition of new books then and there in foreign mission libraries. No librarian is empowered to place orders for books by visiting bookshops periodically. Depending upon personal equations with the head of the institution some professors might pick up a few titles occasionally from bookshops and have them added to the library, after reading them!

However most titles, though costly, evoke reprints quickly as individuals, mostly from higher salary strata, buy them. That one has to find a job, get highly paid to buy these books, is a matter of time, past student days. By then, out of sheer experience, one would have picked up lessons on leadership. If the academia were to instil in students leadership traits, better the libraries got equipped with new arrivals. For new titles or reprints of old texts to enter libraries easily and speedily heads of institutions should invoke the largess of captains of industries, who can cover the expenditure under tax shelter. Further, it is an indirect investment for them in HR, as students, ingrained with values of leadership could be of better service to them very soon.

As of now enriching libraries/faculties be entrusted to the charity of the corporate sector, charity being a key leadership component of individuals and institutions. That leadership is warranted to equip students with leadership quotients is the greatness of leadership. As they say in Sanskrit Dharma rakshati rakshitah, it is leadership that fosters leadership. One hopes leaders create leaders from the cradles of learning.
Chapter IX  Works Cited

1. Waitley, Denis *Empires of the Mind* (London, Nicholas Brealey, 2004) P.170
2. Khanna, Satish *The Future Manager* (New Delhi, Tata, 2000) P.175
6. Ibid. P 210
7. Strock James, M *Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership* (Roseville Calif. Forum 2001) P. 62
12. Ibid. P. 43
Afterword

This study captures the current concepts on Leadership and correlates them with those elucidated in the two ancient Indian works *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*. Having registered for this project in August 2000, this scholar consulted almost all the important corporate titles on Leadership, nearly 200 published after Jan. 2000. Books published in January and February 2005, just prior to the submission of this thesis, have also been consulted and quoted. Even for the millennia old primary sources the post-2000 A.D publications have been consulted. All these titles form part of the scholar’s home library, as he desires to continue to work on this vast and inexhaustible subject - *Leadership and Literature* - albeit submitting this thesis.

This thesis places *Tirukkural* as an epigrammatic expression of the man in the leader, as poet Tiruvalluvar holds the individual as the nucleus of the society. While all the 1330 couplets are relevant, the 250 couplets in the third book Pleasure/Love need not be isolated, as some scholars do. They form the finer sensibilities of leadership. Just for fancying - were he to be asked to cite only one of his couplets that says everything in man-making and leadership, the poet would refer to couplet No: 34. *A pure mind is everything of virtue; all else is nothing.* (34). This thesis interprets the chapter on *Listening* in the corporate context of handling Human Resources.

While *The Mahabharata*, as a whole, could be treated as a management manual, this thesis views it a *Testament of Leadership*, as the epic, through its numerous characters, holds that a good man makes a good leader; leadership is no position or role or title but an obligation and a responsibility. This thesis also establishes, for the first time, that the epic is an elucidation of leadership, from failure to success. King Santanu, enamoured of a fisherwoman, marries her; his son by his first wife gives up his rights to rule. That is the failure of the man in the leader, causing a chain of gruesome events culminating in a war; the wise and righteous great-grandsons of the king come to rule after being exasperated, humiliated and hurt. All that happens in the meanwhile are instances illustrating the facts and facets of leadership.

Together *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata* say that the man in the leader matters most. All good men may not be good leaders, but all leaders are obliged to be good men. Bad men can never be good leaders. Man is the measure, to lead and to be led. The world would be drab without men, good men and good leaders. Only good men make good leaders and only good leaders make men good and create fellow leaders.