

'Formula' for Great Leadership: *Spandan* (Heartbeat) Approach

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HBS Working Knowledge, a weekly journal of the Harvard Business School carried in July 2014 discussion on great leadership. James Heskett moderated the discussion. Around sixty persons from different walks of life across the world participated. Heskett summed up the discussion and posed the question: Is there really a formula for great leadership? (*HBS Working Knowledge*, July 30, 2014)

'Is there really a formula?' The answer is No, if by formula we mean, as an example, '(a+b)=?' Prediction of the outcome in a formula is certain, clear and unambiguous. i.e.: a^2+b^2+2ab . This format of deterministic formula does not apply to human beings even at individual levels, not to speak of their sentiments, interactions and activities at interpersonal and institutional levels. As Isaac Singer, the Polish Nobel Laureate for Literature, put it, "Man is a caricature of God, a parody of the spirit, the only entity in creation which could be a lie."

With reference to human beings it is appropriate to think of a formula in terms of probabilities based upon however certain fundamentals. A formula, not *The* formula. Viewed from this angle, I submit that great leadership has four facets. The first that it is a series of conscious, consistent and continuous efforts at interpersonal and institutional levels towards achieving a specific objective. This facet distinguishes, implicitly, leader from leadership. Leader is person specific and connotes series of disparate and discrete acts. Leadership is not invariably person specific; more often than not, it is collective; and, denotes a process - 'a series of conscious, consistent and continuous efforts'

The second facet of great leadership is that it holds faith in basic goodness of others as its credo. Accordingly, the great leadership is aware that it is the unstinted cooperation and support of the others which is the prime determinant of leadership success and effectiveness.

Notwithstanding the faith in basic goodness of others, great leadership is characterized by its awareness of, and preparedness for, a possible failure of the given efforts in the short run. This apparently contradictory feature, which constitutes the third facet, originates from the understanding of the leadership of human nature. Possible failure, because of the interplay and impact of the environment- both within and outside the institutional framework - on the efforts of the others involved. As R.M.Lodha, the Chief Justice of India said the other day (August 11 2014), “No one is perfect. Society is not perfect. And we come from the same society. We too are not perfect.”

Failure being only of short term nature is because of the faith of leadership in the ability of others to overcome their inability to withstand the negative impact from within themselves and from outside, the environment of which they are a part.

The task of great leadership is to keep on trying relentlessly to facilitate others, their team members, followers and subordinates overcome their internal inhibitions and external threats. This is the fourth facet of great leadership. The great leadership believes in – to paraphrase Michael Jordan, American former professional basketball player and entrepreneur, ‘I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I cannot accept not trying’.

What I have submitted above, in essence, is what I have learnt so far about human behavior at interpersonal and institutional levels.

Spandan (Heartbeat) Approach.

As a teacher in management in India since 1970s, I have observed and experienced as to how the perspective of managerial effectiveness changed from managerial communication to interpersonal effectiveness to management based values to organization based values.

Emanating essentially from Indian ethos, *Spandan* (a word in Sanskrit, meaning Heartbeat) approach postulates at institutional level faith in the basic goodness of human beings as management credo. Three transformational values, viz. Belief in innate

divinity, Faith in basic goodness and Belief in intrinsic altruism in human beings are postulates as the pivot for human existence and growth.

Spandan (Heartbeat) approach along with Spandan Spectrum of Human Values and its 3 D Process of Diagnosis, Discovery and Development is being applied at organizational level aimed at facilitating management evolve a Functionally Humane Organization (FHO).

The experiences and insights gained in propagation and inculcation of human values in management and society since the formation of Spandan as non-governmental organization in 2001, in particular, vindicate that faith in basic goodness of human beings is the only enduring credo for emergence, sustenance and growth of human organization and society.