

Management Fundamentals in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* – III



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Leadership Qualities

Throughout the *Arthashastra*, references have been made to more than a hundred qualities of leadership, along with the methods of developing them. The main focus of the *Arthashastra* is on creating an ideal society, which can be done only through inspired leaders. Hence, we can say that *Arthashastra* is a book on 'Creation of Leaders'.

Sri L.N.Rangarajan, a political economist, in his translation of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, says, "There is a basic difference between the *Dharmashastras* and the *Arthashastras*. Our *Dharmashastras* address themselves to individuals, teaching them their *dharma*, while *Arthashastras* are addressed to rulers."

Hence we find that *Dharma-*

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shastras like *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* etc. are more popular, as they are written for the masses, to teach *dharma* to every individual, while the *Arthashastras* are limited in appeal, as they are written specifically keeping leaders in mind. In every society, the leaders are few and the followers numerous. Therefore, many thinkers have also said that *Arthashastra* is addressed to a particular section of the society, especially the intellectually oriented people who can guide the society towards material welfare and prosperity.

In this month's article we will be looking at some key qualities that a leader should have. Leadership qualities are not the monopoly of any individual, race, country or generation. Leadership is an art that can be developed by any individual from any background. The only way to develop it is to

have a higher goal or ideal in front of us. The goal itself will inspire us and, through us, the others around us. Great leaders are born when they sacrifice their individual pursuit for happiness, for the sake of the happiness of others. From an average lawyer, a 'Mahatma' Gandhi was born. From a Narendra, the great Swami Vivekananda was born.

In the *Arthashastra*, chapter 19 of Book 1, titled 'Rules of a King' describes the various qualities of a leader. A complete and detailed study of this section can prove very fruitful to various students and teachers, who want to develop leadership qualities. It gives exhaustive, step by step guidelines about the kind of life a leader should lead, right from his daily timetable, to his method of conducting himself with different types of people.

Be Ever Active

"If the king is energetic, his subjects will be equally energetic. If he is slack (and lazy in performing his duties) the subjects will also be lazy, and thereby eat into his wealth. Besides, a lazy king will easily fall into the hands of the enemies. Hence the king should

himself always be energetic."
(1.19.1-5)

The first and foremost quality of a leader is to be active. No other quality can replace this. The enthusiasm of the leader is itself an inspiration to others. As the famous saying goes, 'People learn more by watching actions than listening to sermons.' Leaders are the ones who have a positive energy field around them. Only if he/she is energetic and active, the subordinates will also display energetic enthusiasm. The best example is our Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda himself. At the age of 75, he had the enthusiasm of a 25-year-old, which was infectious and difficult to resist. What attracted most people to him was this energy level, which is still felt in a vibrant way throughout the Chinmaya Mission. Even after a decade, since he left his mortal coil, he continues to inspire those who have not even seen him. Such is the magnetic power of a truly enthusiastic leader. It is very contagious.

One cannot afford to be lazy in front of one's juniors. If the boss comes late to the office and is found sleeping there, what can one expect from one's sub-

ordinates? The *Bhagavad Geeta* (Ch.3, 21) says that people generally follow whatever the leader does. A good leader should be able to take quick and effective decisions. If he keeps postponing important matters, his subordinates too will do the same. Such a leader will soon lose control over the subordinates. Without any control, the subordinates will start spending the excess money of the organisation in unnecessary areas. Since the leader is not vigilant and alert, the enemies and competitors will easily overtake him. So, in order to inspire others, to maintain and expand the wealth of the organisation, and also to be in touch with the latest developments around, the leader should be ever active and energetic.

Love for the Team Members

A leader can create a team, but there can be no team without a leader. He is the nucleus around which everything takes place. At many points, he takes tough decisions that may seem harsh to a few people. However, he has to take into consideration the overall benefit of the team and not just his individual benefit.

However great the vision of the leader may be, he cannot keep others truly inspired, if his heart is not full of love.

“In the happiness of the subjects lies the benefit of the king and in what is beneficial to the subjects is his own benefit.”

(1.19.34)

Leaders of most societies look at their individual happiness and the attainment of selfish goals as the primary criterion, while taking key decisions. They think that by this particular method, they will be able to keep themselves happy forever. But the fact is quite different. Happiness is interdependent; if others are happy, it is conducive to one's own happiness. If a person just tries to keep himself happy, neglecting the happiness of other people around him, it will hit him back very hard over a period of time.

A leader understands this point very clearly – in the happiness of his subjects lies his own benefit. In fact, this should be the prime objective of the leaders. A king does not have any individual desire left. The only desire left is the welfare of others.

When the subjects are benefited, the king will naturally be

happy. There are many leaders in the political as well as the corporate circles, who do not want to educate their juniors out of the fear that if they get educated or empowered, they would overtake the leader himself. By doing this, one is just suppressing the hidden potential of a person. On the contrary, if one offers appropriate training to the subordinates, after identifying the core unique areas, not only will they become fully productive, they will also be thankful to the leader for giving them the timely help and support that was needed and repay him ten-fold. A selfless man gets more than what he requires. This is a natural law which a leader has to understand and follow in order to be successful.

Consultation

There are various areas that the leader has to look into. It may not be feasible for him to take care of all these areas himself. Hence he should take help and guidance, consulting experts in various fields. Today we find that even the President or Prime Minister of a country has specialists like the principal scientific adviser, chief security adviser etc., whom he consults

before taking any decision in matters regarding that particular area. This consultation should be done in a spirit of humility, with a desire to learn and understand more.

“All undertakings should be preceded by consultation. Holding a consultation with only one, he may not be able to reach a decision in difficult matters. With more counsellors it is difficult to reach decisions and maintain secrecy.”

(1.15.2, 35, 40)

“Therefore sit and counsel with those who are mature in intellect.”

(1.15.20-21)

Any important undertaking should be preceded by due consultation with experts in that field. There should be more than one consultant, because a single individual may have a narrow or biased vision. Therefore it is important to heed the viewpoints of at least two to three people. After examining these viewpoints, he can come to his own decision.

Further, care has to be taken that he should not go on consulting more and more people, leading to confusion and indecision; there is also the fear that these important matters will lose their secrecy. Therefore, it

is advised that one should only consult a few, and only those who are mature in their intellect, meaning experienced and sharp persons.

We find the same advice being given by Lord Rama to his brother Bharata in *Ramayana*, telling him how to run the kingdom effectively, while asking him to go back to Ayodhya with the *Padukas*.

Respect Spiritual People

This is a unique quality found in the Indian management system that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. India, right from its very birth, has been a spiritual country. It has taken spirituality as its national ideal. Centuries have passed, yet we never gave up our search for Truth. Our *gurus* and spiritual masters have been our role models and also our benchmark for excellence. We have gone back to them again and again to check if we have missed the right track somewhere.

In ancient India, hermits, ascetics and spiritual masters were respected and revered. They were invited to the courts to take important decisions. In various religious books and stories, we find mention of a

special seat for the *acharya*, a religious teacher, who used to be consulted before taking any key decision in the society. The leader himself understands that he is not the ultimate. Therefore, he looks for guidance from the *acharya*. The *acharya*, in turn, understands that he too, as a person, is not the ultimate. His validity comes from his deep understanding of *dharma*. He gives suggestions or decisions based on *dharma*. Thus the whole society runs on the basis of *dharma*.

Today, our parliamentary system of governance, adopted from the West, has no place for any spiritual masters. Everybody takes decisions based on his own individual judgments, without consulting anyone superior to him in moral standards. It is the state of the blind leading the blind. Only if our law makers can understand once again that there has to be a seat for a spiritual guide in our system of governance, can we go back to the glorious days of India.

Throughout the *Arthashastra*, we find that *acharyas* were given a patient hearing on various matters and also invited to court sessions, where they had the highest and the most important

seat offered. The king could start the session only after offering salutations to these great masters.

Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda said, "A leader is one who creates more leaders." This is what Gurudev himself did. A leader does not stick to power, position or authority. He trains potential people in the

knowledge and the skills that he has acquired in his years of experience. As he trains his juniors, he naturally takes up higher responsibilities and moves up the ladder. A true leader understands the golden principle that 'the best way to keep rising higher and higher is to give more responsibilities to the persons below you.'