Chapter I

The Current Plight and the Call for Leadership

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The Current Plight and the Call for Leadership

This chapter has six sections (i) Call for Ideal Leadership, (ii) Revival of Interest in the Subject, (iii) Manager-Leader Paradigm Shift, (iv) Perceptions on Leadership (v) Sources for the Study, and (vi) Genesis of the Study of Leadership.

Starting from the early 20th century's political and social trends, this chapter underscores the need for effective, ethics-based leadership in all spheres including business. In support thereof the views of political philosophers, sociologists, technocrats and corporate littérateurs besides magazine readers and editors are codified.

The post-2000 AD corporate literature's accent is on leadership. Its volley of books distinguishes the role of a leader as different from that of a manager. Hence the manager – leader paradigm shift is also discussed here. The leadership theorists call for a journey back into the past, to learn the best that could be learnt from ancient literary works as they espouse leadership's human angle more poignantly, treating all those being led as human as those who are leading.

This chapter, which explodes the myth that leaders are born, proceeds to establish that leadership quotients could be acquired through learning. Charisma is not a birth trait, but a cultivated one.

Epistemological aids imparting leadership quotients include ethical, metaphysical, philosophical and literary works, besides select works of history and biography.

When works like The Art of War by Sun Tzu apparently justifying the means to gain the ends, works that deserve consideration are ancient Indian treatises Tirukkural and The Mahabharata as they call for the adoption of the right means to attain the ends, forbearance even to enemies, charity for all and malice to none. When Generals are invited to address corporate audience or to head business houses, as in the U.S., views of General Bhishma of The Mahabharata, on leadership, count all the more.

Bhishma is no theorist, but a muscular philosopher. The admirable combination in General Bhishma is his knowledge of scriptures, his sagacity, valour, resolve and commitment, all lending him the locus standi to talk at length on Leadership.
Chapter I
The Current Plight and the Call for Leadership
Section 1: A Literary Survey

This thesis attempts to derive from the two ancient Indian texts, *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*, components of leadership for adoption in political, corporate and social realms. The researcher has selected this topic, prompted by two emerging social phenomena, (i) the media’s critical articles on political leaders across the globe, and (ii) the volley of books on leadership’s dimensions under corporate literature.

When politics decides all other affairs, including business, socio-political and corporate leaders, as people managing people, would gain much by imbibing the needed leadership traits. Many ancient works have marked the dimensions of leadership, long before *management* got vivisected and institutionalised. Of late management researchers have been attempting to reinvent the past, to prove that ancient texts have espoused leadership’s qualities and functions prior to the term manager entering people’s life or lexicon. Says Robert Allio:

"The term leader appears in the English language in about AD 1300, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, while the term leadership appears in the 1800s. William Shakespeare, incidentally, uses the term manager in *Love’s Labour Lost* in 1588." 1

Experts have been doing research on leadership for centuries now. Yet, their findings did not appear to have prompted those in power to adopt or experiment any. Expediency counts more than anything else, especially in politics. Why so? Answers the U.S-based management consultant Keshavan Nair, who projects Mahatma Gandhi as a leader of high standard,

"We have been led to believe that there is one standard for private morality and conduct and another for public morality and conduct. We have come to accept that a lower moral standard is necessary to get things done in the real world of politics and business...Politicians ask us to judge them on their legislative accomplishments, not on their personal conduct. Social
activists who claim the high moral ground in their personal philosophy use violence to obtain results. Business executives do not want their conduct examined but ask us instead to focus exclusively on the bottom line.”

Many publications, past and present, cite instances of leadership’s failures and social breakdowns that leave citizens to long for the right type of leadership in all spheres, as evidenced by the following references from contemporary literature. About the mid-20th century leadership Pitirim A. Sorokin, who braved death sentence for his candid views, said caustically in his Reconstruction of Humanity,

“Bleeding from war wounds and frightened by atomic Frankenstein of destruction, humanity is desperately looking for a way out of the deathtrap. It craves life instead of inglorious death. It wants peace in place of war. It is hungry for love in lieu of hate. It aspires for order to replace disorder....During the catastrophes of this century humanity has childishly followed in this quest one leader after another and has credulously tried various plans of salvation. In vain! None of the leaders and none of the plans deliver the goods they promised.”

Dedicating his book of socio-political criticism ‘reverentially to the deathless M.K. Gandhi’, Sorokin charges the leaders,

“Instead of peace, they have produced two world wars. Instead of happiness and plenty, they have brought mankind into an inferno of misery. These facts irretrievably condemn these leaders and their plans as dismal failures, guilty of irresponsible promises, of inability to prevent catastrophe, of ignorantly leading humanity toward destruction.”

Is there any way out? If so what? Sorokin answers,

“More imperatively than heretofore must it choose new leaders. And yet, observing the kinds of leaders it is choosing, one cannot refrain from gloomy forebodings. Tested by the experience of humanity, they appear to be inadequate and their plans fallacious. These blunders must be corrected before
it is too late. Otherwise humanity is doomed to drift toward an inglorious and painful Calvary devoid of either redemption or transfiguration."  

Dissatisfied with most leaders of the late 20th century, Russi M. Lala, journalist and biographer, points out:

"Many nations today suffer under leadership emerging out of the barrel of a gun. Out of 158 countries only 35 can be reckoned as free, where the rule of law and a free press can function. In varying degrees, force rather than consent, is the basis of leadership in the other 123."  

Corporate trainer Hilarie Owen observed in 2001,

"The last twenty years saw a decline in trust, accountability and leadership; at the same time, there has been a rise in self-interest, greed, and dishonesty by those who exploited the culture and politics of the 1980s. The evidence of the decline is everywhere."  

**Public Opinion on Political Leaders**

Print media has also been pointing out this rut. In November 1987, the cover story of the international magazine *Time* raised the question, "*Who is in charge??*" and answered that the nation called for leadership, and there was no one at home. Warren Bennis, a Leadership specialist and Advisor to four U.S. Presidents, cites this and elaborates,

"Where have all the leaders gone? All the leaders whom we once respected are dead. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who challenged a nation to rise above fear, is gone. Churchill who demanded and got blood, sweat and tears, is gone. Schweitzer, who inspired mankind with a reverence for life from the jungles... is gone. Einstein, who gave us a sense of unity in infinity, of cosmic harmony, is gone. Gandhi, Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Jr. all were slain, almost in testimony to the mortal risk of telling us that we can be greater and better than we are. The stage is littered with fallen leaders."
Closer home, replying T. K. Subramanian of Tirupparankunram, a reader, “What is the giant-size problem threatening India?” Tharasu, columnist of the Tamil weekly Kalki, was crisp:

“Political leaders are unfit to hold presidential posts; only when this is set right can the country solve the other problems.”

Here is a query to Mangayar Malar, a Tamil monthly from reader Ms. Shyamala Swaminathan of Tiruvananthapuram, on what is often felt as leadership failure:

“In a bid to settle scores with an individual, Saddam Hussein, to take over oil wells, innocent persons are being killed by those coming from thousands of miles afar. Is there not anybody to question them? Is it the height of arrogance or selfishness, or the peak of the Kali Yuga?”

The then editor Ms. Manjula Ramesh, responded:

“Not only the Americans, even Iraqi citizens loot the country. They swindle whatever they lay hands on. Good leaders develop good nations. It is rare to find such leaders even on a worldwide hunt. You are right; Kali Yuga is at its peak. Leaders stem up from the same society.”

This is what Warren Bennis asserts,

“A nation can’t survive without public virtue. It cannot progress without a common vision.”

Indian communications professional Sam Pitroda, in his recent lecture on leadership, observed:

“Leadership in the 20th century was based more on command and control, whereas leadership in the 21st century is based more on truth.”

Pitroda also projected Mahatma Gandhi as role-model leader of all times because he held no government position, but dedicated his life to symbolise truth and courage.

“Nowadays one is to act as a leader, not as a boss. There is no point in shouting orders... a proposal from a junior should not meet with a NO,” says R. S. Garg, advising those who want to take their team along with them.
Literary Assessment

Literary critic Krishna Chaitanya comments thus on the dice game, a crucial scene in the epic *The Mahabharata*, where the dice-crazy hero Yudhishtra pawns all his possessions, siblings and even his wife, falling into the villainy of his uncle Sakuni, supporting his vying cousins, Duryodhana and his 99 brothers:

"Yudhishtra was actuated by greed when he accepted the challenge to the dice game. And the way he gambled away his realm reveals that he did not at this stage realise the moral responsibilities of rulership, but regarded the state as his private property which he could dispose of, in any way he likes." 14

Depicting the same scene with his own poetic diction, in his *Panchali Sabhadam*, Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi, laments, (as translated by the research scholar)

"Like a priest performing pujas selling the idol,  
Like a gatekeeper pawning and losing the house he guards,  
Dharma, albeit knowing thousands of moral codes,  
Lost his country in dicing; fie with him, he acted mean  
The king did not consider his citizens men like himself.  
He treated his people as a herd of sheep.  
Cite they a number of scriptures; yet  
They have not crafted well the statecraft." 15

While presenting the *Game of Dice* scene in *The Mahabharata*, Bharathi chides his hero Yudhishtra for having diced away his country and his wife. Yudhishtra who knew many didactic codes did not follow them. The poet observes that the rules of governance had not been properly laid down anywhere in the world. In the succeeding lines Bharathi points out:

"Nowhere in the world is governance that is impartial,  
Governance that has not lost its hold on Dharma  
That which does not rob the people  
And that which has not plunged others into misery." 16
Vexed by the leadership lapses the poet winds up the subject of political justice in an exasperated mood, to pick up the plot,

“All chaffy words. Let us follow the story.” 17

British philosopher Bertrand Russell, a contemporary of poet Bharathi, criticised similarly political leadership of World War I:

“We see men’s political dealings with one another are based on wholly wrong ideals from continuing to be a source of suffering, devastation and sin.” 18

The present political leadership is no different from what Bharathi and Russel chastised. Of the current plight, columnist T.J.S. George wrote in The New Indian Express on the Indian Independence Day of 2004,

“Louis XIV knew precisely what constituted the national interest. ‘I’m the State,’ he said. And that was that. That was 400 years ago. After so eventful a span of time, we would expect a less maniacal view of the state and its interests. No way.” 19

Of the far from ideal leadership of the day, rues Russi Lala,

“What our political leaders believe, and how they live, will determine their conduct, and in turn will decide the way the world goes. With the vast forces for betterment of the world available as also lethal means for its destruction, leadership is still in its primeval stage of one-upmanship, fear, jealousy, competition – emotions that threaten the future of their nations and man.” 20

At this juncture when one expects educative leadership books with political import, one is surprised at a spate of titles on leadership from the corporate sector. Why do leadership books target the corporate community and not the political one?

Five reasons are plausible: All that is to be said on socio-political leadership has been said and nothing new is to be added. There are no schools for politics proper. Elected leaders in democracy are dressed with brief little authority and are unable to have their writ run large. Corporate leaders, accountable to shareholders for launching
new products, better and more products, to increase dividends, enjoy a little more freedom than their political counterparts, whereas politicians' lack of accountability is glossed over in ornate prose in party periodicals or other outlets.

Corporate leaders struggle to cope with transition and turbulence over globalisation; they need advice all the more, and they can be takers. Hence management thinkers feel they would rather tutor the CEOs on leadership and serve the need of the times. Courtney C. Brown, Dean of Columbia University's Graduate School of Business, in his Foreword to a collection of lectures by IBM's Thomas J. Watson, Jr., states:

"It is now a commonly accepted truism that the corporation is more than a legal entity engaged in the production and sale of goods and services for profit. It is also the embodiment of the principles and beliefs of the men and women who give its substance. More particularly, the corporation is the expression of those who have given it leadership in its development..." 21

Many corporate writers feel companies don't perform at their peak when their leaders remain unskilled and unwise.

With a more responsive business community, leadership has become the focus area of recent corporate literature.

People don't perform at their best when they have no leadership over their lives. Therefore, management thinkers write a volley of books on leadership, as different from those on managerial tips and some of them are very eager to point out how leadership differs from management.

Section Three of this Chapter deals with the leader-manager distinction, as perceived by corporate writers and as exemplified by Indian corporate leaders, strong in their native moorings, whose learning in native value-literature was deeper and wider than their formal institutional higher education.

This vindicates that one's basic education in values of life, learnt from native wisdom books, from parents or primary school teachers stand in good stead in one's life and career beyond and aside the formal technical, professional education.
Chapter I

Section 2: Revival of Interest in the Study of Leadership

Many new titles have longer, explanatory subtitles and catchy kickers on the content. As the number of titles on leadership has increased, bookshops keep separate shelves. Magazine articles also discuss leadership at length.

"The past five years of *Time* magazine featured 1,184 articles referring to leadership, and an astounding 2309 articles that evoked the term leader," counts Robert J. Allio, management practitioner.

"Until recently the word leadership did not feature very much in management literature. Even as late as 1988, the best selling *Gower Handbook of Management* (Lock, 1988) devoted only two pages to the topic in a volume of over 1200 pages, while the third edition (1992) takes a stride, doubling the coverage to four pages!" quips Philip Sadler, a specialist on Leadership. From the dawn of the industrial revolution till the best part of the bygone century, workers had to be managed. They were new to the jobs. The industries were also novel; entrepreneurs were quite new to the venture. Therefore, early management books provided only the tips to manage and to measure human labour and productivity by crude methodologies.

Some new books are accorded roaring reception. One is *Lessons from the Top* (subtitled – *The 50 Most successful Business Leaders in America and What You Can Learn from Them*) by Thomas J. Neff and James A. Citrin. The response they had had prompted them to say,

"We were honestly overwhelmed by the positive reaction to our book...a touchstone for managers... both inside and outside the business world."

The book went through nine reprints in a short span; got translated in several languages and evoked numerous radio and TV reviews. The authors, interviewed by
30 journals, did a dozen or so book signings. They led classes at Harvard and Wharton. The book influenced different types of readers.

Jack Welch, GE’s renowned CEO, commended it; a school teacher who bought a copy as a gift for her brother retained when it she found it to be of interest and guidance. The same could be said of several other books on Leadership. Autobiographical works of some corporate leaders also evoke a good response among readers in business and other circles, besides the media. Lee Iacocca states that 6.5 million people bought his first book – Autobiography and as many as 71,412 readers wrote to him about it. His response to those readers was the sequel – Talking Straight. 25

The recent book Leadership Wisdom, with a long subtitle, 'From the Monk Who Sold Ferrari – The Eight Rituals of Visionary Leaders', by Robin S. Sharma, corporate trainer and author in the U.S., has run into several reprints in the U.S. and India. It follows the format of a master and disciple engaged in a discussion of the Oriental perspective of leadership along with Occidental practices. Says Sharma,

"The sage (was) requested to share the lessons with all those in the West. It would be his duty to be the human conduit spreading it throughout this part of the world and transforming many lives. (The master) spent many years studying the fundamentals of leadership by studying the lives of great leaders. The wisdom he shared with me is based on ancient leadership truths that have been passed down through the centuries. These truths could also be characterized as immutable laws of nature; they stood the test of time and will continue to do so. 26

Each new arrival tells something new or different on leadership. Yet, there neither is, nor could be, a single book on the gamut of leadership. With the fast changing global social milieu and complex field realities, leadership cannot be compressed into the cameo of a single book. Still, there is a ceaseless attempt to grasp the dimensions of leadership. As related by Robin Sharma, an executive has reportedly said,

"First of all what does the word leadership really mean? What does it really stand for? Though I am running a huge company with more than 2500 employees, I have never really been able to pinpoint the meaning of the word." 27
Crash Courses Do Not A Leader Make

The more is said on leadership, the more remains to be said. A. W. Verity, English literary critic, who edited Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* asserted,

“The chemistry of criticism has evolved no Hamlet formula.” 28

_A la Verity, be it said,

‘The chemistry of management has evolved no leadership formula yet.’

With the finale on leadership not having been said, it is still an exploration; at least as regards management books in English are concerned.

Besides hundreds of new titles, mostly of the tips type, there are umpteen training courses offering limited help. Of the fad for fast-food type of books Robert Allio says,

“Unfortunately the current literature does disservice to practicing managers and aspiring leaders by encouraging a simplistic approach to effective leadership – ‘Here is a vision,’ _Walk the talk_’ and the like. Or it misrepresents the development process to improve the skills – Spend a week at the Instant Leadership program.” 29

True, leadership development is not like bodybuilding exercise at a gymnasium, a mechanical instrument-supported exercise unto oneself. It is a leader’s preparing his career for others. As Abraham Zalesnik observed in a conference,

“A leader is more interested in what events and decisions mean to people. Then he is in his own role in getting things accomplished …a potential leader will achieve his ambitions… what he achieves will benefit the world…” 30

However time-tested treatises have their own relevance on learning leadership’s quotients. Hence the ancient Indian texts *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata* are taken up for discussion here as source material shedding light on leadership.

The two texts under primary sources of this thesis are introduced in Chapter II.
Chapter I

Section 3: The Manager - The Leader: Paradigm Shift

Looking at new titles on leadership one is led to feel that most of them are rehashed works of psychology, self-improvement and managerial tactics. Researchers John H. Zenger and Joseph Folkman claim that their book *The Extraordinary Leader* is different from the rest. They add,

"It becomes apparent to any one who reads a number of books on leadership, that over 90 percent of what you read has been said before. Packaging is different, the examples are amusing, but, fundamentally, there is nothing new." 31

In Harvard Business Review’s 1998 anthology on Leadership prominent authors address the questions: Who is a manager? Who is a leader? Whether *leader* and *manager* are interchangeable terms? Whether the leader is to shoulder more duties and responsibilities than a manager? Is the leader a promotee from the managerial echelons? Leadership and management are held as the two sides of the same coin. Are the roles mutually exclusive? The loaded one-liner of John P. Kotter:

"Most U.S. corporations today are over-managed and under-led." 32

However, managers are not to be undermined. Zalesnik avers that businesses need managers and leaders to survive and to succeed. Adds Kotter,

"Management controls people by pushing them in the right direction; leadership motivates them by satisfying basic human needs." 33

Managers control; leaders explore. Leaders motivate the employees and enhance their self-esteem. Author Abraham Zalesnik says Leadership requires using power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people. To Zalesnik the manager is a problem solver. For a leader, he says,

"It takes neither genius nor heroism to be a manager, but rather persistence, tough-mindedness, hard work, intelligence, analytical ability, and perhaps most important, tolerance and goodwill." 34
Zalesnik identifies empathy as a key trait that distinguishes a leader from the manager. He points out,

"Empathy is not a matter of paying attention to other people. It is also the capacity to take in emotional signals and make them meaningful..." 35

Warren Bennis, a leadership specialist distinguishes leaders from managers succinctly thus in his On Becoming a Leader: 36

* The manager administers, the leader innovates.
* The manager is a copy, the leader is an original.
* The manager maintains, the leader develops.
* The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader on people.
* The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.
* The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.
* The manager asks how and when, the leader asks what and why.
* The manager has his eye always on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon.
* The manager imitates, the leader originates.
* The manager accepts the status quo, the leader challenges it.
* The manager is a classic good soldier; the leader is his own person.
* The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.

This distinction reflects the role and responsibilities of a leader vis-à-vis a manager. Two Indian instances, one metaphysical and the other corporate, pinpointing the difference between leader-manager, are worth recalling.

If the war of Kurukshetra, presented in The Mahabharata is an allegory, then Lord Krishna is the leader and Arjuna is manager. The manager is obliged to do what is ordained; the leader knows why. In the battlefield of life, God is the leader, man is manager and the manager should know well-done jobs take care of the results. Here is a corporate instance of leader-manager syndrome:
“Though qualified as a chartered accountant, P.L. Tandon began work with Hindustan Lever in the area of marketing and retired as the Chairman of this multinational firm. A few years after his retirement, he was invited by R.K. Hazari, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, to take over as Chairman and Managing Director of the Punjab National Bank. He replied, “Ravi, I don’t know banking.” Hazari was one of the most successful Deputy Governors who made a big difference. He knew Tandon well enough to respond appropriately, “Prakash, I don’t want you to do banking there. The second man is good enough to do that. The bank has virtually no system; I want you to install good systems there.’...He (Tandon) completed the task within the planned time frame; went to see the Finance Minister a few days before his term expired, and said, ‘My term with the Punjab National Bank is coming to its end.’ The minister snapped, ‘We are considering an extension for you.’ The reply was quick, ‘I was given a job; it has been finished. As part of my professional duty, I only came to suggest a name for my successor,’ and walked out.”

This instance cited by Sampat P. Singh, brings to light the following:

(i) Bureaucrat Hazari had the talent-spotting quality in him. He spotted and deployed talent – P.L. Tandon. Above all he knew the difference between the manager and the leader.

(ii) P.L. Tandon discharged his duties of a leader as expected, but declined the fruits thereof, even when offered. He had the sense of renunciation defined in the Bhagavad Gita, renunciation in work and not renunciation of work. As Lord Krishna advises, he did his ‘professional duty’ and did not expect any reward, even an extended term of office. He proved himself to be a worthy leader, with as much detachment and commitment.

(iii) P.L. Tandon had no ego that he was the bank or the bank was his and he did not feel that after him there would be the deluge.

(iv) He was eager to create a leader behind him; he expressed it to the minister.

(Note: P.L. Tandon passed away very recently)
This unique status of leadership emanates from the fact that managers create only managers, while leaders create followers as well as leaders. That is the greatness of leadership. In the corporate sector, early entrepreneurs donned the mantle of managers-cum-leaders. During the expansion stage leadership responsibilities did not allow them to devote enough time to attend to managerial work. Then they appointed managers. Subsequent stages demanded directional guidance; then they installed team-leaders. Be it noted that some recent advertisements invite applications for the positions of team-leaders.

**Command and Control**

The old control and command system still stays but its application is different nowadays. That is why some retired Army chiefs became U.S. Presidents and a few later took over as corporate CEOs. Retired Generals are invited for lectures at reputed management institutes. Exposing the ancient Asian wisdom Ong Hean-Tat, Yap Sin-Tian and Takashi Kawatani, state,

“General Schwarzkoff, who commanded the U.S. Army’s attack on Iraq during the Gulf war, was sought after as a speaker in some American firms after he retired from the Army. The executives wanted to know how military strategies could be used to gain a winning edge in today’s global complex business.” 38

Americans are eager to learn management from *The Art of War*, a 2500 year old book on war strategy by Sun Tsu, China’s warrior philosopher. Seagraves says,

“The Japanese say politics is business and business is politics. If the market place is a battleground, requiring strategy and tactics, then Sun Tsu wrote the Bible.” 39

“The essentials of Sun Tsu’s wisdom can be captured in 10 short principles,” says Donald G. Krause, interpreting the *Art of War* for executives. They are: 40

1. Learn to fight
2. Show the way
3. Do it right
4. Know the facts
5. Expect the worst
6. Seize the day
7. Burn the bridges
8. Do it better
9. Pull together
10. Keep them guessing

Modern executives or ‘corporate warriors’ as some prefer to call them, read avidly books written by or written on retired Generals. Three deserve mention here: (i) Wisdom of the Generals – From Adversity to Success and from Fear to Victory by William A. Cohen, retired Major General of USAFR, and, (ii) Patton on Leadership – Strategic Lessons for Corporate Warfare by Alan Axelrod. (iii) The Leadership Secrets of Collin Powell. In his Foreword to the book of leadership lessons from Gen. Patton, Major General Cohen states,

“No less a management thinker than Peter Drucker wrote almost half-century ago, that the first systematic book on leadership, written more than 2000 years ago by Xenophon, was still the best. Xenophon was a Greek General and his writings concerned combat leadership.” 41

War literature of the past and the present portray Generals as leaders. One such is General Bhishma, the pivotal character of the Indian epic The Mahabharata, which predates Xenophon by about 3000 years, or even more. Bhishma was a warrior of different mettle. He headed a large army; was fatally injured in the crucial Kurukshetra war. Well trained in martial arts, a leader and trainer himself, Bhishma was erudite in scriptures too. His sermon on statecraft to be analysed in this thesis commands universal applicability.

An acclaimed leader of brain and brawn, Bhishma was duly equipped to speak authoritatively on leadership. Hence The Mahabharata is taken as one of the primary sources for research on leadership; along with it Tirukkural that lays emphasis on military strategy as part of leadership, as the leader in the past was political, the king.
Chapter I
Section 4: Leadership as Espoused by Authors

When leadership is stressed so much, to the one eager to learn much of it, three epistemological sources are available: (i) Conceptual - Books on leadership (ii) Observational, Books on leaders (iii) Empirical, Books by leaders - autobiographical. To grasp Leadership's dimensions phrases have been culled out from the works of 50 writers and practitioners, 50 recent and important titles and interviews of 50 documented global CEOs. (The sources are furnished in Appendix No: 5 Page xiii)

The first category covers books by Warren Bennis, John Adair and others. Books by John Neff and Citrin Lessons from the Top, Carol Kennedy’s Sainsbury, John Lewis and Cadbury belong to the second; those by Lee Iacocca, Rudolf Guiliani, Jack Welch and Sam Walton form the third type.

Conceptual

Conceptualist John C Maxwell, lists 17 traits of leadership: adaptability, collaboration, commitment, communication, competence, dependability, discipline, expansion, enthusiasm, intentions, mission-consciousness, preparedness, relationship, selflessness, self-improvement, solution-orientedness and tenacity. Carolyn Barker and Robin Coy, scholars of Australian Institute of Management list seven: Compassion, Courage, Humility, Humour, Integrity, Passion and Wisdom. Peter Urs Bender lists knowledge, vision, passion, risk-taking, communication and checking results. Warren Bennis, an authority on leadership concurs with all of them.

Observational

R. M. Lala lists communication, compassion, competence, courage, decision-making, humility, integrity, purpose, stamina, personnel management, teamwork, training and vision. Rozer Fisher and Allen Sharp call for five quotients: purpose, thinking, learning, engagement and feedback. Anup J Singh and Daisy Chauhan mention: development, empowerment, team and organisation building. Dayle M.
Smith mentions control, relationship and encouragement. Power, self-interest, virtue and private morality are the duties, according to Joanne B. Ciulla. Jane C. Ward, Andrea Bacon, Rosie Mackie define the crucial role of emotional intelligence of leaders in a competitive world. Vasant K. Saraf lists ten: Purity, Non-Violence, Rectitude, Steadfastness, Fortitude, Renunciation, Accommodation, Equanimity and Contentment. Many rarely touch the last said component.

Daniel Diehl and Mark P. Donnelly cite history as a source to learn on leadership. They cite religious leaders, philosophers, kings, despot leaders, pirates, prophets, statesmen and industrialists. John Adair reverts to history and literature and attempts to orient contemporary leaders to the world of idealism of the past. J. M. Burns, oft-quoted author on leadership, presents personalities like Mahatma Gandhi as leaders who changed the contemporary thought and activities.

In his book *Thought Leaders: The Source Code of Exceptional Managers and Entrepreneurs*, management counsellor, Shrinivas Pandit, portrays 22 corporate heads and spots 12 leadership traits that are common. They are: Commitment, Persistence, difference, curiosity, persuasiveness, risk-taking, focus, values, high energy, learning, humility and listening. He adds he is not exact or exhaustive in defining leadership but has only given the lead words, which encompass many associated traits.

According to Srinivas Pandit, *Commitment* could refer to drive, dedication, passion, obsessions and zeal. Commitment generates energy, because the self merges in action, and action leads to friction, and friction to energy.

*Persistence* could also mean doggedness, determination, hard work, insistence and tenacity. Difference is distinctiveness, differentiation, positive attitude, personality, innovativeness and talent.

*Curiosity* covers intelligence, creativity, clarity of thought, kaleidoscope thinking and originality.

*Persuasiveness* is the communications quotient spanning negotiation and presentation skills and influencing.
Risk-taking is entrepreneurship, taking on responsibility and being accountable for results, experimenting without fear of failure, learning from mistakes, without thinking they are fatal and creating by trial and error.

Focus includes zeroing in, concentration and goal-orientation.

Values include honesty, integrity, honouring commitments, keeping one’s word, truthfulness and independence.

High energy is spiritedness besides stamina, because of intense involvement in the task at hand ‘doing’ things in conceptualising and getting interested in the work itself.

Learning annexes knowledge, skill through proper study and experience. The result of learning is modification in behaviour, approach, attitude and perspective.

Humility is ego in check, modesty and unpretentiousness.

Listening is being open-minded, firm, but not obstinate or obdurate.

While the above extracts cover myriad facets of leadership, they do not exhaust all the dimensions of leadership.

Empirical

Three reputed U.S. CEOs, cited by Neff and Citrin, practice leadership thus:

Frank Raines of Fannie Mae is a very good communicator. He influences his audience over the processes of decision-making, directly or indirectly. He expects leaders to clarify their mission internally and communicate their objectives to the rest of the world. His strength: Focusing and communicating.

Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines holds that leadership is servanthood. He prefers leadership by example. He believes in adaptability and demonstration of sincerity, which should come from the heart rather than the head.

Passionate, goal-focused, good at perfect timing, and delegating authority, CEO Charles Schwab aligns his company’s goals with client’s goals. His advice:
Successful CEOs have been incredibly passionate. Without that quality, one cannot possibly be a leader. 55

Based on their experience, this is what 50 corporate chiefs, including the above three in the U.S., note as qualities of leadership.

Adaptability, avoiding complacency and arrogance, being competitive, being courteous, being humble, being passionate, being quick, beliefs and values to inspire people, bravery as to not to cave in, change, choosing right time, choosing to follow and not lead, cleanliness, collect details, courage, decentralisation, decision-making, delegating, delegating authority, demonstrating, demonstrating the ability to make judgements, developing, development within, drawing on resources, energy, enjoying the job, establishing trust, exhorting, facilitating internal communication, faith, fixing priorities, focus on their strength, giving them flexibility to decide, guiding, having no complacency, high standards, homework, honesty, innovation, integrity, intellect, intensity, knowing people, lead by example, leading without panic, listening and understanding them, manage priorities, not those who do not, not to focus on others’ weaknesses, loving assignments, passion, planning and execution, precision, providing strategy and motivation, quality, realising leadership is the way one needs to go on his own, recruiting the best people, responsibility, rewarding those who perform, right attitude, ruthless about discipline, sense of urgency, sensitising, setting examples, skill, staying focused, sticking to ethics, strategy, supporting, taking care of employees, talking straight, to pay credit where it is due, track record, training, trust, understanding them to take decisions, values, vision, walk with employees to find much less resistance, what gets measured gets done, what matters is the right perspective and willingness to work.

(Presented in Appendix No: 5 on Page xii are the CEOs, their leadership styles and their advice to leader aspirants.)
Chapter I

Section 5: Leadership - Epistemological Sources

Leadership is what has been said in the previous section and much more. Attempts to study leadership takes one to ancient literary works, which speak more of leaders than of managers. Books like Leading – Lessons From Literature by Sampat P Singh, an Indian consultant and author, could be of help. He presents numerous examples and anecdotes in this direction.

Whatever be the type of books, could leadership be taught? Allio, Sadler and others strike a paradox that leadership cannot be taught though it could be learnt. They are right because the grasping quotient is not the same with everyone, despite the teachers having the same IQ. The authors explode the myth that leaders are born. The London Business School exhorted the potential students to “enroll as a manager and emerge as a leader!” in its insertion in the Sept.1998 issue of The Economist.

“In reality, these are abilities harder to acquire… Leadership cannot be taught, though it can be learned by developing certain qualities and refining one’s core leadership skills. But it does not happen overnight and certainly, not at a leadership seminar,” says Allio.\(^\text{56}\)

The corporate sector’s thrust from manager to the leader has prompted business schools to start courses on leadership. Harvard Business School, the oldest in the world, incepted in 1906, started only in 1995 its MBA (Leadership and Learning) programme with a focus on values and qualities, besides skills and knowledge, to ‘achieve a partial shift in emphasis towards developing business leaders,’ notes consultant Sampat P. Singh.\(^\text{57}\)

As classrooms have limitations, Hilarie Owen, a leadership expert, says,

“Learning techniques may allow an individual to become a better manager, but leadership is more about taking an inward journey and finding your own strengths and leadership gifts.”\(^\text{58}\)
Philip Sadler also accepts sources prompting inward journey for lessons on leadership. He says,

“Bennis and Nanus have also identified commonly believed myths surrounding leadership. Leadership is a rare skill. Untrue. While great leaders may be rare, everyone has leadership potential. Leaders are born, not made. Not so. The truth is that major capacities and competencies of leadership can be learned, and we are capable of learning, given the will to learn.” 59 (emphasis added)

If leadership lessons could be learned, what are the sources? R. M. Lala, biographer, executive and journalist, recommends biography. Says he:

“Men study for five years and more to qualify to be doctors or engineers. But no preparation is deemed necessary for men to assume command of nations. It is time schools and universities undertook a study of leadership through the medium of history and biography.” 60

Philip Sadler who accepts biography to a limited extent, rejects autobiographies, accounts of consultants and practitioners as products of bias or excesses, saying,

“Biographical studies can be expected to be more illuminating than leaders’ own account... if they are not tinged with hero worship.” 61

Of the limitations of biographies, Robert J. Allio notes,

“We have seen countless biographies of leaders and empirical studies of leadership, but curiously enough, few have defined the conditions that produce leadership or qualities and skills that effective leaders must possess.” 62

Some management experts accept history as a source. Hilarie Owen recommends,

“An unusual journey back into the far distant past where we see the foundations and the beginnings of organisations.” 63
British consultants Daniel Diehl and Mark P. Donnelly, who train executives and script the serials for television, assert,

"It is probably fair to say that over 8,000 years of human civilisation every conceivable management technique has been tried, probably more than once...the logical place to look for the broadest possible variety of tried and true managerial styles is in the dusty pages of history." 64

Australian writer James Sarros accepts this and cites Latemore and Callan,

"This form of post-industrial leadership is not new after all. ...the origins of this type of leadership are found in antiquity; without the emergence of leadership as a type of social institution, civilization may not have been possible." 65

Reminding the adage, two is a company, three is a crowd, Warren Bennis says,

"One person can live on a desert island without leadership. Two people, if they are compatible, could probably get along and even progress. If there are three or more some one has to take the lead; Otherwise chaos erupts." 66

The progress of civilisation implies that there had been leadership in the remote past. As leadership had been behind the strongly built social institutions, it is worthwhile to study its aspects. Experts suggest literature, biographies and history as sources for leadership lessons. Reads the blurb of the book How Did They Manage? Leadership Secrets From History:

"Most of us think of business management as a phenomenon of the modern age. Nothing could be farther from truth. For as along as people have lived, worked, fought, played and prayed together, there has been a need for a strong leadership and people management skills. Throughout history leaders have achieved success through time-tested managerial techniques." 67

In reading historical and biographical texts one should sift panegyrics, stuff with bias and hypes. Chroniclers and image-builders eagerly push under the carpet some unsavoury aspects of leaders of the past. Morgen Witzel, revealing some untold truths on Henry Ford, exposes him in his Fifty Key Figures in Management:
“There were two sides to Henry Ford and any appreciation of him needs to look at both. The American entrepreneurial genius, who revolutionised American culture and lifestyles, was the instigator of a dehumanising deskilling system. His admirers included Vladimir I. Lenin who instructed *Pravda* to serialise his books. His detractors included Aldous Huxley whose characters in the novel *Brave New World* pray to ‘Our Ford’ rather than ‘Our Lord.’ Even the most sympathetic observer has difficulty in reconciling the enlightened employer and talented engineer who designed the Model T and built the Highland Park production plant with the paranoid bitter old man who neglected his company, hired mafia thugs to beat up employees and if witnesses are to be believed, drove his only son into an early grave.”

If books on personalities are to be set aside as image-building exercises, works of literature help those seeking lessons on leadership, as they present good and bad traits of leaders in fictional format. But literary critics write about characters, reading too much into the text, to display their erudition and analytical skills. It is, after all, a literary exercise, not a leadership study.

Robin Sharma recommends,

“Books will keep you connected to the fundamental leadership principles that all too often get forgotten in the crush of daily activities. Books allow you to look deeply into the minds of the greatest men and women who have ever lived. By investing the few hours it takes to read the autobiography of Gandhi or the biography of Churchill, you will learn leadership lessons that it took them decades to discover. You will come to understand that the principles they followed as well as the solutions they discovered to many of the most common leadership problems. By reading from books on executive effectiveness and personal mastery, you will find time-honoured way to get more done in less time. And by reading the great works of philosophy and consistently exposing your mind to the great thinkers you will come to understand the ageless laws of nature and humanity. Start spending some of your day with the greatest people who ever lived by spending some time with the books they have written. How would you
like to have Ben Franklin, Thomas Edison or Alexander Graham Bell mentoring you on the fundamentals of creative thinking and innovation... There is such wisdom in the great books of literature and yet most people seem to be too busy to discover it. And so they continue to make mistakes both in their leadership and in their lives, mistakes that could so easily have been prevented, had they taken a few hours out of their weeks to read deeply.”

Leadership quotients cannot be acquired from the external sources as one builds his wardrobe by spending money or asking somebody to buy for him garments. They have to be ingrained in one’s psyche as he develops his personality from his formative period.

Philip Sadler identifies five sources for leadership lessons.

(i) academic research
(ii) podium speakers
(iii) consultants
(iv) practitioners and
(v) summarisers, who respond to the other four.

He perceives academic research lacking practical bearings; academics are inexperienced on the podium; consultants are closer to problems, but lack aptitude for research; practitioners write their own experience, but selectively and less objectively; biographies border on hero worship. Sadler recognises only summarisers as those who present what is to be learned from external sources. He does not consider literature as a potent source. Says he,

“The literature on leadership is more extensive than impressive. It contains more in the way of myth and legend than fact or substance. A great deal of common sense dressed up as theories, as well as theories which defy common sense.”
On the other hand Paul Corrigan who holds that Shakespeare has lessons of leadership for today’s managers, says,

“Management literature over the last 40 years has emphasized the importance of leadership. Book after book argues that without leadership managers and organisations will fail, and that it is this quality that is missing from the day today work of real managers...Yet leadership is not something that has only developed in the last 40 years. Shakespeare demonstrated very different ways in which leadership could be provided. Between them his plays are a master class of what leaders should and should not do.” 71

Adds Corrigan,

“Perhaps, to some, the similarity between Shakespeare’s stories and modern management issues will come as a surprise. But there are a number of strong bridges between his time and ours...In Shakespeare’s time the ‘senior manager’ was called a ‘leader,’ whose job was to lead a nation, a clan or a country. Leaders were also called kings, queens, dukes or lords. Then, as of now, organisations needed leaders; managers either led or failed; and leaders had to worry about managing with limited resources. Good leaders managed their staff well and bad ones badly or not at all. Good managers understood the vital need for information and bad ones ignored it, feeling that communication with subordinates was not necessary.” 72

The 400-year-old Shakespeare bears relevance even now; so too his illustrious contemporaries. Works older by several millennia are the primary sources for this research Tirukkural and The Mahabharata; one speaks of ideologies, another speaks of ideologies and presents instances of leadership’s failures and successes.

Of the much older ones, says Sampat P. Singh,

“There is another interesting way of looking at leadership. A good example is Sun Tzu’s Art of War written more than 2500 years ago in China. Its English translation is now considered a seminal work on the philosophy of successful leadership and as applicable to contemporary business as it is to war...Sun Tzu
was inclined to justify all means - deception, bribery, spying and so on. For him all means were justified to achieve ends... It has been written that Sun Tzu’s book on the *Art of War* had been translated into French and was read by Napoleon, and that he followed many of its tenets. Napoleon’s winning card was always the element of surprise.” 73

Singh speaks of Machiavelli’s *The Prince* published in the medieval times:

“It is used even today as an important book on leadership. He advocated that all means are justified to achieve the end. But he did not advocate leaders to act immorally. He only emphasized the inefficacy of acting morally in an immoral world.” 74

Adds Singh, advocating the need to stick to ethics with regard to means also,

“Ethics lays down the norms for good behaviour, by distinguishing between virtues and vices. They not only govern interpersonal relationships, but also organisational and social relationships. Values and ethics are closely related. Further the distinction between principles and practices in ethics is important.” 75

Such constant values have been espoused in books of the past and they are recommended for in-depth study by writers who plead for keeping in tact with the moorings of the past while working out the vistas of future. They hailed ancient works not with the blind belief that ‘old is gold’ but they do believe that ancient works of values touch upon the unchanging fundamental nature of man and time-tested truths. That is why they are relevant even now.

Had Philip Sadler and his ilk been introduced properly to such books, especially ancient Indian works like *Tirukkural* in Tamil and *The Mahabharata* in Sanskrit, they would not have rejected literature summarily as a pedagogic source for leadership.

This thesis seeks to prove that literature could be an effective pedagogic source to impart and imbibe lessons on leadership; among other sources *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata* claim attention because of their normative nature.
Chapter I

Section 6: Genesis of the Study of Leadership

Though the study of man is as old as philosophy or literature, study of leadership has acquired more importance from the time political science branched off as a separate discipline. Most hero-hailing ancient works across the globe could be taken as leadership expositions through literary format.

However, a study of the man in the leader is a recent trend in corporate literature. Leadership research came to be pursued as a separate discipline, distinct from management, since mere management was felt inadequate to run institutions usefully and profitably. Leadership remained a socio-political phenomenon in the books of history till the corporate sector redeemed it to the world of business at the close of the 20th century. India’s analysis of leadership is as old as her epics.

Literary works had dealt with it. For centuries scholars had written on leadership. Studying the traits of leaders - social, political, and literary - fictional and historical. Western corporate world started tracing the evolution of leadership recently. The purpose is to re-orient business on proper leadership. A study of leadership thus becomes imperative within and beyond management’s domain.

Says G. D. Sharma, former professor of management of the Rajasthan University,

“Leadership is a widely researched and discussed subject in the Western management literature. It has passed through at least five distinct phases of development.”

He identifies those five stages as,

(i) the great man theory,
(ii) the trait theory,
(iii) the team player theory,
(iv) the situational or contingency theory, and
(v) the path goal theory.
Familiarisation with the theories of the history of leadership, initiated by the corporate sector, helps one understand its dimensions.

The first stage of the history of leadership presumed that all leaders were born, not made. The next was to identify qualities which made one a leader. The third was an approach toward the leader’s handling his people, making him a team player, not a monolith. At the next stage a leader was viewed as a product of his times and situations, so engrossed in the contingencies of immediacy, rendering him lose their vision for future.

The first four stages are just halts on the passage of Time. Leaders respond to their times, with skills they could muster, to tide over a crisis of a situation or its aftermath. The fifth stage is not the culmination of the other four, though it is closer to the management jargon’s MBO - Management By Objectives. As setting examples is ideal, the goal path, could be enlightened further, to be called MBE, Management By Example.

No less a person than Collin Powell, till recently U.S. Secretary of State, after a long and distinguished stint as a General, has stated,

“You can issue all the memos and give all the motivational speeches you want, but if the rest of the people in your organisation don’t see you putting forth your best effort every single day, they won’t either.” 77

Collin Powell was to have run for the U.S. Presidency; he did not.

The distinguished U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt, felt that even the members of a leader’s family should set examples. He upbraided his daughter for her smoking and other challenges to convention:

“In your present position your example might be one for good; at least you need not make it one for evil” 78

Such a role model leadership is depicted in the normative *Tirukkural* and the normative and illustrative epic, *The Mahabharata*. Hence the demonstrated leadership traits from the above two works will help leaders and leader aspirants.
Summary of Chapter I

Call for Leadership in Corporate Literature: A Survey

Citing nearly forty authors and a handful of journalists this chapter underscores the need for the right type of leadership in all spheres under the current dispensation. The spate of books on the subject under corporate literature, since 1995, especially after 2000 AD reveals the acute awareness of leadership in the management sector.

Even the celebrated B-Schools in the U.S. focused on leadership only at the fag end of the 20th century. The trend is to differentiate between managing and leading.

Thinkers agree that leaders are not born and leadership lessons could be learned. Quotients of leadership are listed from three important sources, compilations of quotes, books on leaders and books by leaders.

Western perspectives are provided through fifty reputed CEOs of U.S. based multinational companies, as interviewed by writers and headhunters, Neff and Citrin. The Indian leadership perspective is given through a similar research-based book by Management consultant Srinivas Pandit, covering 22 Indian business leaders.

Writers on the subject suggest a journey back into the past to imbibe leadership components. They suggest studying history and biography. Therein some rightly sound a note of caution that panegyrics passing for biographies be avoided, as they might be exaggerations glossing over shortcomings.

To gain the right perspective for leadership, to govern the affairs of the society, one should develop Management by Example (MBE) along with Management by Objectives (MBO). A leader’s exemplary behaviour matters most. Managers, leaders and leader aspirants are expected to take lessons from the right epistemological sources, wherein figure the ancient books of wisdom.

Among the ancient works those of didactic nature and universal appeal could be of help. In this context Tamil text *Tirukkural* and the much older Sanskrit epic *The Mahabharata* deserve reinterpretation from leadership perspectives, as they are time-tested universal pedagogic sources, teaching the nuances of leadership.
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