



WE THE LEADERS

Salil Sahu

Himalaya Publishing House

ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED

WE THE LEADERS



SALIL SAHU

**Co-founder and Director, Healthathon Tech
(Ex-CEO, Entrepreneur)**



Himalaya Publishing House

ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED

© **AUTHOR**

No part of this publication shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording and/or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author and the publisher.

FIRST EDITION : 2018

Published by : Mrs. Meena Pandey for **Himalaya Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.**,
“Ramdoot”, Dr. Bhalerao Marg, Girgaon, Mumbai - 400 004.
Phones: 022-23860170, 23863863; **Fax:** 022-23877178
E-mail: himpub@vsnl.com; **Website:** www.himpub.com

Branch Offices :

- New Delhi** : “Pooja Apartments”, 4-B, Murari Lal Street, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi - 110 002. Phones: 011-23270392, 23278631;
Fax: 011-23256286
- Nagpur** : Kundanlal Chandak Industrial Estate, Ghat Road, Nagpur - 440 018.
Phones: 0712-2738731, 3296733; Telefax: 0712-2721216
- Bengaluru** : Plot No. 91-33, 2nd Main Road, Seshadripuram, Behind Nataraja
Theatre, Bengaluru - 560 020. Phone: 080-41138821;
Mobile: 09379847017, 09379847005
- Hyderabad** : No. 3-4-184, Lingampally, Besides Raghavendra Swamy Matham,
Kachiguda, Hyderabad - 500 027. Phone: 040-27560041, 27550139
- Chennai** : New No. 48/2, Old No. 28/2, Ground Floor, Sarangapani Street,
T. Nagar, Chennai - 600 012. Mobile: 09380460419
- Pune** : “Laksha” Apartment, First Floor, No. 527, Mehunpura, Shaniwarpet (Near
Prabhat Theatre), Pune - 411 030. Phones: 020-24496323, 24496333;
Mobile: 09370579333
- Lucknow** : House No. 731, Shekhupura Colony, Near B.D. Convent School, Aliganj,
Lucknow - 226 022. Phone: 0522-4012353; Mobile: 09307501549
- Ahmedabad** : 114, “SHAIL”, 1st Floor, Opp. Madhu Sudan House, C.G. Road,
Navrang Pura, Ahmedabad - 380 009. Phone: 079-26560126;
Mobile: 09377088847
- Ernakulam** : 39/176 (New No. 60/251), 1st Floor, Karikkamuri Road, Ernakulam,
Kochi - 682 011. Phones: 0484-2378012, 2378016; Mobile: 09387122121
- Bhubaneswar** : Plot No. 214/1342, Budheswari Colony, Behind Durga Mandap,
Bhubaneswar - 751 006. Phone: 0674-2575129; Mobile: 09338746007
- Kolkata** : 108/4, Beliaghata Main Road, Near ID Hospital, Opp. SBI Bank,
Kolkata - 700 010. Phone: 033-32449649; Mobile: 07439040301
- DTP by** : Sudhakar Shetty
- Printed at** : M/s. Aditya Offset Process (I) Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad. On behalf of HPH.

PREFACE

There are literally hundreds of books on leadership and every year loads of articles have been published on the topic. There is a huge amount of ongoing research, and we keep getting contemporary literature that adds to the knowledge on the topic. But all this knowledge is too vast and confusing to comprehend. Leadership still remains an elusive concept.

This book is a primer on leadership. Leadership is both an art and science. Pinning it down is an onerous task. It tries to do that by explaining the various theories and practices that underpin leadership. I have layered it with my experiences in the corporate sector. It is meant both for students and practitioners who want to get an overview of various concepts and their interlinkages in leadership.

The book tries to make it simple by breaking the topic into the following parts:

- What is the need for leadership?
- Understanding leadership — Definitions and aspects.
- What does the leader do?
- What are the attributes and skills of a leader?
- How do you become a leader?
- Deeper/Further reflections on leadership.
- Learning from great leaders in history.
- Looking forward — Leadership in the twenty-first century.

Each topic touches on the relevant basic theory and then shares inputs and perspectives. The book also tries to illustrate points with examples. The interested reader can delve into the subject more if he wants. History has been a mine of learnings and I have profusely used these lessons throughout the book. My sincere hope is that this sparks off an interest in a fascinating topic amongst individuals who have begun to explore it. India needs leaders at all levels in all varieties of human endeavour and better leadership can go a long way in solving some of its problems.

As usual for a book of this nature, I have tried to take the help of many people — the ones I have had the pleasure of working with, both seniors and peers. I am grateful to them for all the learnings. My special thanks to V.N.S. Wallia, G.D. Kulkarni and Kartik Raina who were my supervisors and enabled me to understand multiple facets of leadership. The tips from Len, Pooja, Arnab, C. Lal and Usha at various stages were invaluable. My special thanks to Christopher Doyle, a friend and a fine human being, who took me through a process of self-introspection and that is the time when I thought of writing on a topic like this. I am also thankful to my wife Madhumita for editing parts of the book and my son Sarvag for the back-end support.

I hope this book makes the reader's journey of leadership much more engaging.



— Author

CONTENTS

SECTION 1: THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP	1 – 10
Crisis in Leadership	
Why is Leadership Important in the 21st Century?	
The Need for Leadership in Corporate Organisations	
Leaders that Matter	
Why Should You be a Leader?	
SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS	11 – 23
Leading, Leadership, Leader — What Do They Mean?	
Lead, Leader and Leadership — Origins of the Concepts	
Expanding the Idea — Leadership	
Who is a Leader?	
The Beginnings of Leadership – Leaders in History	
Are Leaders Born or Are They Made?	
SECTION 3: LEADERSHIP TYPES, THEORIES AND MODELS	24 – 42
Leadership in Military, Corporates Entities and Societies	
A Brief Overview of Theories of Leadership	
Leadership Styles in India	
The Military Leadership Model	
SECTION 4: WHAT DOES A LEADER DO?	43 – 52
The Seven Key Tasks	
Inspires a Vision	
Communicates Constantly	
Formulates Strategy	
Develops People	
Spreads Values	
Creates the Right Culture	
Models the Values and Behaviour	
SECTION 5: THE NINE FOUNDATIONAL ATTRIBUTES	53 – 78
Integrity	
Courage	
Resilience	

Self-awareness
Vision
Empathy
Comfortable with Ambiguity
Positive Attitude
Humility

SECTION 6: THE SEVEN KEY SKILLS 79 – 90

Indispensable Skills for Leaders
Analysis and Decision Making
Learning Ability
Communication Skills
Planning
Ability to Motivate
Critical Thinking
Social Skills

SECTION 7: BECOMING A LEADER 91 – 125

Transforming into a Leader
Management and Leadership
Challenges a Leader Faces
What Makes Some Leaders Extraordinary?

SECTION 8A: LEARNING MORE – LEADERSHIP THROUGH VARIOUS PRISMS 126 – 134

Leadership Styles
Level 5 Leadership
Maslow's Hierarchy and Leadership

SECTION 8B: LEARNING FROM REMARKABLE PEOPLE 135 – 151

Socrates
Lao Tzu
Jim Collins, Lao Tzu and Greenleaf
Abraham Lincoln
Mahatma Gandhi
Winston Churchill
Ernest Shackleton
Steve Jobs
Nelson Mandela

SECTION 9: LEADING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY **152 – 172**

The Changing Landscape of Leadership

Key Imperatives for the 21st Century

Global Cultural Sensitivity

Understanding of Technology

Self-mastery

Information Asymmetry

Managing Diversity

Learning Coaching Skills

Building Leadership in Organisations in the 21st Century

In the End

REFERENCES **173 – 175**







Section

1

**THE NEED FOR
LEADERSHIP**

CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP

Around seven million years ago a branch from a group of African apes started the long process of evolving into humans. The first anatomically modern humans appeared two hundred thousand years ago and they lived in hunter-gatherer societies till thirteen thousand years back. Roughly in 11000 B.C., agriculture, metallurgy and political organizations started getting formed and in some parts of the world, people started living in villages. But most humans led very simple lives till the middle of the last millennium. Their lives were typically influenced by

local issues — the character of the village headman, problems with the clan and minor changes in generally stable climate patterns. Sometimes war ravaged their lives, but it was very infrequent. The number of factors that could impact their lives was always limited.

This changed with the advent of scientific revolution in the sixteenth century and the proliferation of technology in the second half of the 18th century in Europe. The industrial revolution that ensued launched a new way of life. Technology helped in kicking off extensive global travel and industrial scale manufacturing in the eighteenth century. These in turn led to more trade, faster exchange of ideas and so higher momentum for change. The process has accelerated in the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first century. The forces of globalization, media and Internet have sparked off both positive and negative changes on a monumental scale disrupting lives everywhere.

Human existence is concomitant with a lot of uncertainty. On top of that our lives are now being constantly uprooted by an unpredictable environment and turbulent changes. So despite rising prosperity there is a tremendous sense of anxiety today. In the normal course of things we used to hold on to anchors like state, religion, and community to deal with that. But over time these pillars of our faith have eroded. The church, religion, political authorities and leaders in various fields today fail to provide a sense of coherence that we desire as their intellectual authority has declined and they do not have plausible answers to the challenges we face.

So individuals are worriedly looking for leadership to give them a sense of stability and a modicum of meaning to their lives. The tectonic shifts in our way of

living also mean that we need leaders everywhere, but unfortunately the current crop of leaders has fallen short of tackling challenges. We see that in the political landscape and corporate boardrooms. We have seen the abject failure of political leaders in western democracies and India. There are only a handful of corporate leaders who evoke genuine widespread respect. We see that too in academia and civic life.

There are some who seem to be having all the glory one moment and in the next, they fall from their pedestals — sometimes their serious but hitherto hidden flaws get exposed, and at other times their leadership paradigms collapse against the mighty currents of time.

Tony Blair and George Bush got repeated mandates but later were seen as leaders who were misleading the public or charitably, as being too naïve. Obama's record is seen as patchy within months of his departure because his tenure seeded forces that gave rise to the phenomenon of Trump. Steve Ballmer was the co-founder of Microsoft but is seen as a leader who failed to change with the times and brought the company to a stasis. The situation in most countries including India is no different. It is indeed a gloomy situation.

At the same time, the allure of leadership is the quest for superheroes. Alexander, Napoleon and Shivaji capture our imaginations as warriors who are virtually invincible. Lincoln and Gandhi appear as extraordinary beings with a superhuman combination of traits and capabilities. But today's leaders are subjected to new challenges — they spend more time in the limelight with intrusive media focus on them and secondly, the environmental uncertainty is all-pervasive. Their flaws get ruthlessly focussed on and magnified. This has made it even more difficult to find leaders who can both inspire and then

sustain their legacy — being a superhero is now virtually impossible.

WHY IS LEADERSHIP IMPORTANT IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

After a time when millions died in the two world wars and countless smaller conflicts, we have entered another century of looming threats. Technology, social media and rising human aspirations mixed with the extremely angular visions of small but influential vocal minorities in every part of the world make for an inflammatory cocktail. The forces of globalization exacerbate a volatile and unstable environment. The rise of ultra-nationalists and religious fanatics is a product of this volatile mixture and today it is a global phenomenon.

Amidst this tumult of modern life, it is also disquieting to see a lack of leaders who can provide hope and strength. In many parts of the world, charlatans have exploited this absence of leaders with grandiose false promises and clever manipulations. So if there was ever a time for inspirational and transformational leadership in India and the world, it is now. We need men and women who have the resilience to cope with change, the character to stay focused on the long-term vision and the ability to influence.

We have had leaders in the past in various fields who did achieve this. Socrates in Greece with his incessant questioning, Buddha in the East with his reflections, Alexander with his heroic ambitions, Lincoln with his grit and goodness, Gandhi with his visionary distillation of ancient messages and humanity, are some of the brightest beacons who forged new paths of leadership. We have truly a rich repository of wisdom and experience of these great men to draw from.

At the same time the principles of leadership, both universal and specific, are not properly understood. After countless books, treatises and models year after year, the theory of leadership remains an esoteric subject. True leadership is seen as unattainable and unrealistic. Leaders are seen mostly as the products of individual abilities and accidents of circumstances.

This is definitely not true. There are plausible ways to build leaders and leadership. Leadership frameworks can percolate down to every level in the society and organizations with a better understanding of its underlying principles. One thing is for sure, the world definitely needs it. This book distils the timeless essences of leadership from the great lives of the past and the influential theories of today.

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP IN CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS

As late as at the end of 19th century, most people in the world worked in individual occupations or businesses. The only large organizations were the army or the Government. Large swathes of the world including China and India had practically no industrial sector. Globalization was happening in limited geographies. It was driven mostly by small individual enterprises or family trading houses. The free flow of capital and people that we see today was a distant dream. The rise of the corporation in the twentieth century changed that. Large corporates became dominant entities in trade and business.

The challenges that these organizations confront today in the face of globalization are manifold and distinct. Global capital chases economic returns in several places.

Various financial innovations enable the fragmented corporations to flourish from any country. Superior communication systems have made it easier for organizations to address both the domestic and international demand and manage businesses from anywhere. With better logistics and the ability to mass-manufacture, the economy of scale has become a key driver of profitability. Severe competition, technology, media and changing consumer preferences influence business results, both independently and simultaneously, across multiple geographies. At the same time, economic uncertainty pervades everywhere.

The environment is truly complex and dynamic. It means that companies have to be extremely alert to signals from the markets and any delay in appropriate responses can actually bring them to the verge of a shutdown. Out of the top 500 companies in 1955 in the list by the Fortune magazine, only 12% survive in the list today. In a more protected market like India out of the top 100 companies by market capitalization in 1991, barely 50% feature in the list 25 years later. The battle in each segment is intense. Processes get copied. Technology is a differentiator in some cases but it gets replicated fast. The battle is fought over new dimensions and with weapons from re-engineering to analytics and digitization.

The companies have to respond to these fast changing scenarios and driving this change and transformation in the organization are its people. It is their leadership ability that provides the cutting edge in most cases. This is not only at the top of the organization but also leaders at every level in the organization. One benefit of this competitive intensity is the leaders get

recognized rapidly and what they do spreads to other parts of the organization fast.

The quality of leadership has a deep linkage to strategy — it helps in building more effective strategic roadmaps. It can set ambitious goals and lead to extraordinary results. It also impacts the overall morale and culture in the organization. Leadership also plays a critical role in situations where differentiation comes from ideas. Innovation also flourishes with an appropriate climate of the organization and intrinsic motivation of employees brought about by good leaders.

There have also been several studies which show how good leaders have delivered higher returns on investments. The evidence is irrefutable that leadership matters in corporate organizations.

LEADERS THAT MATTER

There are many leaders that have left an everlasting impact. Some of them have wielded great influence in their time but have fallen from grace later. They were successful through fortuitous circumstances or a happy confluence of trends. Their impacts have been temporary. The underlying driving factors including the cultural underpinnings of the day play a disproportionate part *vis-à-vis* the role of the individual in the case of these leaders. A change in these underlying factors that drove their success typically exposes their feet of clay in the collective memory of the society.

Harold Geneen, CEO of ITT from 1959 to 1977 and V.P. Singh, the former Prime Minister of India are examples of this phenomenon. Their successes were based on an unusual mix of factors during the period in question.

But time has shown that their success achieved then was unfortunately shallow.

Geneen believed that any business can be run by a combination of tight controls, a confrontational culture that encourages managers to literally fight to arrive at an objective decision and the application of sound financial management principles. He built ITT by buying three hundred and fifty companies and extended his operations to eighty countries. He was seen as highly successful despite the evident issues in the organization. In his heydays, he was hailed as the archetypal super-manager. But very soon after his departure the company was bought by Starwood for a very low value and the serious drawbacks of his style came to be exposed. He is today seen as being the proponent of things that a manager should not practice.

V.P. Singh, the erstwhile Prime Minister of India had his moment in the sun as a crusader for social justice and he became a respected leader for some time. But very quickly his own lack of integrity in the idea that he was espousing was found out, and he died a discredited man.

There have been leaders who have been very prominent and done something extraordinary but whose actions have led to a deterioration of human values. Their influence has been evil in nature. In fact, history is replete with the examples of military and political leaders with enormous influence who have killed and spread hatred in the quest for their goals. Hitler, Stalin and Genghis Khan are prime examples of this category of leaders.

The study focuses on leaders who have gone beyond circumstances to produce astonishing results and beneficial changes that have stood the test of time. Their values, styles and ethics teach us more about leadership

than what we can learn only by studying theories. The book also draws from the thinkers of leadership theory like Bennis, Kotter and Goleman. We also study the teachings of ancient giants like Lao Tzu, Sun Tzu, Socrates and Homer.

**KEY THINKERS AND LEADERS FROM HISTORY
WHO HAVE INFLUENCED THE BOOK**

Socrates

Marcus Aurelius

Ashoka The Great

Lao Tzu

Abraham Lincoln

Mahatma Gandhi

Ernest Shackleton

Nelson Mandela

Steve Jobs

Warren Bennis

Daniel Goleman

WHY SHOULD YOU BE A LEADER?

Like it or not, you are a leader. You are expected to show leadership skills in several aspects of life. You are a leader when you are a father and your children look up to you. You are a leader when you are a teacher, and your students follow your lessons and you are a leader, when you are a nurse in a hospital, and the patient in the bed depends on your guidance. The question is how good a leader are you in all these roles?

In each of these situations, people around you look up to you and expect you to provide direction. In each of these situations, you are expected to demonstrate that you are a good human being and you can make some sense

of the future. Leadership boils down to this finally — you are a good human being, who you are; and you have a positive, sensible and confident direction towards the future.

Besides this in a world that is changing more rapidly and every minute too, it is necessary to learn some leadership skills simply to survive. For example in these fast-transforming environments a crucial leadership attribute like courage plays a large role in taking better decisions. In a typical organizational life, you could be a follower most of the time but there could be still periods where you are a leader.

At the end, being a leader makes your life more fulfilling and your talents do not go unnoticed because you provide a new value to the world with your special abilities. It makes you a better man, a better partner and a better father. Counter-intuitively being a better leader makes you a better follower too. A leader understands and appreciates the challenges and constraints of leadership more, and so he can be a better follower by listening more and giving superior feedbacks to the leader.

A better leader has a better life. A good life and leadership behaviour overlap in many aspects. Learning, integrity, passion, commitment, empathy, strategic sense are not only leadership skills, they are also life skills. And that's why any study of leadership or reflections on leadership are nothing less than thoughts on life and living. One way to make life rich is by making a positive difference to others and you can accomplish this better by being a better leader.

