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Demystifying Leadership

Regular and Intelligible Sequence of Essentials Discernible in the way in which Something Happens or is Done

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Abstract- **Leadership has been of interest from Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates to present day experts along with its associated illusions; complicated and difficult to comprehend – intrepid and decisive. Mystery continues on what leadership actually is – how to understand and demystify? People have perceived leadership in their own implicit ways with strong and lofty words used to describe human traits considered essential for leadership few can realistically achieve. Using a common leadership language and tools enables people work across boundaries and overcome organizational challenges limiting individual and organizational growth. In this conceptual paper amidst rise and fall of leadership attempt is made to demystify leadership for people to speak a common leadership language and achieve success.**

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I. Introduction

Leadership has emerged as a unique pattern of - traits, feeling, thinking, intent, behaviour, actions, practice, situations, people, processes and practices. While leadership tenets exist always and in equal measure for everyone, pursuing a fit; self-aligned with organizational objectives translates in success. Leadership kaleidoscope generates multiple patterns with mindful and unmindful customization based on a leader's; knowledge, skills and abilities alongside challenges and these patterns become simple, small and/ or complex and elaborate because leadership is practiced differently –more than one perspective/ model/ theory exists. Research suggests leadership is person oriented, consequently, many believe mere mortals are unable to become great leaders and shun leadership because leaders are expected to instantaneously deliver extraordinary results.

II. Demystifying Leadership

The same old gets old fast and present day business landscape is asking for creative, innovative and out of box thinking; good governance. New leadership cannot be vertical; it has to be different with people functioning independently and responsibly in collaboration with people as participants/partners accountable in adding value to business. Leadership was always plural and misconstrued as individual capability; for the people, by the people and with the people, yet, never was about getting people to follow - it was about getting things done and continues to be, except things are now done less by lining up troops and more by generating movement around a common goal. Leadership is boundary less with large number of variables; always at tipping point. Culture is often talked about but rarely understood; fragile ecosystem with many interdependent mechanisms to be nurtured in order to succeed. Leaders cannot transform a culture they do not understand. A strong culture accelerates performance creating shifts in momentum. It's the glue that holds businesses together. Research suggests culture at Yahoo is fragmented if not altogether harmful and a not so good culture is an enigma for leadership failure. Volkswagen represented complete leadership failure especially w.r.t corporate social responsibility; deliberately setting out means to circumvent emissions control with the aim of giving an unfair advantage over competitors alongside impairing the environment – despite awareness of stratagem at the highest level sit was an intentional rejection of ethics and value system - leadership rise and fall is perpetual. While there is no denying that leaders have also shaped the course of history and the world, leadership is not about popularity or group-think, cohort mentality and/ or being right. Leadership is the ability to bring people and organizations into a newer better state and help see the world in a way that they never thought was possible before. Toyota automobiles was forced to recall almost nine million cars worldwide coupled with poor handling of the issue damaging brand reputation resulting in decline of sales for over one decade. Problems were not as a result of isolated mistakes by a single individual, rather, due series of inter-related mistakes; systemic management failure leading to crash of Toyota.2010 British petroleum oil spill case in the Gulf of Mexico suggested IT failure; more importantly deep state of failed leadership inside British Petroleum. The company stated accident was a result of failure of processes, practices, systems and equipment – leadership. Collapse of major financial companies bringing down Enron were also clear cases of leadership failure suggesting organizations and leaders keep making the

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same mistakes over generations with common ingredients – inability to unlearn, lack integrity, rigid culture, blocking creativity, absence of connect with people, inability to make an impact, influence because in doing of leadership leaders often tend to expect more money/ higher position/ personal gains and so on in return. On the contrary successful leaders remain flexible to adapt best possible style and approach required for different leadership scenarios; approach by paying attention to details, optimize risk with caution, display value, lead from the front and empower people. This allows leaders to step out and master any situation; Coca-Cola, Barkley's bank, South-west airlines, Starbucks, Microsoft, Apple are some examples of leadership with its form and shape but speaking the same language.Starbucks is reputed for exceptional treatment of employees; insurance for part-time workers. When tragedy struck the CEO was able to connect with the store and community. In 1997 three employees were killed in a bungled robbery and instead of issuing press release or seeking legal counsel, CEO reached on ground spending time with employees and their families displaying compassion and incredible leadership helping in healing people related to the tragedy.When business blogging was in its infancy and generally feared, IBM encouraged its 320,000 employees to start company blogs. IBM leadership evolved corporate blogging policy encouraging employees to be own self and respect co-workers. Company blogs emerged as most trusted technology blogs generating enormous page views and links providing feedback to IBM; IBM embraced as against fearing technology making both employees and customers happy. Performances are low/ high at the behest of leadership and leaders and organizational cultures need to speak one common leadership language. Is it possible to have one common language for leadership? When leaders start believing that people make profits, have passion and commitment – obsession for leadership and work hard – walk the talk they leave an imprint for others to follow, speak one common language and make leadership everlasting. **Literacy** is the first step; leaders do not unlearn before any new learning happens. Leaders come with their strong set of beliefs' and convictions; baggage of experience. To be able to discern right from wrong leaders cannot hold on to their baggage; need to unlearn to learn. Leaders cannot afford to act solely on what they know; they need to act on what they learn; shift leading from knowledge to leading from learning. Security, political, social and cultural milieu, economic growth, globalization, technology and workforce diversity have a direct impact on leadership. Leadership has not been a daily read for organizations to improve literacy. While leadership models help in understanding what makes leaders act the way they do, aim is not to lock in to a type of behavior and realize that every situation calls for a different approach. Leaders need to formulate strategies to invest in people and respond quickly to changing business demands; SOCS – *situation, options, consequences and solution*. **Ethics** is the alethiometer defining value system and leadership character; individuals believe their leadership style/ approach to be best when it works for them and believe it will work in future too brings different shades; patterns of my way or the high way, I know everything, the present generation is no match, subordinates should be clones, lack of concern, success is always because of the leader and failure due incompetency of team, onus based on outcome, attitude and values. While in almost all professions a code of conduct; formal code of behaviour is laid down, leadership is devoid of a universal code; absence of leadership laws. Ethical principles need to translate in how organizations integrate values into practices, policies and decision making. Ethics always need to be ahead of legal compliances, laws, rules and regulations. Leaders need to instill behavioural guidelines for self and others on the ethical spectrum. Leaders need to operate with a joint approach tying ethical codes with organizational values serving as a constant reminder on performance expectations; ethical leaders gain trust, respect and integrity and employee engagement. Leaders do not spend time in planning and focus more on implementation of business imperatives and/ or vice versa. Leadership needs to be **Aeonian**; everlasting-leaders need to focus on planning in a coherent and cohesive manner, adapting and customizing to achieve objectives – realize in driving results. Any business strategy sets the direction; individuals and teams enact leadership creating a sense of alignment and commitment to achieve an enduring performance. Leaders don't delay instead use their judgment to decide the best course of action, leadership style and communicate - feedback on threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths - making accomplishment possible. When leadership is ignored it translates into dealership. Leaders need to focus on objectives along with the team, build a team which is engaged and motivated and develop individuals from within the team leading by example; ceaseless by planning and implementing - making results happen. Leadership strength therefore demands passion and commitment – **Desire but deserve**; personal power in shaping the destiny by knowing, being and doing. Leadership is both science and art; research area and practical skill to modify and bring change. Leadership is a creative and disruptive discipline; IDEA –*institutionalized development of education and abilities*. It is not to be viewed in the same way every time in every situation. Leaders more often than not do not measure their desire against their capability; do I deserve and overcome fear due risk of being replaced! Leaders therefore need to work hard; first deserve then desire and leaders cannot afford to rest on past laurels but need to continually work on

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reinforcing beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, skills and their abilities. Leaders cannot have imperial ambitions; leaders need to inspire others to learn more, do more, become more and dream more. Leadership is **Entrepreneurial**; triggers excitement and exploration; at times a radical shift. Technology has made work C^2I^3; challenging, complex, intuitive, immediate and informal. Content is becoming more concise and needs to connect with the context. Research suggests leaders need to shift focus from conventional concepts to creative web of abilities and experiences to widen leadership role and responsibilities. Arrival of Generation Z brings new set of values and expectations that prompt to re-examine how well organizations walk the talk in the realm of digital leadership. Millennia do not associate leadership with rigidity and autocracy but with purpose, learning and sharing. Collaborative learning significantly invigorates interest in newer approaches. Leaders do not make people and/ or work tedious and un-interesting. Beliefs of employees are the key to development of organizational values and culture. Leadership therefore is **Relationships**; human relationship where leaders set the stage and determine the moral climate in organizations. Senior leadership beliefs are more important because individuals learn practices more by seeing and experiencing in day to day life rather than re-visiting theories and text books. Leadership is defining roles and expectations, up scaling skill-base and capabilities across the organization and engaging employees at a deeper level. As leaders move up the ladder they need to be aware of the repercussions of outward display of character; self-awareness is important; move from rational to emotional effectiveness. Middle level managers need to focus on social awareness and integrity to build trust on their way up the ladder and top leaders need to focus on people and organization with highest degree of trust and integrity – reiterating fundamentals of leadership. Knowledge, skills and abilities are inseparable to leadership. Leadership therefore is to **Show the way forward**. Leadership strength comes from people, processes and practices for organizational effectiveness. Leadership is not a hard wired trait but disciplined and focused practice attained by learning, developing and applying. Leaders need to articulate and share an inspiring vision, align people and organizational goals as a complete package. Challenges necessitate building high uncertainty avoidance index and leadership becomes increasingly relevant; leaders need to think differently and show the way forward. Leaders need to apply new insights and expand their thinking; become bellwethers. While theories and models enable they also limit and it is the ability to understand the insights that incite leaders to think differently and bring new practical ways; realize thought into action - ignite ideas and stretch understanding for fresh insights. Leaders need to create own unique leadership practices and show the way forward. As organizations grow in leadership the next logical step is managing **Human responses**. Leaders need to practice trust and bring personal touch. Leaders need to be empathetic in roles with expanded responsibilities, new situations; greater 360° framework because leadership tends to get lonely at the top. Leaders need to make efforts to predict employee behaviour and responses. Leaders need to win trust, belief and confidence helping employees understand business strategy, how they contribute to achieving key business objectives, sharing information with employees on how business is doing and how an employee's own actions are relative to strategic business objectives by communicating across rank and file. Leadership therefore is **Influencing**. A person in an organization has no firsthand experience, carries forward own personality, experience and beliefs and/ or emulates others. There is an individual aspect and an organizational aspect. Culture creates an impact and the challenge is to claim it by having the right conversation and navigating through the impact. Leaders need to influence employees for achieving higher level of teamwork because leadership does not come naturally and is acquired through continual hard work. Leadership is fusion; integration in creating value system and formula for competence, understanding business and redefining work, recognizing and serving stakeholders, commitment and contribution - redesigning to deliver value with actions that embody organizational brand. Leadership needs to expand from profits to people because people make profits. While some leaders continue to choose a conventional leadership style and work in silo – a short lived scenario, leaders need to understand when to lead and when to hold back so that others can lead; proactive and systemic influence to bring lasting change; **Philanthropy**. Leaders need to practice altruism, humanity, generosity and benevolence. Pursuing a fit between one's own views aligned with organization ensures leaders continuously improve. Why things are hard for leaders? How can leaders make things happen even when they want to just give up; when one problem is solved a new one arises!When people across the organization use common leadership language and tools they work across boundaries and overcome challenges limiting growth; greater focus, flexibility and courage with an attitude of Nish Kama Karma.

III. Analysis

Present day business landscape requires leaders to understand more than one perspective because leaders tend to get caught in their own dilemmas; rigidity and/ or lack of leadership literacy. Andy Haldane, Executive Director for Financial Stability, Bank of England asked in his speech; is catching a

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Frisbee difficult? Doing so successfully requires the catcher to weigh a complex array of physical and atmospheric factors, among them wind speed and Frisbee rotation understanding and applying Newton's Law of Gravity. Yet despite this complexity catching a Frisbee is remarkably common. It is a task that an average person can master. The answer lies in keeping focus and applying gut feeling; basic common universal knowledge and then every person can achieve success. Leaders too need to focus and use their knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve success. A leader can choose to be a carrot, egg and/ or coffee beans. After putting all three through the same condition, same adversity; boiling water, yet, each react differently. Carrot which was strong, hard and unrelenting becomes soft and weak. Egg which was fragile with its thin outer shell protecting the interior becomes hard. Coffee beans were always unique and change the water itself. What kind of leader one needs to be in business today; carrot that appears strong and becomes soft losing strength, egg that becomes hardened and stiff or coffee beans that change the circumstances by releasing own fragrance and flavour.

IV. Conclusion

Demystifying leadership enables leaders and organizations understand, improve and do better; trigger a culture of unlearning and sharing for strengthening leadership literacy. Leaders need to get better and change the situation around them resourcefully even when things are at their worst, create an everlasting impact constructively engaging with people and organization; work from inside to outside with clarity, honesty, compassion, resilience and selflessness - unique pattern for success.

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