From a Manager to a Leader: Bridging a Gulf or Jumping a Chasm?

S Manikutty

Executive Summary

This paper argues that the transition from being a manager to becoming a leader is more like jumping a chasm than walking smoothly on a bridge over a gulf. Traditional methods of management education, training, and mentoring are not likely to be very helpful in making this transition because they fail to recognize that leadership involves fundamentally different processes as compared to managing and hence leaders cannot be developed by more liberal doses of traditional management inputs. This paper identifies five dimensions for the transition from a manager to a leader:

➤ *From a manager of 'facts' and 'data' to a manager of emotions*: Leadership has less to do with cold analysis of hard facts and more with managing the emotions that exist among people in the organization.

➤ *From a manager of emotions to a generator of emotions*: 'Managing' the emotions is not enough; generating the right kind of emotions is also essential. People must be inspired by the goals and must seek fulfillment in attaining them. Emotions such as loyalty and passion for a cause are to be generated.

➤ *From a follower of standards to a setter of standards*: Leaders do not follow standards; they set their own standards often at variance with prevailing and accepted views. It is this characteristic that sets leaders apart from run-of-the-mill managers.

➤ *From a realist to a dreamer*: Leaders are not necessarily realists they are great dreamers. Great dreams, they know, are what inspire people. These may or may not be 'practical' dreams, but, often, the leaders are governed less by the practicality of the dreams than by the fact that they are worth pursuing.

➤ *From an optimizer to a compromiser*: Leaders do not try to optimize for they know that such solutions exist only in books. They are constantly driven by the need to compromise, to make the best of a situation, and pry open loose bricks to gain entry into their world of dreams. They are also very keen on making sure that their compromises do not dilute the basic objectives and become a sell-out.

These are shown to be major transitions involving development of new skills and schemas. Making the transition involves three steps:

➤ *Knowing oneself*, i.e., one's strong as well as weak points, potential, and capabilities.

➤ *Becoming oneself,* i.e., shedding the masks worn so long that the person has forgotten what his true face is like. One has to again become oneself.

➤ *Deciding what to become in future and moving towards it* : This is essentially a process of self-development of gathering of new perspectives, fresh interpretation of facts, reflection, and developing a fresh worldview that is all one's own. Nietzsche's poser, 'This is my way, what is yours?' captures the essence of this transformation. Self-development is a vital ingredient of leadership; leaders have to find their own paths to their goals. ⩔

Increasingly, many organizations are coming around to the view that in the coming years, the critical resource shortage they will encounter will be that of leadership and not 'hard' resources such as technology and infrastructure or 'soft' resources such as analytical skills and conceptual skills of its personnel. This is because the above resources and skills can be acquired or imparted to employees relatively easily whereas finding and training leaders is a much more difficult and tricky proposition. Traditionally, organizations have concentrated on developing their managers (witness terms like 'managerial education') and little or no work has been done to develop leadership. This was largely because of a lack of appreciation of the differences in the skills and even the personality requirements of a leader as compared to a manager. It was assumed that the process of developing managers would also lead to the development of leaders.

But, experience has taught us that this is not the case. With the seminal publication by Zaleznik (1977) on the differences between leaders and managers and subsequent research done on leadership, more importance is being given to leadership development as a separate activity in organizations. All the same, there has been inadequate appreciation of the real issues involved in developing a manager into a leader.

This paper seeks to explore the issues involved in the transition from a manager to a leader, identifies five dimensions for the transition, and discusses their implications for leadership training in organizations.

TRADITIONAL MEANS OF CONTROL AND THE PRESENT CONTEXT

Much of the difference between managers and leaders arises from the way they exercise control in organizations. Traditionally, managers have exercised their power and authority through three sources: positional power, superior experience, and greater access to information. But, all these three sources are becoming less and less reliable and the real control has to come through the way leadership is exercised in the organization.

Traditionally, the dominant source of control for the top managers has been positional power. This is still very much the mode of exercising 'leadership' authority in feudalistic cultures like in India. But, with the increased education levels, larger choices available, and the general process of democratization of society which is taking place, the respect shown to mere positional authority is steadily on the wane. This process of decline has been buttressed by changes in parenting practices, influence of media, especially television and movies, exposure to different cultures, especially the more egalitarian Western culture, and, above all, much greater mobility in jobs. No longer can the boss treat his subordinates as little more than valets; the subordinates expect and demand a decent treatment. They are no longer willing to be treated as the children of a stern but benevolent dictatorial boss treating them paternally.

Similarly, top managers can no longer rule by virtue of their 'experience.' Earlier, the rate of change in environment — technologies, society, markets and so on — was so slow that, over a generation, what one learnt as a young person applied by and large even after 30 years. The experience thus accumulated could be used to judge situations and people better and this ability could lead to better decisions. But, experience leads to better judgments *only if* the past experience is, in some sense, applicable to the current situation. In the fast changing situation of today, while experience does count in improving judgment in ambiguous situations, this can no longer be taken for granted. Due to the fast and fundamental changes in the structure and models of businesses, markets, technologies, and environment, past experience needs to be used with caution. Managers cannot claim any superior decision-making skills simply due to their experience.

The third source of power has been access to information. Managers could tightly control the information flow to themselves. Due to this additional information, they could take better decisions. But, technological revolutions such as the Internet and distributed data systems have brought about major changes in the way information is stored, retrieved, and used. In fact, so much information is now available at lower levels that top level managers have to figure out how to get the right information for themselves. The lower level 'cutting edge' managers know much more about the business at that level than the top managers do. Top management often lacks the basic skills to even interpret the information that is made available to them. For example, decisions on what technologies to opt for in the telecommunications scenario in India today cannot be taken simply by a broad understanding of the technologies; a much greater in-depth understanding of how different technologies work is needed. In general, this depth of knowledge is difficult to attain and top managers will have to take decisions based on their juniors' advice without really understanding what the decision involves. The recent *faux pas*

by the Reliance Group in the telecom field to use franchisees and a long-term locked-in period for customers is an illustration of this dilemma.

Yet, there is no escape from the basic fact that, in organizations, someone will need to tell someone else what to do. But, unlike in the 'good old days,' it is much more critical today that the person taking the instructions responds willingly and with commitment. Making this happen requires not exercise of authority but qualities of leadership.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In this paper, leadership is broadly discussed as:
➢ taking charge
➢ setting goals and priorities
➢ establishing a direction to the others in the organization
➢ getting the people to do what they need to do willingly, effectively, enthusiastically, and with a sense of purpose.

In this sense, a leader is not just the CEO of the organization; leaders exist at all levels, although, by the nature of things, the CEO's role as a leader is still unique. The CEO sets the overall direction and purpose of the organization, defines the value system prevalent in the organization and its ethical climate; and defines the way the other organizational members interact with one another. The other leaders in the organization have to act within this context. If an organization has a wrong person as the CEO, there is a limit to which other leaders at lower levels can define their own directions and value systems of their sub-units. But, this does not mean that the CEO is the sole leader in an organization. Lower level leaders can also define their own climate, their own value systems, and sense of purpose, and there are many more degrees of freedom available to them than is commonly realized.

Having realized the importance of leadership, organizations are now in quest of ways and means of getting the leaders in place. The most commonly adopted techniques are: academic training programmes in which concepts and research findings in leadership are presented and discussed; experiential training programmes in which participants in groups experience what it is to be a leader and assess their own abilities; and mentorship programmes in the organizations. Typically, in many programmes, the traits or behavioural patterns of leaders are analysed and the implicit assumption is: "Develop

these traits, follow these practices, and you will also become a leader." However, in reality, this does not happen. These programmes, with the exception of some well-administered mentorship programmes, generally have limited impact and organizations reach the conclusion that either these programmes are useless and 'do not work,' and hence there is no need for their managers to participate in such programmes any more or that the efforts are inadequate and should be redoubled.

In our view, the reason for the limited impact of such initiatives is that they are *externally* directed while leadership is a process of *internal* development. The programmes give inputs on how, *in general*, one could become a leader but fail to address the question of how *a particular* person can become a leader. Leadership development is an intensely personal process and though the external inputs are valuable, they will be useless unless they are supplemented by a programme for internal development. This programme is to be drawn out by oneself. Without such a programme, at best, we are likely to get a lot of people who *know* about leadership but cannot *practise* leadership effectively.

Leadership is a highly demanding activity because of the need to reconcile numerous dimensions and evolve a holistic, integrated model for oneself. This is a very unstructured process and involves a process of questioning, reflection, gathering knowledge, learning from the experience of oneself and of others, and discovery. This is the reason Bennis (1998) has commented that one does not train oneself into a leader; one has to *become* a leader. This is a personal effort and involves a major unlearning of what one has learnt in one's career as a manager.

Typically, organizations bestow upon managers some roles and these roles demand certain behaviours from managers. For example, many managers get a mantra of 'bias for action.' This may degenerate into a propensity for action without thinking adequately about the consequences of the action. Or they may get the message that 'no one will run if he is allowed to walk.' This may lead to a slave driver mentality and a propensity to oversee everything closely, missing out completely on the larger picture. These habits get ingrained into the managers' system over the years and the schemas develop into self-consistent cognitive systems. It is even possible that these habits make one an effective manager but the problem is that they do not make one into an effective leader. The attributes needed in a leader are quite different from those needed in a manager and it is by no means certain that a

person who has been an effective manager will turn out to be an effective leader as well. The transition needed is more akin to jumping a chasm than walking comfortably through a bridge.

We discuss below the major dimensions involved in making the transition from a manager to a leader and what this transition involves.

Transition 1: From a Manager of 'Facts' and 'Data' to a Manager of 'Emotions'

Management education concentrates on decisions based on facts and data. Hopefully, it teaches how to analyse and interpret these facts and data more efficiently. Managerial jobs involve both collection and interpretation of data. The typical problem-solving approach, so popular in management schools, involves a 'cold' and an 'unemotional' analysis of alternatives and their consequences and adoption of the 'optimal' course of action. This approach has a great intellectual appeal as it involves processing of a fairly complex set of data and arguments for and against a particular course of action. Harold Geneen of ITT was probably the best example of a data cruncher. He would spend enormous amount of his time (and that of all his executives) in collecting more and more data and subjecting them to more and more rigorous analysis. But, despite all the analysis of data, he could not stop ITT from sliding down mainly due to want of a clear long-term strategy and a strong set of core values.

Many managers fall into the trap of believing that the key to good results is cold, unemotional analysis, and emotions should not come in the way of decisions. Unfortunately, people being what they are, emotions do come in the way. It may be a good analytical solution to close down a division or sack a person for non-performance but it involves very real and critical human issues that need to be resolved. Mr Rahul Bajaj, CEO of Bajaj Auto Limited, says in an interview* that his company had to institute a voluntary retirement scheme in which many employees had to be retired. He says that the decision was agonizing when he knew that many employees who had served loyally for long years had to go; but, not taking this step would have meant that the company itself would have faced an uncertain future. The scheme for downsizing was an 'optimal' and 'rational' solution. Yet, when a worker asked him as to why he was being discharged after 30 years of service to the company, whether

he was inefficient, and what he will tell his family, he says he found it difficult to answer. The company was no longer the same to its workers including those not downsized.

Managerial education does not prepare one for handling such a situation. At the most, the worker who asked questions to Mr Bajaj is considered a nuisance, to be got rid of quickly; at worst, he is someone who cannot grasp how his leaving is going to benefit hundreds of others. A rational framework cannot answer the worker's questions. They have to be answered through a combination of logic, understanding, and empathy. The emotions of this worker, as well as those of numerous others in a similar situation, have to be managed, and this is a much more difficult task as compared to making a Power Point presentation on a strategy for downsizing.

Even more difficult to manage are such emotions as commitment, loyalty, and a sense of ethics. These are extremely fragile to handle and can be destroyed or seriously affected by a single false step. Major decisions generate major emotions and the organization is not the same after such decisions. But, keeping the essential character of the corporation intact involves effective management of these emotions. Typically, managers who are strong in analytical abilities are weak in managing emotions; they find it uncomfortable to deal with 'unpredictable' and 'unreasonable' human beings. The more the time they spend on their job, the greater is their difficulty, and, unfortunately, it is at that stage that their call to leadership comes through.

Transition 2: From an 'Emotions Manager' to an 'Emotions Generator'

For becoming a leader, *managing* the existing emotions is not enough; *generating* the right emotions is also essential. These emotions cannot be generated through a logical process; in fact, they are quite often contrary to logic. Leaders generate emotions of fear and insecurity in organizations when they become complacent or want to achieve a new goal. We can take the example of Komatsu's famous 'Maru Caterpillar' campaign. Komatsu was doing well, and was in no grave danger, but the CEO had to galvanize the people of the company into a concrete goal and encircling Caterpillar was that goal.

It may be necessary to generate positive as well as negative emotions. In the Komatsu campaign, for instance, Caterpillar was projected as a demon to be conquered. Here the emotions aroused were anger and even hatred. When Gandhi first landed in South Africa, the

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*In a television serial of CNBC titled 'Lessons of Excellence' available in a set of nine CDs.

Indian community was not particularly unhappy with the treatment meted out to them. They were apathetic. Even an impending bill for disenfranchisement was not taken seriously by them because they were not voting anyway. Gandhi realized that if Indians had to live with dignity there, the community had to be shaken out of its stupor. A sense of exploitation needed to be created. This was duly done and he could mobilize the community who now perceived injustice. Similarly, when Chrysler was in dire straits, Lee Iacocca had to build a strong sense of optimism and confidence in the company and also present a doomsday scenario to the US community and the Federal Government about the disastrous impact on the US economy if Chrysler was not bailed out. The dominant emotion aroused was one of optimism. When Dr Bhabha established the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and Atomic Energy Establishment (later named the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre), he mobilized a number of brilliant Indian scientists with the vision of a modern India.

To generate these emotions, leaders work not through logic but through hope, promise of the jackpot at the end of the rainbow, and symbols and myths that create strong emotions. As Roosevelt said, statesmen are not there to project realistic scenarios but to sell hopes and dreams. Gandhi had an uncanny knack of identifying very strong symbols that could generate intense emotions. He identified a perfect symbol–salt–to fight the British in 1930. It was a powerful symbol of how ruthless the British were in extracting taxes from the poorest of the poor for this lowly but vital commodity. Gandhi could also generate positive emotions: his campaigns for the rights of *Harijans*, women, and Muslims were based on generating a positive vision for a new independent India.

Leaders have to be adept at capturing, in a few words, the essence of what the organization stands for and generate an emotional commitment. Again, Gandhi coined the term 'Ramarajya' to symbolize a righteous, caring, and equitable society free of exploitation. The Christian Medical College, Vellore, started its hospital under the leadership of Iva Scudder in 1900 with the motto of 'serving the poor in the spirit of Christ.' It symbolized the target segment and the spirit in which this segment had to be served–with selfless dedication. The Aravind Eye Hospitals, a chain of eye hospitals in South India, have, as their mission, eradication of needless blindness. Since a very high percentage of the blind is poor, this implies serving them equally and even reaching out to them and

educating them to come for a surgery that is not 'commercially very attractive.' This mission provides a rallying point and enables the staff to concentrate on cataract surgery, cataract being by far the largest source of blindness, and carry out its operations in a highly streamlined and efficient manner so as to reduce costs. This is also supplemented by a spiritual symbol in the form of Sri Aurobindo and though no one is compelled to read his teachings, his pictures are ubiquitous and serve as a constant reminder of the spiritual dimension of the work.

Goals such as 100 per cent growth in the next three years or doubling of profitability next year may serve as action points and are indispensable to managers. But, while they may motivate, they do not inspire. Managers work through a system of motivation in which people work for the sake of rewards or for avoiding punishment. Leaders, on the other hand, work through generating inspiration where people *want to* contribute because it is *worthwhile* doing so and not because it is profitable.

This is exemplified in some famous speeches that transformed nations such as the 'I have a dream' speech by Martin Luther King, and 'Their Finest Hour' speech by Churchill. However, no one could beat Gandhi at the pithiness of a symbolic, electrifying utterance. While it is said that Nietzsche shook the philosophers of Europe with his three words, 'God is Dead,' Gandhi shook the entire India and the British Empire with two words: 'Quit India!'

The two approaches, namely, logic vs. emotions, are fundamentally different from each other and that is why the aspiring leader needs to make a transition by jumping a chasm. The difference between the two approaches is expressed in the phrase 'Passions and Interests,' which is also the title of a book by A O Hirschman. When motivated by tangible rewards, people are driven by interests; there is no passion attached to them. Leaders, on the other hand, are driven by a passionate commitment to a cause rather than by a realistic understanding of a situation or by a calculation of what it would mean to the leader personally. It is this passion that inspires the people to do things that are otherwise impossible to do. Leaders, first of all, need to be capable of being moved passionately by a cause and then they must be capable of moving the others. That is why, many a times, leaders tend to fail: they are neither moved themselves nor are they capable of moving others.

How do leaders succeed in moving others? First of all, they have to find a cause to be passionate about, some-

thing that inspires them, and be committed to it. And they have to present it in a moving way by inventing myths, symbols, and even illusions. They have to gauge how their followers react to their moves. They are not ashamed of logical inconsistencies. What is important is the overall impact and managers have to learn how to make this impact if they aspire to be leaders.

Transition 3: From a Follower of Standards to a Setter of Standards

It is often said that those who cannot obey cannot command. This may be true in an army hierarchy but certainly not true of leaders. Leaders have the ability to see a new vision, a new opportunity, an ideal to be followed, and this involves what may be called a creative destruction of the *status quo*. In this sense, leaders are not great respecters of orderliness; in fact, many tend to be iconoclasts. Napoleon once said that when Europe comes to know of his death, all it would do is to heave a sigh of relief.

Obedience is essentially a requiem to the *status quo*. But, leadership is not about maintaining the *status quo*. It is about changing the existing rules, standards, and the comfortable equilibrium the world has set itself into. Leaders set their own standards, whether it is a Marconi who worked on the idea of a commercially viable telephony and changed the face of communications, or a Bill Gates who saw the impact of inexpensive computers with a standard driven by an operating system, or a Hitler obsessed with German and Aryan superiority, or a Gandhi equally convinced of the power of non-violence. As Bernard Shaw said, the reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

This position has serious implications for a manager aspiring to be a leader. Typically, a manager has been trained to play by the rules and not to 'rock the boat.' He/she prefers orderliness; nothing makes him/her happier than a self-propelled 'system.' It induces far less uncertainty and messiness than organizations are willing to put up with. A manager also finds it more comfortable to deal with people who are orderly in their thinking and their behaviour. But, given that a potential leader has to have a certain degree of restlessness with the *status quo* and a vision to put forward, he/she has to decide how and when to express it. It may create chaos in the organi-

zation and in his/her personal life and career. Having been conditioned effectively through the entire career, most managers have been required to jump at the crack of a whip and not to the inspiration of a vision. Transition under such circumstances is particularly difficult.

Transition 4: From a Realist to a Dreamer

One lesson that is constantly drummed into a young manager in an organization is that he/she should be a realist, a 'practical' person. He/she is told not to 'dream' up fanciful notions and ideas but do a reality check on what will work. Over a period, the manager starts looking at a problem in a 'practical' way and become adept at dismissing new ideas and rebuking people who come up with outstanding ideas.

Leaders are not necessarily realists or 'practical' people. In Shaw's play, *Saint Joan,* one of the courtiers to Robert, the commander of the castle of Vaucoulers, tells Robert: "We want a few mad people now. See where all the sane ones have landed us!" Leaders are dreamers constantly dreaming of fantastic visions. Without constant dreams, minds stagnate.

Joan of Arc dreamt of a united France under a powerful king devoid of the invading English. It was a fantastic dream not easily comprehensible today when a united France, which was defined by her as 'a country of French speaking people' is taken for granted. We have already referred to Gandhi's dream of 'Ramarajya.' Nehru dreamt of an industrialized India, strong, powerful, self-reliant, and providing a moral anchor to the world. The issue here is not whether these dreams were feasible or what their consequences were. The issue is that dreaming is an art in itself and brings in its own rewards. The important thing is to dream.

But, dreaming is definitely not a part of a manager's process of training. Dreams need a certain time for inactivity, a time for 'doing nothing,' merely contemplating. People 'caught' doing that are very likely to be branded as loafers or day-dreamers, not fit for higher responsibilities. 'Business' is the business of business. But, it is precisely those people who can dream are capable of bringing about any significant change. Of course, dreams are by themselves of no use unless followed by purposeful action. But, action without dreams is, in all likelihood, purposeless, empty action, likely to stir up a lot of heat and noise but accomplishing little that is substantial.

Transition 5: From an Optimizer to a Compromiser

Management education starts with an assumption that the job of a manager is to maximize some parameters — profits, profitability, shareholder value and so on — essentially economic parameters. But, managers are all too aware of the basic problem involved while taking such decisions: difficult trade-offs. Even among the three economic parameters mentioned above, there could be situations where maximization of profit may not lead to maximization of shareholder value. The dictum of Friedman (1970) that the *sole* responsibility of management is to maximize profits is or can hardly ever be practised. Part of the problem is in visualizing what, in fact, would, lead to maximization of shareholders' value. For example, if a product (let us say, a pharmaceutical product), released in the market after an expensive research and development effort by a company is found to have major side effects, which have not been conclusively established, should the company go ahead with the product, adopt a denial mode, and risk expensive liability suits or should it withdraw the drug, subject it to more tests, and satisfy itself? Was it the right decision for Johnson & Johnson to withdraw *all* its supplies of Tylenol from the market from the point of view of shareholders? There could be short-term vs. long-term trade-offs. Was it in the long-run shareholder interest that the major tobacco companies in the US persisted in their campaign against smoking, challenging medical findings about the injurious effects of smoking, and even deliberately misleading the public about the effects of smoking? Today, many of them have been forced to pay large sums as compensations in lawsuits. Did they serve the cause of their shareholders by their earlier actions?

The dilemmas are not purely economic. Many of the dilemmas involve non-economic elements. Should a company shut down its plant and throw out its employees, giving them the least compensation possible? Should it punish whistle blowers? Should it promote a competent person but one whose integrity is doubtful or a not so competent person who is totally dependable?

These are not issues that involve choices between right and wrong, but, as Badaracco (1997) puts it, between right and right and wrong and wrong. The choice cannot be *optimal;* it has to be a compromise. Even Lord Rama, the embodiment of virtue and righteousness, had to compromise some values when he killed Vali, who, after all, had done nothing wrong to him. In Jean Paul Sartre's play, *The Dirty Hands,* Hugo, a young person loyal to the party and true to its ideals, has been sent to assassinate Hœderer, the local party boss, because the latter is trying to secure a compromise with other groups, some of them representing 'class enemies.' Hugo accuses Hœderer of betraying the party's ideals to which Hœderer gives a classic reply: "How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid are you to soil your hands! All right, stay pure! What good will it do? Purity is an idea for a *yogi* or a monk. You intellectuals and bourgeois anarchists use it as a pretext for doing nothing ….. Well, I have dirty hands. Right up to the elbows. I've plunged them in filth and blood. But what do you hope? Do you think you can govern innocently?" "Do you think you can govern innocently?" That is the haunting question posed in the play. It is not a question of doing *the* right thing; it is a question of what sort of a compromise to make.

People trained in the traditional managerial educational mould may find difficult to accept that there could be situations where there are no right answers. Yet, decisions have to be made and consequences have to be faced. Leaders have to constantly grapple with these kinds of dilemmas and find answers that they can live with and others can live with never being sure that they have done the right thing. The trade-offs may involve choices between the short-term vs. long-term, between one set of affected persons and another set, the company versus community or self vs. close family members. They have to justify their actions to oneself and to others, now and later. These are very difficult choices that assume a different dimension when people move into leadership roles. They define a person showing his/her true mettle. But, they also take a heavy toll as was the case with President Lincoln who aged prematurely by the end of the Civil War.

Mahabharata is full of such difficult choices. Should Yudhishthira go for war to claim his kingdom and also to avenge the humiliation of his wife or should he accept what Jinnah might have called a 'moth-eaten Hastinapura' if such a peace proposal is offered saving countless lives in the process? Should Arjuna kill Karna when he is disarmed and out of his chariot thereby bringing the war to a speedy conclusion because Karna had showed no scruples or sympathy with Arjuna's own son, Abhimanyu? Should he abandon *dharma* on the plea that the opponent has abandoned his? In a 20th century version of the question, should the US have dropped its atomic bomb on Japan? Should it have invaded Iraq?

Answers to these questions cannot be found in any

books on ethics. Resolution of such ethical dilemmas involves the development of a framework for oneself against which one can judge one's action. This requires a major transition from a determinate world of a manager to the messy world of a leader.

MAKING THE TRANSITION

The five dimensions of transition from a manager to a leader discussed above are major transitions. They involve fundamentally different processes and major re-learning on the part of the manager. They cannot be managed by learning more of the conventional managerial tools and techniques. What is required is the acquisition of a totally new perspective of the role the person has to play as a leader. How should he/she make this transition?

The role of traditional management education and training in the workplace would be limited in this context. Typically, even broad-based courses (for e.g. in strategy) still adopt essentially a rational-analytical, profit-maximizing approach based on 'facts' and 'data.' This necessarily makes them limited in their scope and hence cannot address all the complex issues involved in the actual decision-making. We are not trying to under- estimate the importance of such analytical techniques based on logic and reason. But, the development of a belief that they are *sufficient* is dangerous. Our focus here is on a wholly different class of problems and neither traditional management education nor on-the-job training can give the perspective needed to resolve the dilemmas of leadership.

Experience is also not a reliable guide. As Goethe wrote, "experience is only half the experience. The other half lies in the interpretation of that experience and relating it to the present situation." All 'facts' come with an overlay of interpretative and subjective judgments. The true lesson of experience is that while one should make use of it, one cannot be led solely by it. This requires, again, the development of a perspective.

What then can prepare a manager to make this transition and become a leader? The answer is in self-development. This may seem to be a trite recommendation in itself, but, it is a difficult, complex, and personal process that needs to be undertaken by aspiring leaders.

The best and the most celebrated example of self-development is that of Gandhi and the best way to understand it is to read his autobiography, which is titled, very aptly, as *My Experiments with Truth*. As is implied in the title, his whole life was an experiment. It was a never-ending journey for he had no illusions that he will reach *the truth*. But he strove to find *his* own truth. The book describes in detail the kind of dilemmas he had to face and how he came out with *his own* solution. The process of self-development is also brought out beautifully in Shyam Benegal's film, *The Making of the Mahatma*. We see, in this film, the evolution of a perfectly ordinary young person called M K Gandhi into one of the greatest souls the world has ever seen. He was not borne with the brilliance of Einstein or even any special innate talent; what set him apart from the others was his willingness to learn — from his colleagues, from his opponents, from his countrymen, and from his own experiences. Each experience helped to shape him better and closer to being a Mahatma.

The manager, in attempting this transition, must, first of all, be willing to examine himself truly and frankly, understanding his weaknesses and prejudices, his bright and blind spots, his abilities and disabilities. Thus, the first step is the good old adage, 'know thyself.' This should be neither to gloss over one's own weaknesses nor to flagellate oneself or indulge in meaningless self-pity. It has to be a dispassionate, disinterested assessment of oneself.

The second step in the transition is the Nietzschien prescription to 'become what you are.' People are not what they are. They wear masks, they behave in ways expected of them, do things they do not want to do. After sometime, they lose their own true selves, their own identities. Over a period of conditioning in organizations, people become more similar to their colleagues in the organizations rather than what they themselves truly are. But, arriving at one's own identity is an absolutely vital ingredient of leadership. Sometimes, one has to get out of one's familiar ways of thinking one has developed over a long career and truly embark on one's own thoughts. Since what a person thinks is a product of his/her past, one needs to get out of those ways of thinking that are no longer relevant and concentrate on those that are.

The last step is to decide what one *wants* to become. This requires a certain amount of stock-taking, of making major choices that involve a decisive break with the past, like Nora does with her resounding slamming of the door behind her in Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*. Symbolically, when Gandhi decided to take a vow of non-possession and moved to the Phoenix settlement or when he shaved his head and adopted a coarse Indian dress in South Africa, it involved breaking decisively with the Gandhi that

he was so far and become a different person. This involves introspection comparing, at one level, what one is to what one wants to become; and at another level, what one wants to become to what one can realistically become.

This process of development also involves a conscious broadening of one's perspective. This can take place not through a more intensive learning of limited areas but a more extensive and broad-based learning process. We believe one effective way in this process is the study of humanities, especially good literature, which highlights human dilemmas and issues. Brecht's *Galileo*, for instance, brings up the issue of responsibilities to society, to the field of one's profession, and to one's immediate stakeholders. Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* brings up the issue of responsibilities to society and to one's own family. *A Doll's House* brings out the issue of responsibility to oneself. Jean Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands* brings up the point that a leader's hands cannot be squeaky clean; they need to be or have to be dirtied. *Mahabharata* brings up a complex set of varied issues ranging from duty to the state to one's own progeny, flexibility of positions, the difficulty in identifying 'the right' course of action, and the differences between compromise and sell-out.

The important point is to look for such inputs consciously and ingesting them selectively. They do not provide 'answers' but broaden one's perspective regarding the issues involved. There is no *one right answer* to such questions but there is *a right answer* for oneself. Nietzsche's poser in *Thus Spake Zaruthastra*, "this is my way, what is yours?" captures the essence of the above argument — that one has to find that one way by oneself. In Herman Hesse's story, *Sidhartha*, Sidhartha finds that he cannot attain Truth and Wisdom by reading scriptures, austere penances, intensive worldly pleasures, or joining Buddha's *sanga* and following His preaching. He gets his understanding and self-realization only by listening to the sounds of a river, emptying his mind of all pre-conceived notions, and interpreting the sounds of the river in his own way. Symbolically, the river gives him Wisdom, but, in reality, he discovers the Wisdom that is already there inside him. Finally, when he attains the Wisdom, he becomes indistinguishable from Buddha Himself.

Leadership is also finding *one's own* way. It is absolutely different from trying to find *the* way. The transition is really not walking over a bridge smoothly but jumping a chasm, or like in the Sidhartha story, crossing a river. ⩔

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S Manikutty has specialized in Business Policy and Strategy in his doctorate and teaching. A Professor in the Business Policy Area of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, he is a member of the Centre for Telecom Policy Studies at the Institute as well as the Inter-Ministerial Advisory Committee on Universal Service Support Policy for Telecommunications, Government of India. His areas of interest include strategic management and competitive strategy, leadership, global competitiveness of industries, corporate governance, and strategies for family businesses. He has been a consultant to the World Bank and ODA, UK, in the field of social development programmes. He has written a number of cases and published papers in national and international journals. His paper (co-authored) won the award for the best paper on family businesses for 2003 from the Family Firm Institute, USA.
e-mail: smanikuti@iimahd.ernet.in