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THE LOWLY RECEPTACLE

Advocate Sakshi Goyal

Abstract-A team is only as good as its leader. Today's challenging and changing world demands from its leaders the capacity to keep learning and relearning, with an open attentive mind full of empathy along with a powerful clear vision which aligns the goals of all the stakeholders concerned.

Index Terms Leader, Open, Receptive, River, Sea

1. INTRODUCTION

The true leaders in our life could be someone who are leading us, but leaving no trace of leadership. They get us to do things without force; to the extent that we find what we do is our own choice, rather than a result of their lead. It is a mistake to believe that a great leader is above others. Paradoxically, greatness comes from knowing how to be lowly, empty, and receptive and of service.

Imagine that the life force is like water in the river and the sea. Mighty sea, greater than the river, lies below, which is open and receptive. The busy, rushing river enters the sea, is absorbed and is transformed. Rivers and seas are more powerful than streams. They are larger, deeper and stronger. Power of rivers and seas, however, is derived from the streams. Without the water flown from the hundreds and thousands of streams, rivers and seas will not be what they are. Rivers and seas can be powerful, because there are ready to receive. When the leader leads the people, he puts himself behind the people as a person, thereby imitating the rivers and the seas.

2. SOLVING THE I(A)MPOSSIBLE

In the world of leadership and organizational work where we are aspiring to access new paradigms of success and other undefined possibility, it is crucial to open our minds and hearts in the places we get stuck. Fear, assumptions, judgements, limiting beliefs and stressful thinking tends to close us down – particularly in the phase of changing and challenging situations.

Whether we are aware of them or not, our own limiting beliefs and thinking impact's our actions, what we pay attention to, the choices we make, who we can work effectively with, and what we are able to see (or not see) as being possible. Our own thinking has a strong effect on how much satisfaction and enjoyment we get from our work, and our ability to learn and grow.

As leaders we need to step fearlessly into the challenges of change, conflict, and the unknown as we look for new ways to work and to 'solve' the problems of the world. We need to connect with each other deeply, listen and collaborate and be able to work with a wide diversity of people – 'whoever shows up' – and to reach out beyond the boundaries with a genuinely open mind and heart. We need to bring the very best of ourselves to our work and life and to hold truly open space for ourselves and others to do good work.

And sometimes we hit a place where we close – where we are afraid, confused, overwhelmed, stressed, hurt, angry, or stuck; where we are firmly attached to outcome. Where we are not ok with 'whoever shows up', or 'when it is over'. Where we are afraid and not feeling at all, we need to be 'prepared to be surprised'. When we are caught up in needing the approval of our client, or our boss, or our colleagues or we find a particular person or group difficult (or impossible) to work with and we are unable to listen and act wisely and compassionately.

"It's not our differences that divide us. It's our judgements about each other that do."

A leader is more powerful than his people, but his power is derived from his people. He needs his people to feed him with their energies and vice versa. Else he has only his own resources to draw from. Just like rivers and seas, a good leader must be ready to receive. To receive water from streams and rivers as seas and always stoop low. To harness energy from his people, a leader positions him at a lower level in order to receive. He pays attention and listens. He follows, before he is followed.

"You lash the last sheep, and the rest will move."

3. FOLLOWING LEADER

The wise leader is of service: receptive, yielding, following. The group member's vibration dominates and leads, while the leader follows. But soon it is the member's consciousness which is transformed, the member's vibration which is resolved. The relationship is reciprocal. It is the job of the leader to be aware of the group member's process; it is the need of the group member to be received and paid attention to. Both get what they need, if the leader has the wisdom to serve and follow, to be open and below.

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The Leader must let his people have clarity of direction but not the exact path, like the rivers which always flow downstream but take their own course. He makes many, many small decision and is always ready to accept the mistakes that make him (the leader) in the process. The people follow without thinking that they are following.

This does not mean that such leaders need to be always pleasing and disarming. They can be tough; or even much tougher than the other leaders. The key point is that they are able to harness the nature of their people, resulting in the people following willingly and wholeheartedly.

The best leaders know how nature works in people. They can make nature work for them if the combination of three critical elements is right: Time, space and relationship. So long as one of the elements is not right, nature works against us.

As a leader, there are occasions when we can get things done immediately. There are nevertheless also occasions when we simply have to wait.

3.1 Example 1

We are sometimes like a hunter spotting a prey. We take out the rifle, aim, and shoot. Lo and behold, we've got the game! The result is immediate; because the element of timing coincides with that of space and relationship.

We are sometimes like a farmer. We till the soil, plant the seeds, water the seedlings -- and yet nothing happens. There is no immediate result, because the timing does not coincide with the space and relationship. We will have to wait. It can be months before we can reap the fruits; while working on the other two elements -- the space and relationship -- to make the harvest possible when the timing becomes right.

In both cases, we will have to respect the element of timing. Whether we should act fast or wait patiently is not decided by us. It is decided by nature. As a leader, we have to nurture the trust, build the system, and wait for the right timing to act. As a leader, we can either function like a farmer or a hunter.

As a farmer-type of leader, we invest in, and cultivate our relationship with our people. We may not get anything immediately, but there will come a time when we can start harvesting, and enjoy the fruits of loyalty team in the long run which is beneficial to all.

If we behave like a hunter, we can exact respect and obedience by force. It will, however, 'kill' the loyalty, the urge to learn and be humble. If there is no loyalty, the leadership will not last.

"Those who lead people by following the Tao don't use weapons to enforce their will. Weapons often turn upon the wielder."

How can we see an image of a tree image clearly in the water? The water must be calm, undisturbed. If the water is stirred, we will have to wait for it to stabilize, and mud particles in it to settle. Only when this happens that we can see ourselves clearly in the water.

The same applies to clarity of mind. If we want to have a clear mind, we ought to remove distortions and noises. We need to Stay calm, stay tranquil. Even if it is a split second! As an effective leader, do what is called for, and trust the process. Even when there is a storm, it needs time and space to subside. As Lao Tzu puts it, "A leader is best When people barely know he exists. Of a good leader, who talks little, When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, They will say, "We did this ourselves."

We always say that fruits are borne by the trees that are low. The trees tend to stay low so to help the others be it the birds, insects, parasites, animals, humans or even other plants. Even though they help all of these through their life time but they never demand anything.

3.2 Example 2

Once upon a time, there was an emperor who lost his magic pearl during a journey. Immediately he dispatched the most able man he had to look for it. It was Intelligent he sent. Unfortunately, Intelligent came back empty handed. So he asked Keen-eyed to go. Keen-eyed, again, searched in vain. So he dispatched Analytical-mind. Still the pearl was nowhere to be found. The emperor asked Shapeless to do the search. You know what! Shapeless found it! The emperor was astounded, "How odd! Shapeless has never taken anything seriously, but it was he who found the magic pearl!"

In order to ensure effectiveness, you will have to stay open. To stay open, you must first be ready to empty. Empty your mind. Empty your ego. Empty your desire. By emptying, we condition our self to receive. When a teapot is emptied, it is ready to be refilled with a fresh supply of hot tea.

Stay open, so that we can see the order of things. Stay open, so that we can be close to reality. Stay open, so that we are ready for good ideas. Learn through structured lessons, from doing, from observing, from mistakes of our own, from experience of others, from all kinds of happenings around us.

Trait of successful leaders who build successful organizations is the lust for lifelong learning. They love to learn. They look for any and every opportunity they might find to learn. The trees like banyan tend to grow from a single

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trunk to a multi branched heavy weight. Instead of rising vertically they chose to stay low and help all the other living creatures in the every possible way. This makes the tree more receptive, and it has new experiences each day through newer interactions, which could not have been the case if it was not low and open. The tree tells us how to be calm, composed, determined, open, and mindful and learner.

These leaders not only crave constant learning, but demand it for those around them. By creating an environment that places a high value on life-long learning and personal development, one can foster a culture of growth and productivity that translates into success.

4. LIFE LONG LEARNING

Life-long learning isn't just about the individual earning advanced degrees or certificates. Life-long learning is also about the growth of character. It is a quest to develop into a well-rounded, intelligent, soulful person. We are talking about people who want to be thinking and growing with vibrant, evolving personalities. It is in that personal growth that growth of everybody and everything around is borne. It is nearly impossible to grow if we had become closed which the people leading it are stagnant. When we bring a culture of life-long learning to our personal life it enhances our ability to face adversity and enjoy success. Life-long learning also gives us the ability to see opportunities for change and growth that we might not have been able to see before.

Continuing to expand your knowledge base will allow you to try more new things. No one is perfect, and how he resolves the problem is as important as the impact the mistake itself has made.

If people believe our intent is to serve – be it other people, our own department or the organization as a whole – rather than advance our own career or agenda, they are more likely to trust us, believe in us and follow us, even if you don't have formal authority or a management title.

Maybe we can't change the whole world, but we can change our corner of it. And when we change our corner, we actually change the world. Leadership isn't about a position, it's about behavior. Doing something willingly because we respect and trust someone is different from doing something because they have the authority to give you an order. A unique challenge exists when we own a deliverable, yet we do not manage the people who are directly responsible for executing the deliverables.

It is to get others behind your vision. When others deeply understand the motivation behind our vision, the expected impact of our vision, and how critical our vision is to the company's success, it's much easier for them to be in support of our initiative. This is absolutely critical for ensuring top performance out of our team. When taken to an extreme, our vision becomes a true calling for our team, enticing them to go well beyond what is expected of them to help achieve our and their goals.

A high degree of empathy is extremely important for success. This involves deeply understanding other's motivations, their struggles, and their own objectives, and then finding ways to help them address those in alignment with our goals.

CONCLUSION

The leaders need to be more empathetic, patient and tolerant. They need to approach decision-making subjectively, using personal values as a guide and examining how each option will impact others. They shall be approachable, strive for harmony among their employees and work to build consensus and trust. They shall also admit when they're wrong and seek constructive criticism.

Empathy and respect are like oil in the wheels of machinery, and well-oiled machines work better. A culture of openness and interpersonal relationships creates an environment of trust and the ability to rid the organization of its dysfunctional and faceless culture, thus providing a true ability to communicate and relate with others at every level of the organization.

This allows the leader not only to understand the need of each individual, but provides an environment of open communication and trust. And, passing knowledge and wisdom through teaching others allows a leader to ensure that the vision and direction are achieved.

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