

'Democratisation of Leadership' as opposed to 'Democratic Leadership' during Pandemic Times

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Abstract :

The paper examines, the way Leadership has changed in pandemic times and how the equation has turned to individual's attributes and responsibilities to survive and thrive. How leading without title is becoming the norm in the democratized leadership regime that is emerging is captured by aligning to the evolving setting . Leadership is not about title and more about behaviour and you have to live it, or survive it, is extolled again.

Key Words : Democratized Leadership, Leading without Title, Re-charging Supply Chains and Value Chains, Vaccination drive

1.0 Introduction

There is no better time to test the Leadership traits than at times of absolute distress and adversity. The Pandemic times of the current context which has thrown the lives and life systems for the past many months into utter disarray has placed us in such a setting. Will individuals, families, groups or organisations come out of it unscathed or at least managing and surviving, ought to have lot of their stories etched permanently in the annals of 'Recovery time Leadership' traits exhibited. There is obviously lot of learning and takeaways in so far as 'How to sustain and excel when systems are down'. Many indicators are flashing different signals, when we try to peer into recovery of the current context.

2.0 Tough Situations and Tougher Alternatives:

Already the business and management messiahs have started talking about re-creating, re-orienting and re-charging the Supply Chains and Value Chains, post Covid-19 to jump start the World Economy. Their call for 'Re-charge' is to win back the Production, Productivity and Resources use (including human resources). While there is no denying the compulsive reasons for putting back the life train (incl. connected economy) in the rails to keep it chugging, it would be pertinent to note that some of the path 'Nature' takes and experiences it teaches, would be irreversible for the human behaviour.

Accordingly, we have now started closely following and talking about 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'. Leaders who can't align, direct and act the resources with respect to larger goals of the SDGs may not be doing justice to their roles. Directing resources and aligning our decisions / actions should show authenticity of purpose and existence of larger good. In simple terms, this is to say that the man kind may have to evolve as beings in the earth sharing the resources with all other beings (including plants, water bodies, insects, animals etc.) for need and not for greed. The backlash we are facing for not taking care of our environment and hygiene are telling in myriad ways, all across the World. West blaming East and East blaming subsistence rights, and all of them including intellectuals trivialising the 'Climate change' issues with end-less negotiations does not help the World. Time is running out and melted glaciers are contributing to rising percentage of Land-Water proportion in the World, so much so that many of our big Cities will soon be inhabitable for at least humans.

3.0 Leading without Title and Authority:

All along we have assumed that Positions and Titles signifying authority are required for running organisations – be it Business or Community or even family. But the Virus has demonstrated that if you can't lead yourself, you can't lead others. We have no business leading others to Greatness if our own lives are a derailed train-wreck. It is much the same as the Air-hostess's announcement 'Secure your oxygen mask before you start assisting others'. Suddenly, we notice that be it immunity, food habits, health and hygiene, mental/ physical health, positivity and so many such wellness parameters are all in your own hand. The scale to measure and the discipline to align to the protocol and follow is your choice.

The new 'democratisation of leadership' has shown the importance of every single person/ member behaving responsibly as a stakeholder in the Society, Business or Organisation they are in. Every single person needs to conduct responsibly and own the responsibility of showing their leadership in their walk of life / craft. Every single person is the CEO of their small business / activity called 'job'. Very clearly being successful in the game of life, precedes great leadership. And winners understand strengthening capacity at every level, in every person, is the way to win. As the saying goes, 'the chain is only as strong as the weakest link in it'. The pandemic time recovery leadership reminds us what the Leader cast in the movie 'Invictus' saying, 'I am the master of my fate and I am the Captain of my Soul'. It is here that the significance of 'democratisation of leadership' as opposed to 'democratic leadership' has emerged (as we know, the concept of 'democratic leadership' refers to a form of leadership style, where members decide on a participative basis in the decision-making process).

4.0 Work towards changing the belief 'Poor are generally Poor in every sense of the Word' and can be discriminated against:

There is a reason and a role to the entire humanity to work towards changing the belief that 'Poor are generally Poor in every sense of the Word'. While the health catastrophe had hurt all of us badly and the Virus doesn't discriminate the poor over rich, the climb from the sink hole that we have all fallen, is proving to be tough for the poorer people and poorer nations. The ongoing pandemic has massively discriminated the poorer people and nations in terms of access to health care, food, livelihood, vaporisation of jobs and revenue losses, capacity / quantum to stimulate the economy, poor debt servicing ability, capacity for rapid adoption of technology etc. We are not sure when the so called 'Vaccination drive' comes whether all will be treated equally, specially when many kinds of vaccines with diverse claims of efficacy and price are being talked about. The 'Vaccination Challenge' is a big challenge in populous countries like India, bigger than the challenge of conducting elections. With affordability, access, and equanimity in Vaccination are all issues wherein very high leadership amongst nations and within nations are indispensable. The recovery and sustainability leadership is likely to test many such aspects, as a continuum in the days to come. There is no dearth for exhibiting leadership in many walks of life and living in the pandemic times.

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