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# Tread Carefully to Lead Cheerfully

*(from the hat of a force Commander)*

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To lead efficiently as well as wield the rod effectively is a monumental task though often not so perceived by the layman, the onlooker. To successfully direct and monitor both the professional and to some extent the personal facets of one's subordinate's life is a dream privately nurtured by the hierarchy. However, it is a dream not easily realized as it requires sustained effort to develop a healthy, mutually, trusting environment with meaningful relationship that augments achievement orientation towards the aforesaid goals.

Those in command predetermine the objective with a visionary approach to it and accordingly enforce the code of conduct and the direction to be adopted, simultaneously setting a precedence for their subordinate through exemplary, modular and supportive behaviour. The culture of the organisation is, thus, considerably dependent on the projected role model which necessitates the natural activation of the intervention procedure to be successfully conducted by those in authority.

Management and leadership, though having distinctive characteristics, are still the two flip sides of the same coin. Despite having clear cut distinctions, yet functionally they are integrative in nature in an optimally moulded organisation. They have certain common reference points which cannot and should not be ignored before we venture into their complex concepts such as the gravity of 'common functional goals' i.e. to say that the organisational goals should carry with them a common converting factor between

the individual requirements and the individuals aspirations, though it is generally observed that the former manages to take precedence over the latter.

However, in the public service organisations especially the 'security forces', values are distinctly different. Here the organizational objectives alongwith the personal needs, desires and aspirations hold little relevance, infact no relevance, over and above the national / social cause. Leadership influences monitoring the nobler values may, thus, successfully generate a demonstration effect inducing in the subordinate the right momentum and inspiration to perform for a greater wider cause. Leadership, thus, eulogises self sacrifice, self denial and abstinence, thereby inspiring a similar trend in those that look upto the hierarchy for guidance and ideal manifestation. This is what we call the internalized approach. In contrast is the externalist approach where the higher command sets non-flexible goals, seeks absolute compliance and ruthlessly hauls up the juniors for substandard performance. An over ambitious manager who directs all his actions and energies towards career upliftment alone will sooner or later be identified and pushed at the receiving end of hostility.

Ability and professional efficiency minus integrity has become unacceptable today. The days of colonial legacy are history. On the other hand, in today's world a healthy mix of appropriate values may well see successful implementation of life / organizational objectives and leave the individual in a

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more blissful, satisfied and peaceful state. Public service officers are, in fact, blessed with an enviable state of pursuing a meaningfully enriched life style alongwith ensuring the upliftment of those working below him i.e. being a role model in the real sense. Despite the unfair comparisons often made between the private and public services, the public servant wins hands down being exposed to the opportunity to serve selflessly, to become an ideal role model and to bear the satisfaction that they made the correct difference to those below them at hand and society at large. It is here that they can claim to perceive themselves as true and befitting leaders.

Deserving rather than extracting respect and obedience from one's subordinates is the true hallmark of an ideal commander of our security forces. This is what forms the crux of a true and able leadership. Leadership based on total acceptance knows no subordinates, no power and no armtwisting techniques. Authority alone cannot compare with the humane and behavioral excellence of a leadership based on the dogmas of professional and personal uniqueness. In today's complex scenario, the 'know-how' and 'do-how' paradigms must include a keenly developed 'think-how' as well in order to ideally meet the surrounding human sensitivities. Taking a wider and long term perspective, with the subsequent rise in the hierarchy, technical abilities are to a great extent replaced by managerial acumen and these gradually give way to behavioural expertise in a true and a model commander.

It is the art of the client-relationships which helps realize the degree of acceptance rather than the 'master-servant' relationship. It is the 'pursued process' rather than the sole concentration on the task at hand that eventually enables rich dividends. As a responsible public servant we owe it i.e. we are under a moral obligation to provide due satisfaction to our 'client' which is the society at large. That for the deserving is the eventual litmus test for all our actions geared towards the society we have taken up cudgels to serve.

However, the most efficient and dynamic commander cannot give the befitting results unless supported by appropriate tools in congruence with the mission at hand. Let us delve into features of the desired tools a commander must use for success. The

ability to define and predict the course of growth and development is one of the true characteristics of strategic management. This accompanied with a professional focus further strengthens the cause of interpretation i.e. maintaining professional ethics, genuine care and concern for the public welfare, ensuring upliftment and required development of the masses, professional ability and integrity, technological adaptability and keeping pace with the advancement in the system and, of course, making valuable contribution to the given cause.

The ability to maintain ruthless objectivity i.e. to rise above one's subjective attitudes, like and dislikes regarding caste, creed and religion, with no communal bias is another basic characteristic of true leadership. To rise above the self to the selfness is highly desirable, but equally difficult to achieve, as some where, midway, one may either come under the influence of the opportunists or may surrender to one's personal jealousies, hatred, anger, fury and prejudices thereby compromising on the very intrinsics on which effective leadership balances and succeeds.

The ability to decipher, perceive and innovate in real time is another key tool to success. Tactical intuitions, monitoring an action without putting it through mundane reasoning and analysis is the key 'Success Mantra'. It is the ability to perceive the battle times either through the experience gained during insurgency, realistic war games or even through case studies, simulated exercises, reading material etc.

The moral ability to defer and the moral courage to decline in case of a trade-off or deviance gives equal impetus to one's commander status. The non-feasible and non-ethical should not be succumbed to. We may develop optimally the ability to counsel in a balanced and a motivated manner, seriously imbibed with detailed inroads into the issue at hand, through an enlightened and proper understanding of the human mind and psyche. This is possible through experience along with being an active member of the job at hand that may lead to a high level of orientation. This would properly enable us to guide, share, ensure healthy habits and induce professional power amongst our subordinates.

The most vital, yet unfortunately, the most neglected aspect is the habit of simple living. The

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critical importance of this leadership tool can be evidently eulogized via the realm of history. 'Spartans' at the height of their military success sent a deputation to the Oracle at Dolphin and demanded arrogantly, "Can anything threaten Aparta ? 'Yes luxury', came the humble reply. There lies the major secret of a public servant's success. To follow a frugal and austere lifestyle sets an ideal for the force to ape and follow, thereby helping to mitigate so many related vices namely - greed, corruption disharmony, dissatisfaction, disorderliness, discipline and the like. An ostentatious lifestyle, thus, can be declared not an option for the public servant. However, this need not be confused with shabbiness and unkept appearance and sub-standard life style. Dignity of appearance is an essentiality and must under no given circumstances be ignored.

Similarly, over-familiarity with one's subordinates may actually result in insubordination and indiscipline. A correct balance is imperative and has to be maintained to ensure a wholesome personality. Here, the Indian Culture and ethos meet the job requirements best because the Indian Culture is a correct balance of wisdom, resilience, experience and richness of heritage.

Finally, to summarize the above, we can safely say that an able commander is one who while gradually

fading away into the background raises the efficiency level of his juniors to take on the complex tasks/responsibilities, develop clarity of thoughts and objective, a clear focus on the path to traverse and become spiritually elevated to the extent that work itself becomes homage, and the ultimate goal. Command management calls for ability of foresight vision, pro-action, analysis to manage change and optimize capability. An intense belief in humanity results in providing positive, encouraging strokes to achieve and progress rather than create negative vibes through persistent acrimonious behaviour. The idea is to 'win hearts' and not immobilize them with raw terror. He moulds their fate, leads them, yet he is one of them. He needs to rise above the status of a 'paper tiger' and achieve / motivate through 'smart efforts', not just sweat and toil. If the juniors repose their blind trust in him, his work is already more than half done as compliance of his directions and acceptance of his ability to direct and guide is never challenged but enthusiastically aped and complied with. It is the aura of his personality that ensures and determines the compliance of his desire and viewpoint rather than the orders issued on paper. To ensure the all round positive results, the focus needs to be on promoting them to do right in a win-win situation rather than attempting to catch them doing wrong in a no-win situation.