



SPACE TRAVEL IN THE GALAXY OF LEADERS: CHARISMA AND COMPETENCE

Dr. Deepalee Ambalal Mahida
Associate Professor

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a topic with universal appeal and in the academic research literature much has been written about leadership. Despite the abundance of writing on the topic, leadership has presented a major challenge to practitioners and researchers interested in understanding the nature of leadership. The extremely complex world of today necessitates a wide variety of leaders. We need leaders of different types for various walks of life.

On the matter of whether leaders are born or made, perhaps it is more accurate to say that leaders have to be born like everyone else, but everything after birth is cultural and interactive (or 'made'). Portraits of leaders from biographies, autobiographies, diaries, journals and other sources reveal that leaders engage in a purposive construction of self, that is they actively engage in creating the persona they want to become.

Here leadership acumen of several successful entrepreneurs and leaders in different fields are mentioned. These are : Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela , Elaben R. Bhatt, Vinoba Bhave, Narayan Murthi, Azim Premji, Kiran Mazumdar - Shaw, Dhirubhai Ambani, JRD Tata and Kumar Manglam Birla.



1.1 Aung San Suu Kyi is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades. She has become an important symbol in the struggle against oppression. In awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 1991 to Aung San Suu Kyi, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wished to honour this woman for her unflagging efforts and to show its support for the many people throughout the world who are striving to attain democracy, human rights and ethnic conciliation by peaceful means. When Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi received her Nobel Peace Prize and addressed the House of Commons in England, it marked a historic moment for Southeast Asia. Never before had an opposition politician been bestowed with such honors.

Through thick and thin, Suu Kyi has shown that she is a transformational leader in character, playing by the rules and following pacifist ways to win over her adversaries. She is different from some power-hungry Southeast Asian leaders who go after economic growth as the only redemption for their tight-fist rule that often trumps human rights and democracy.

1.2 Nelson Mandela has never wavered in his devotion to democracy, equality and learning. Despite terrible provocation, he has never answered racism with racism. His life has been an inspiration, in South Africa and throughout the world, to all who are oppressed and deprived, to all who are opposed to oppression and deprivation. Mandela personifies struggle and he led the fight against apartheid with extraordinary resilience and vigor after spending nearly 3 decades of his life behind bars. He has sacrificed his private life and his youth for his people, and remains South Africa's best known and loved

hero. Mandela is one of the great moral and political leaders of our time. He is an international hero and is revered everywhere as a vital force in the fight for human rights and racial equality.

The main image that persists in the public mind about Nelson Mandela is that of the generous old man who, after twenty-seven years in prison, emerges to forgive his tormentors for the love of his people and the nation, he was able to lead a nation nearly liberated from the prejudices of the past, he raised the consciousness of his followers by appealing to their higher ideals and values, whilst in prison he helped many to learn how to survive behind bars, by encouraging them to educate themselves.

1.3 Elaben R. Bhatt is known as the 'gentle revolutionary'. She has dedicated her life to improving the lives of India's poorest and most oppressed women workers. Fighting for the cause of women's rights on behalf of the Textile Labour Association in Ahmedabad, India, in 1972, Ela Bhatt founded the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) – a trade union which now has more than 1,000,000 members. She is also Founder Chair of the Cooperative Bank of SEWA, she is also founder and chair of Sa-Dhan (the All India Association of Micro Finance Institutions in India) and founder-chair of the Indian School of Micro-finance for Women.

Ms. Ela R. Bhatt, the co-founder of Self-Employed Women's Association (the forum of 1 million women entrepreneurs in India), was awarded the Entrepreneur for the World Award in the "Social Entrepreneur" category in recognition of her impressive ability to mobilize poor populations around entrepreneurial goals, by the World Entrepreneurship Forum. Bhatt was one of the founders of Women's World Banking, and a founding member of The Elders, a group of world leaders initiated by Nelson Mandela.

1.4 Vinoba Bhave was one of India's best-known social reformers and a widely venerated disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. Bhave was the founder of the Bhoodan Yojna ('Land-Gift Movement'). Bhave's idea of the land-gift movement was conceived in 1951, while he was touring villages in the province of Andhra Pradesh, when a landholder offered him an acreage in response to his appeal on behalf of a group of landless Dalits (members of the lowest castes, formerly called 'untouchables' and now officially named Scheduled Castes). He then walked from village to village, appealing for gifts of land to be distributed among the landless and relating the act of giving to the principle of ahimsa (nonviolence), which had been adopted by Gandhi. According to Bhave, land reform should be secured by a change of heart and not by enforced government action. His critics maintained that Bhudan Yojna encouraged the fragmentation of land and would thus obstruct a rational approach to large-scale agriculture, but Bhave declared that he preferred fragmented land to fragmented hearts. Later, however, he encouraged *gramdan*—i.e., the system whereby villagers pooled their land, after which the land was reorganized under a cooperative system.

1.5 Narayan Murthy is credited to have started the IT industry revolution in India. He started Infosys Technologies in one of the rooms of his two bedroom apartment in 1981 with a capital of Rs. 10,000. Today the company has multi-billion dollar sales turnover. More importantly, when very few in India saw any potential in the computer software business, he doggedly stuck on it and made a huge success of it.

1.6 Azim Premji took over the reins of WIPRO at the young age of 21 and turned the company from a very modest manufacturer of vegetable oil products to an Indian giant in computer hardware and software among other business.

1.7 Kiran Mazumdar - Shaw is the quintessential pioneer amongst Indian business persons. She led the biotechnology business revolution in India from the forefront. She chose to do business in a new field starting out from a garage in her house. Today, her Biocon India is a top biotechnology firm in India and she is the recipient of prestigious awards like ET Business Woman of the Year, Best Woman Entrepreneur, Model Employer etc. Government of India also felicitated her with Padmshri (1989) and Padma Bhushan (2005).

1.8 Dhirubhai Ambani, who started his entrepreneurial career by selling 'bhajia' to pilgrims in Mount Girnar over the weekends and worked as a gas-station attendant later build India's largest private sector company. In 1992, Reliance became the first Indian Company to raise money in global markets.

Reliance is the first Indian company to feature in Forbes 500 list. He is remembered as the one who rewrote Indian corporate history and built a truly global corporate group.

1.9 JRD Tata was one of the most enterprising Indian entrepreneurs to build one of the largest industrial houses of India. He provided wings to India by building Tata Airlines, which ultimately became Air India. Under his guidance, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust established Asia's first cancer hospital, the Tata Memorial Center for Cancer, Research and Treatment, Bombay, 1941. It also founded the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 1936 (TISS), the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, 1945 (TIFR), and the National Center for Performing Arts.

Tata Steel Township was also selected as a UN Global Compact City because of the quality of life, conditions of sanitation, roads and welfare that were offered by Tata Steel.

He received the Padma Vibhushan in 1957 on the eve of silver jubilee of Air India. He also received the Guggenheim Medal for aviation in 1988. In 1992, because of his selfless humanitarian endeavors, JRD Tata was awarded India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna-one of the rarest instances in which this award was granted during a person's lifetime. In the same year, JRD Tata was also bestowed with the United Nations Population Award for his crusading endeavors towards initiating and successfully implementing the family planning movement in India, much before it became an official government policy.

1.10 Kumar Mangalam Birla is the Chairman of the Aditya Birla Group. The group is India's third largest business house. The group also has its presence in various countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Egypt, Canada, China and Australia.

Under Kumar Mangalam Birla's leadership, the Aditya Birla Group, apart from consolidating its position in existing businesses, also ventured into sunrise sectors like cellular phones, asset management, software and BPO.

Kumar Mangalam Birla also holds several key positions on various regulatory and professional boards, including chairmanship of the advisory committee constituted by the ministry of company affairs for 2006 and 2007, membership of the Prime Minister of India's advisory council on trade and industry, chairmanship of the board of trade reconstituted by the union minister of commerce and industry, and membership of the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India.

Kumar Mangalam Birla has won honours like The Business Leader of the Year (2003) by The Economic Times, Business Man of the Year - 2003 by Business India, and The Ernest & Young Entrepreneur of the Year - India in 2005.

2.0 There are certain aspects that are common among these legendary leaders.

These are the kind of people who see changes much before they occur. They sense capabilities and constraints and spot pathways and hurdles much ahead of others. Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, Elaben R. Bhatt, Vinoba Bhave are social entrepreneurs. They are individuals who worked as catalysts for social transformation. They engaged themselves in the process of effecting sustainable social change. These social entrepreneurs are different from for-profit entrepreneurs in theory of life. Their values and beliefs about human nature, the kind of society they envision and how they achieved it mark them as extraordinary leaders.

In the 1970s when Narayana Murthy and Azim Premji look the business with computers, Computers were hardly known in India. They saw opportunity decades before others could experience it. These two men approached the budding field from two different directions - Murthy was into software while Premji was into printers and other computer hardware - and made a huge global success of it. KiranMazumdar saw the potential of the virgin field of biotechnology more than two decades ago. Dhirubhai Ambani started trading in yarns in the back alleys of Mumbai, and then went on to set up a large modern textile mill. From these Ambanis moved into becoming the modern manufactures of polyester yarn in a big way trading it globally.

It was striking to find that while each of these persons was in a different field, they showed certain common aspects to leadership. The most striking aspect has been the transcendental nature of their approach to leading the business. They were so committed to their goals that they transcended the boundaries of self and their business companies. These leaders exhibited a high clarity of the vision of

the goal/task. Leadership phenomenon could also not be separated from task at hand, since it was the task that generated the high commitment level resulting in high leadership effectiveness.

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