

Mercuri Mail

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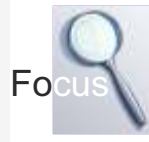
Leadership and Discipline

- Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw



Must Read

- written by
R Gopalakrishnan,
Director, Tata Sons



Stoke the fire within

- Dr APJ Abdul Kalam



Vintage



Leadership and Discipline

Excerpts from
Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw's
lecture at Defence Services College,
Wellington in 1998

Ladies and Gentlemen,

..Can leaders be made? My answer is yes. Give me a man or a woman with a common sense and decency, and I can make a leader out of him or her. That is the subject which I am going to discuss with you this morning.

What are the attributes of leadership? The first, the primary, indeed the cardinal attribute of leadership is **professional knowledge and professional competence**. Now you will agree with me that you cannot be born with professional knowledge and professional competence even if you are a child of Prime Minister, or the son of an industrialist, or the progeny of a Field Marshal. In this fast-moving technologically developing world, you can never acquire sufficient professional knowledge. You have to keep at it, and at it, and at it, with hard work and constant study. Unless you know what you are talking about, unless you understand your profession, you can never be a leader.

What is the next thing you need for leadership? It is the ability to **make a decision and accept full responsibility for that decision**. Have you ever wondered why people do not make a decision? The answer is quite simple. It is because they lack professional competence, or they are worried that their decision may be wrong and they will have to carry the can. According to the law of averages, if you take ten decisions, five ought to be right. If you have professional knowledge and professional competence, nine will be right, and the one that might not be correct will probably be put right by a subordinate officer or a colleague. But if you do not take a decision, you are doing something wrong. An act of omission is much worse than an act of commission. An act of commission can be put right. An act of omission cannot.

When I was the Army Chief, I would go along to a formation, ask the fellow what have you done about this and I normally got an answer, "Sir, I have been thinking... I have not yet made up my mind," and I coined a Manekshawism. If the girls will excuse my language, it was 'if you must be a bloody fool – be one quickly'. So remember that you are the ones who are going to be the future senior staff officers, the future commanders. Make a decision and having made it, accept full responsibility for it. Do not pass it on to a colleague or subordinate.

So, what comes next for leadership?

Absolute Honesty, fairness and justice – we are dealing with people. Those of us who have had the good fortune of commanding hundreds and thousands of men know this. No man likes to be punished, and yet a man will accept punishment stoically if he knows that the punishment meted out to him will be identical to the punishment meted out to another person who has some Godfather somewhere. This is very, very important. No man likes to be superseded, and yet men will accept supersession if they know that they are being superseded, under the rules, by somebody who is better than they are but not just somebody who happens to be related to the Commandant of the staff college or to a Cabinet Minister or by the Field Marshal's wife's current boyfriend. This is extremely important.

We in India have tremendous pressures- pressures from the Government, pressures from superior officers, pressures from families, pressures from wives, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and girlfriends, and we lack the courage to withstand those pressures.

That takes me to the next attribute of Leadership- **Moral and Physical Courage**.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not know which of these is more important. When I am talking to young officers and young soldiers, I should place emphasis on physical courage. But since I am talking to this gathering, I will lay emphasis **on Moral Courage**. **What is moral courage? Moral courage is the ability to distinguish right from wrong and having done so, say so when asked, irrespective of what your superiors might think or what your colleagues or your subordinates might want.** A 'yes man' is a dangerous man. He may rise very high, he might even become the Managing Director of a company. He may do anything but he can never make a leader because he will be used by his superiors, disliked by his colleagues and despised by his subordinates. So shallow- the 'yes man'.

I am going to illustrate from my own life an example of moral courage. Ladies and Gentlemen, there is a very thin line between becoming a Field Marshal and being dismissed. In 1971, when Pakistan clamped down on its province, East Pakistan, hundreds and thousands of refugees started pouring into India. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi had a cabinet meeting at ten o'clock in the morning. The following attended: the Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh, the Defence Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Rao, and I was also ordered to be present.

A very angry Prime Minister read out messages from Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. All of them saying that hundreds of thousands of refugees had poured into their states and they did not know what to do. So the Prime Minister turned round to me and said: "I want you to do something".

"Yes, it is my job to tell you the truth. It is my job to fight and win, not to lose."

I said, "What do you want me to do?"

She said, "I want you to enter East Pakistan".

I said, "Do you know that that means War?"

She said, "I do not mind if it is war".

I, in my usual stupid way said, “Prime Minister, have you read the Bible?” And the Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh (a Punjabi Sikh), in his Punjabi accent said, “What has Bible got to do with this?”, and I said, “the first book, the first chapter, the first paragraph, the first sentence, God said, ‘let there be light’ and there was light. You turn this round and say ‘let there be war’ and there will be war. What do you think? Are you ready for a war? Let me tell you –it’s 28th April, the Himalayan passes are opening now, and if the Chinese gave us an ultimatum, I will have to fight on two fronts”.

Again Sardar Swaran Singh turned round and in his Punjabi English said, “Will China give ultimatum?”

I said, “You are the Foreign Minister. You tell me”.

Then I turned to the Prime Minister and said, “Prime Minister, last year you wanted elections in West Bengal and you did not want the communists to win, so you asked me to deploy my soldiers in penny pockets in every village, in every little township in West Bengal. I have two divisions thus deployed in sections and platoons without their heavy weapons. It will take me at least a month to get them back to their units and to their formations. Further, I have a division in the Assam area, another division in Andhra Pradesh and the Armoured Division in the Jhansi-Babina area. It will take me at least a month to get them back and put them in their correct positions. I will require every road, every railway train, every truck, every wagon to move them. We are harvesting in the Punjab, and we are harvesting in Haryana; we are also harvesting in Uttar Pradesh. And you will not be able to move your harvest.

I turned to the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, “If there is a famine in the country afterwards, it will be you to blame, not me.” Then I said, “My Armoured Division has only got thirteen tanks which are functioning.”

The Finance Minister, Mr. Chawan, a friend of mine, said, “Sam, why only thirteen?”

“Because you are the Finance Minister. I have been asking for money for the last year and a half, and you keep saying there is no money. That is why.”

Then I turned to the Prime Minister and said, “Prime Minister, it is the end of April. By the time I am ready to operate, the monsoon will have broken in that East Pakistan area. When it rains, it does not just rain, it pours. Rivers become like oceans. If you stand on one bank, you cannot see the other and the whole countryside is flooded. My movement will be confined to roads, the Air Force will not be able to support me, and, if you wish me to enter East Pakistan, I guarantee you a hundred percent defeat.”

“You are the Government”, I said turning to the Prime Minister, “Now will you give me your orders?”

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have seldom seen a woman so angry, and I am including my wife in that. She was red in the face and I said, “Let us see what happens”. She turned round and said, “The cabinet will meet four o’clock in the evening”.

Everyone walked out. I being the junior most man was the last to leave. As I was leaving, she said, “Chief, please will you stay behind?” I looked at her. I said, “Prime Minister, before you open your mouth, would you like me to send in my resignation on grounds of health, mental or physical?”

“No, sit down, Sam. Was everything you told me the truth?”

“Yes, it is my job to tell you the truth. It is my job to fight and win, not to lose.”

She smiled at me and said, “All right, Sam. You know what I want. When will you be ready?”

“I cannot tell you now, Prime Minister”, I said, but let me guarantee you this that if you leave me alone, allow me to plan, make my arrangements, and fix a date, I guarantee you a hundred percent victory”.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, as I told you, there is a very thin line between becoming a Field Marshal and being dismissed. Just an example of moral courage.

Remember, moral courage. You, the future senior staff officers and commanders will be faced with many problems. People will want all sorts of things. You have got to have the moral courage to stand up and tell them the facts. Again, as I told you before, a ‘yes man’ is a despicable man.

- Sam Manekshaw goes on to talk about other attributes of leadership – Physical courage, Discipline and Character. A full transcript of this lecture is on <http://goo.gl/X1s73q>

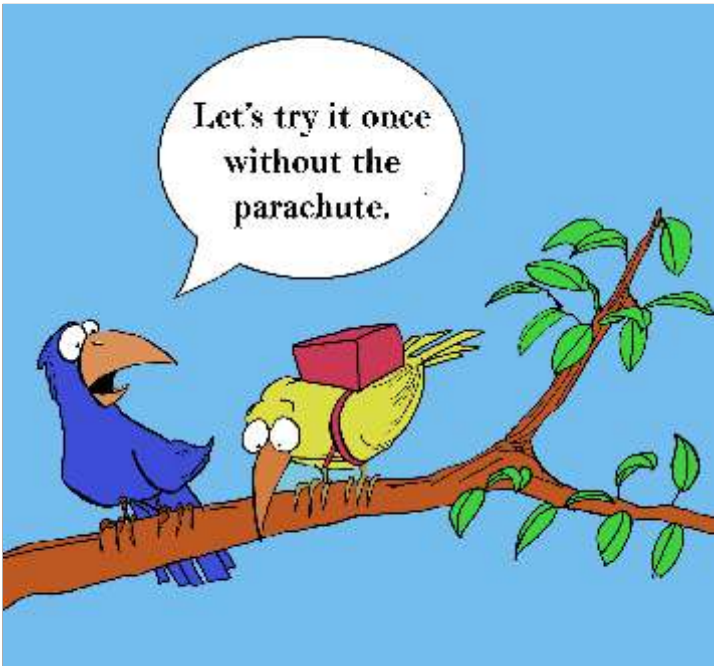
Ravi’s Corner



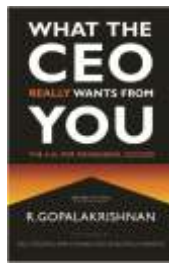
Bolt from the blue

Admired at work
I bask in my success
My home and family
Circle me with delirious joy
The Trappings of material wealth
Make me puff up with pride
I see a rainbow everyday
Who cares what is at the end of it
I write poetry and dream endlessly
My golf is getting better- the swing delicate and sure
I am a social butterfly touching many lives

And then the bolt from the blue
And what can I do, but learn to deal with it
Denial, Anger, Acceptance and Hope
I will go through all of it
I will...



Must Read



In this crisp must read book, Gopalakrishnan presents the four A's to succeed as a manager. Drawing from his rich experience of almost five decades in the corporate world serving conglomerates Unilever and the Tata Group, RG in his simple story telling style makes this book an engrossing learningful experience.

The 'Four As' describe the competency set and behaviors required of a successful manager. They are Accomplishment, Affability, Advocacy and Authenticity.

Accomplishment: The moment one transitions from being an executive to being a manager, it is very easy to make the mistake of believing that he need not 'do' things anymore, and that he now has only to 'think'. Consequently many potential managers take their eyes off 'execution'. Getting things done through other people and other departments needs influencing skills which managers must strive to be very good at.

Affability: Managers are paid to deliver results. This requires them to convince, cajole, coerce and even crucify people in their pursuit of results. An affable manager knows to disagree without being disagreeable; to separate rival's views from his likes or dislikes for rival, and to listen with a focused and open mind. This is a skill that is perfected through painstaking practice.

Advocacy: To quote from the book 'In the early stages of one's career, you are the recipient of instructions and the effects of power. You accept them by adapting. You realize that the boss expects you to exercise your leadership on the people who report to you and make sure that things get done. In the middle management phase, you find the need to influence people without their directly reporting to you. In the senior and leadership roles, you may exercise no control over people you need to influence. This is the manner in which your skills of advocacy develop'.

Authenticity: The perception of who you are and what you stand for determines the followership you will have. Followership here, is the voluntary desire or inclination among followers to follow a person, emotionally and physically.

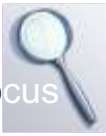
After expanding on the four As, the book goes on to show how these skills come together, in building the crucial capability to find the correct pathway amidst apparently opposite requirements such as - Get the job done on time and do not upset people, Speak the truth if you disagree and do not offend the boss, Keep your eyes and ears open in the company and do not gossip, Set ambitious goals and deliver on your targets, Be experimental and be consistent. To find and walk the middle path between such extremes is essential for happiness and success.

Gopalakrishnan illustrates his views with very practical day-to-day examples which inspire reflection and a sense of urgency to change. His compassion and sincerity of intention to groom successful managers, shines right through every page of the book. Once you start reading, you are sure not to put it down. Get started now!



Stoke the fire within

Focus



Timeless lessons for winning in a complex world.. from one of our greatest statesmen and leaders of all time Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.

Each of us is created unique. We are born with a divine fire within. The focus of our lives should be to give wings to this fire and fill the world with the glow of its goodness. The difference between an energetic focused person and a confused person is the way their minds handle their experiences. Here are Kalam's words of wisdom on how one can stay focused on living one's potential:

Difficult times:

We need our difficulties because they are necessary to enjoy success. Accept your destiny and go ahead with your life. Forget the failure; it was essential to lead you to your destined path. Search for your true purpose of your existence.

Solving problems:

As the process of confronting and solving problems often requires hard work and is painful, we have endless procrastination. Actually, problems can be the cutting edge that actually distinguishes between the success and the failure. They draw out innate courage and wisdom.

Leading teams:

Anyone who has taken the responsibility to lead a team can be successful only if he is sufficiently intelligent and powerful in his own right to become a person to reckon with. This is also the path to individual success in life. What can one do to strengthen oneself? First, by building your own education and skills. Knowledge is a tangible asset, the most important tool in your work. You must have the most up-to-date information. A leader should keep abreast of all that is happening around him. To lead, is to engage in continuing education. Second, develop a passion for personal responsibility. Work for the things you believe in. Work as hard as you can at something that presents a challenge and is approved by your heart.

Dealing with reality:

The trouble is that we often merely analyse life instead of dealing with it. People dissect their failures for causes and effects, but seldom deal with them and gain experience to master them and thereby avoid their recurrence. When your hopes and dreams and goals are dashed, search among the wreckage, you may find a golden opportunity hidden in the ruins.

Your best investment:

Your willingness to invest your own inner resources, to invest your life, esp. your imagination, will bring you success. When you undertake a task from your own uniquely individual standpoint, you will become a person.

Being a 'workaholic':

The term 'workaholic' is misleading because it implies a pathological condition or an illness. If I do that which I desire more than anything else in the world and which makes me happy, such work can never be an aberration. Total commitment is a crucial quality for those who want to reach the very top of their profession. The desire to work at optimum capacity leaves hardly any room for anything else. FLOW is a sensation we experience when we act with total involvement. There is no hurry, there are no distractions. The past and future disappear. So does the distinction between self and activity.

Notes from all over

"I have no idols. I admire work, dedication and competence."

- **Ayrton Senna da Silva** - **Brazilian racing driver who won three Formula One world championships**

"No human being will work hard at anything unless they believe that they are working for competence."

- **William Glasser** was an American psychiatrist. He developed the **Reality Therapy and Choice Theory**

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."

- **Anaïs Nin** – **Author**

"A man with outward courage dares to die; a man with inner courage dares to live."

- **Lao Tzu** - **Tao Te Ching** – **Chinese Classic Text** – **of the 4th Century BC**

"Integrity is telling myself the truth. And honesty is telling the truth to other people."

- **Spencer Johnson** – **Author** – **Who moved my cheese?**

"Seek freedom and become captive of your desires. Seek discipline and find your liberty."

- **Frank Herbert** – **American writer** - **Science Fiction** – **Dune.**

"The best index to a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good, and how he treats people who can't fight back."

- **Abigail Van Buren** – **Columnist**

"Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."

- **Mahatma Gandhi**

"Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen."

- **Brené Brown** – **Author** - **The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are**

"Placing the blame or judgment on someone else leaves you powerless to change your experience; taking responsibility for your beliefs and judgments gives you the power to change them."

- **Byron Katie** – **Author** – **Who would you be without your story**

Story time

The little leader earns his stripes



In Ramayana, when Rama decides to construct a bridge to Lanka, the entire vanara sena – army of monkeys led by Sugreeva - swings into action, carrying large rocks and dropping them in the sea. Watching this frenzied action is a little squirrel, who was so inspired by Rama's mission. The squirrel realizes he cannot carry huge stones.. so he thinks about how best he can use his strengths to help Rama build the bridge. He gets a nice idea, and decides to execute.

The inspired squirrel runs into the sea water getting wet all over. He then runs back to the sea shore and rolls over and over again on the sand. The sand sticks to his wet body. He then runs into the sea and washes off the sand. And comes back wet, again to roll over and over, and run back to the sea to deposit the sand.

There are monkeys running from into the sea carrying the large rocks.. who take exception to the squirrel running across their way, impeding their speed. One of the monkeys yells at the squirrel "If I run over you, you will die.. Get out of here". The squirrel does not have the time or the inclination to reply.. so completely engaged in his service to Rama, that nothing distracts him. Of course he is afraid. His love for Rama gives him the courage to go ahead.

Lord Rama notices this little squirrel's fearless labour. He asks "What are you doing?" The squirrel says "Oh my lord Rama, I have just enough strength to carry some sand into the sea for your bridge.. Am happy to do the best that I can in serving your mission". The Lord is touched. He gently picks up the squirrel and affectionately strokes his back with his three fingers, in appreciation. The strokes of Rama's fingers are the three stripes that the squirrel earns for having lived his potential, taking responsibility with courage and commitment in service to his chosen cause. Since then it is said, all squirrels acquired the stripes on their back.



Mercuri Mail is a thoughtful compilation of meaningful articles drawn from Mercuri India archives, and from timeless management literature. Edited by Malathy Sethuram & Jaishankar Balasubramaniam of Mercuri Goldmann (India) Pvt. Ltd. Design & Artwork by Ravi Shankar De. This publication is for private circulation only.

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