Roots of Leadership in Vedas

Leadership Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is subject widely discussed, researched and taught, it has wide influence on human performance. Qualities like integrity, honesty, enthusiasm, and ability to communicate are needed in a leader.

Veda in Sanskrit means knowledge in all forms, it's collection of hymns which are grouped into four volumes and more than 6000 years old. They speak more of ascent of the man towards the world of all-sided perfection. Hymn is of rhythmic-sound, interwoven verb and thought, and vision of supreme truth and has powers to make us see the world beyond six senses, can create new subjective states, alter our physical being, reveal knowledge and faculties. There are several cosmic powers in universe which are beyond perception our senses, hymns are addressed and prayers to these cosmic powers and when hymn is chanted the corresponding cosmic powers sprout in the chanter, establishes and grows over the time. Each cosmic power is responsible for a specific ability of the mind, as an example; fire addressed as ‘Agni’ in Veda is one of the cosmic powers and it’s responsible for will power.

A leaders needs balanced abilities of mind, the abilities will manifest as the outward behavioural patterns like vision, integrity, honesty, enthusiasm, and ability to communicate. This paper attempts to connect each ability of mind to the cosmic power by invoking which the ability blossoms in the individual making him more and more perfect and making him as a leader.
INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the subject widely discussed, researched and taught, it has wide influence on human performance. Despite of all the importance the subject remains many times a black box, its inner workings and specific dimensions cannot be easily understood.

Qualities like integrity, honesty, enthusiasm, and ability to communicate are needed in a leader. Once these qualities are consistently demonstrated the subordinates automatically respect the individual and he is recognized as leader. Some argue that there is no way of training people to become leaders, however the statement ‘Leaders become leaders because they decided to become leaders’ opens up a way of training one to become leader; inspire individual to become a leader.

We often confronted with leadership issues in our work place, home, society and public places. India has emerged as a great source of human capital, one sixth of humankind live in India. Over 1 billion people hold the key to human prosperity and progress in global front.

If you examine the global political scenario carefully the word ‘Leadership’ seems to be very badly misrepresented and abused, even in the corporate context there is enough misrepresentation of this word.

It’s difficult to correlate things when someone is referred as ‘Leader of Terrorist group’.
Leadership has wide influence on human performance, people exhibit best performance when they are working with a good Leader. A leader is recognised as leader by his followers, designating someone as Leader by hierarchy doesn’t hold on for long time.

Wealth, position, family status doesn’t make an individual as leader, we have heard of scenarios where there is intensive effort by system to project some unworthy individual as a Leader and are also aware of the results of such efforts.

WHO IS THE LEADER
Leader is someone who never lets his temper get out of control, no matter what problems he's facing, he is the one who has the complete trust of his/her team, listens to team, is easy to talk to, and always makes careful, informed decisions.

In its very basic form it may be said that leadership stems from the concept of reciprocity. It simply would mean that every follower at some point of time requires a leader. Hence when we consider leadership, we are dealing with two quite separate entities, the process that goes on between the leader and the led which could be mainly emotional although there is an intellectual content also, and the aspect of leadership that concerns itself to the end state towards results. This conflicting demand of the human aspects on one side and the achieving results needing ruthlessness of execution on the other, requires a very fine skilful balancing skill by the leader.

Leadership is also perceived by some as a management function, meaning thereby, the coordination and use of resources optimally to achieve its objectives.

A leader has good level of self-awareness, he/she always be aware of their own feeling, emotions and how their actions affect the people around, and have a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses.

Leaders rarely verbally attack others, make rushed or emotional decisions, or compromise their values, they exhibit Self-regulation and stay in control. They know what values are most important? Spend some time examining “code of ethics”, they seldom face decision dilemma when they face a moral or ethical decision.

Leaders are open to admit their mistakes and prepared to face the consequences, and this makes them to earn the respect. Leaders are self-motivated and work consistently toward their goals, and they have extremely high standards for the quality in their work. Leaders are empathetic, have the ability to put themselves in someone else’s situation. They help develop the people on their team, challenge others who are acting unfairly, give constructive feedback, and listen to those who need it, empathy earns the respect and loyalty of team members. Leaders are extremely careful about their body language, never show up casual body language. They’re open to hearing bad news and good news with equal enthusiasm, and they’re expert at getting their team to support them
and be excited about a new mission or project. Leaders are also good at managing change and resolving conflicts diplomatically. They're rarely satisfied with leaving things as they are, but they don't sit back and make others do the work, they set an example with their own behaviour.

**WHAT MAKES ONE A LEADER**

At the core a leader is a human being, it will be easy to understand complexity of leadership if we understand the basics of human being. Classic definition of human being is a man or woman, of the species "Homo sapiens", distinguished from other animals by superior mental development, power of articulate speech, and upright stance. The important thing of human beings which makes them different from other animals is superior thinking ability. Animals act by basic instinct whereas human behaviour is driven by thinking beyond basic instinct. In a typical situation the individual receives input/stimuli from ambience through the five senses (viz see, hear, touch, smell, taste), the input reaches the mind through the nervous system and mind processes the input and produces output. The output could be any of these or combination of these.

Stored into memory as knowledge or learning,
Words spoken (speech)
Action through hands or legs or both

The whole mechanism can be represented as a system which receives inputs, processes it with a complex algorithm and produces some output as depicted in fig 1.

![Diagram](image)

The algorithm operating inside is of interest, in computer language algorithm is set of mathematical formulae like adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, averaging etc, the formula could be complicated combination of the basic formulae. The algorithm operating inside the humans is much beyond the mathematical capabilities, it's influenced by the individual's memory and the important factor called trait.
The mechanism is same in all human beings, however very seldom two individuals behave in the same way in a given circumstance. Some will become leaders depending on how they react to the circumstances, and it can be said the characteristics, capabilities of the algorithm will decide whether one can become leader or not.

### SOURCE OF THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE

All matter in this Universe is made up of infinitely small building blocks called atoms which are indivisible and indestructible. Dalton (1766 -1844) proposed this theory in 1803, at that time an atom was thought to be indivisible. Science has advanced, it is now established that atoms are made up of infinitely small particles called electrons, protons and neutrons. It’s further discovered there are still smaller particles called quarks which are of eighteen different types grouped in two groups. The quarks in the first group, when combined in distinct combinations makes the protons, neutrons and electrons. The quarks in the second group give rise to the basic forces of nature, viz. gravitational, nuclear and electromagnetic forces.

Further it’s discovered that quarks sometimes behave like particles and sometimes as waves(energy) which is referred to as particle/wave duality. Thus, the ultimate fact is that the basic building block of physical matter is not physical, it is infinitely small bits of energy and information.

### WHAT MIND IS MADE UP OF

Mind can be visualized as a ball of subtle energy, subtle part of five fundamental materials i,e Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Space makes the mind. In what way these subtle of these five elements are bonded, cohered, joined to form the mind, it’s a topic for scientific / spiritual research.

### COSMIC POWER

Cosmos simply means “universe”, the word is generally used to suggest an orderly or harmonious universe, it was originally used by Pythagoras in the 6th century B.C.

Cosmic power refers to the supreme principle which is the substratum of all existence, it manifests into different aspects as different powers, some of which are perceived by our senses and some are beyond our perception. For Ex; Gravity, Light, Wind, Fire are perceivable.

Cosmic Power is limitless power, it’s living force, it can manifests in humans as living force, traits, capabilities etc.

### INTRODUCTION TO VEDAS

Vedas are revealed knowledge that sages realised in deep meditation as hymns of eternal truths that govern the creation. They are the oldest available knowledge and most ancient scriptures of inconceivable depth and beauty, revealed in various metres and styles (prose, poetry, and songs). Vedas reveal that universe is a cosmos governed by ‘Law of truth’, executed by divine functionaries manifesting Supreme in different forms. Hymns speak
of things beyond time and space, systematic development of man towards world of all-sided perfection, material prosperity of society.

Vedas form the very basis of most ancient civilization the Sarasvati and Sindu (Indus) civilization which dates back to 5000 BCE. Sage Veda Vyasa compiled Vedas into four volumes – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. Many Hymns got lost in time, but thousands of Hymns have survived, all four volumes put together makes about 26,000 hymns, it would take life time to study these.

Each Veda can be divided into two parts – Hymns and Brahmanas, collection of Hymns is typically called a Samhita, traditionally the Samhita portion alone is referred to as the Veda.

The Brahmanas are commentaries, explanation of proper methods and meaning of Vedic Samhita rituals in the four Vedas. They also incorporate myths, legends and philosophy. Total of 19 Brahmana texts have survived, two associated with the Rigveda, six with the Yajurveda, ten with the Samaveda and one with the Atharvaveda.

Brahmanas have their own names and are more like theological treatises of the Vedas. The end portions of many Brahmanas have an esoteric content, called the ‘Aranyakas’. Embedded in these Aranyakas, or at their very end, are deeply spiritual treatises called the ‘Upanishads’. For several centuries now, Upanishads are the mainstay of spiritual traditions, and are held in the highest esteem.

**SOURCES OF TRAITS**

A trait or character is a feature of an organism, a visible trait is the final product of many molecular and biochemical processes. Vedic concept of five sheaths (Pancha Kosha) explains the human personality, these sheaths exists in close proximity of each other and are responsible for traits and functioning of individual as shown in table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Kosha / Sheath</th>
<th>Referred as</th>
<th>Trait / Function</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Annamaya (food)</td>
<td>Physical body</td>
<td>Physical, Materialistic Health</td>
<td>Mundane Selfish Narrow views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pranamaya (Air)</td>
<td>Subtle body</td>
<td>Energetic Action oriented</td>
<td>Task oriented Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Manomaya (Mental)</td>
<td>Subtle body</td>
<td>Emotional Sentimental Memory</td>
<td>Kind &amp; loving Jealousy Passionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vijananmaya (Intellectual)</td>
<td>Subtle body</td>
<td>Intellectual Judgemental Ego</td>
<td>Analytic Strategic Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Anandamaya (bliss)</td>
<td>Subtle body</td>
<td>Creative Visionary Delight</td>
<td>Intuitive Ahead of times Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One source of trait in human beings is inheritance, the other source is learning by seeing others, listening, reading, another source of trait is by invoking the cosmic force within oneself. Traits can sprout, establish and grow stronger in an individual by invoking the cosmic force. This again reiterates the fact that the force (energy) is the sources of everything in this universe.

INVOKING COSMIC FORCE

Let's consider a fictitious situation, there is an individual who is pious, honest, stands for truth, liberal, helps the needy, and has abundant wealth, knowledge, health and knows the means of maintaining good health etc. He/She can be communicated easily, known for accepting admiration happily and parting things whenever somebody requests. People are free to approach this individual, praise him, make him happy and ask for materialistic or non-materialistic things and in all probability the individual will give them. Things in possession of this individual are abundant, in fact infinite and by parting it won't come down, in Vedas such an individual is referred as Deva, the word Deva is derived from the word ‘div’ which means ‘to shine or illumine. The difference between a human being and Deva is, human being has the physical body, mind and consciousness. Deva is supra-physical beings without physical body but endowed with consciousness, knowledge, power and infinite amount of energy. They implement actions directly from consciousness without the need for a body, they are emanations of cosmic forces endowed with a high level of consciousness. Each Deva is given a name in Veda for convenience of reference, EX: Agni, Varuna, Indra etc. By reciting Hymns and performing meditation human beings can access, invoke Devas, and the Devas are there to help human beings, show them the way to perfection, progress to divine, happiness, health and prosperity.

Every Deva represent a physical aspect and an inner or psychological power, for example Agni is physically fire, fire of digestion, psychologically it’s will power.

HYMNS & IT’S POWER

Hymns exist in supreme ether, imperishable and immutable in which all the Cosmic forces are seated. The origin of the hymns is not in the human mind. Their source is in the higher Ether of the supernal regions, which is also the abode of the Cosmic powers and Devas, Hymns were heard by seers who were able to raise their consciousness level higher to reach supreme ether.

Hidden in cryptic Vedic mantras is the primal code of cosmic law, the key to the universal force on all its levels. Through these Vedic mantras we can learn to balance and control the forces of life. This not only creates health but also gives the basis for rejuvenation of the mind and the transformation of consciousness.

Hymn is a poetic revelation received by a human sages in the state of deep meditation, it is not a human mental construction or speculation. The person who receives the revelation is known as a Rishi, there are several women Rishis to whom Hymns were revealed. Hymns are all in Vedic Samskrit which is quite different from the classical
Sanskrit associated with the poets like Kalidasa. The poems of Kalidasa are melodious and full of aesthetic beauty, but they are not hymns as they lack the power.

A poem of high calibre has three basic components namely the rhythmic-sound movement, the interwoven verbal form & thought substance, and the soul's vision of the Supreme and the all-encompassing Truth. When the intensities of all the three components are at the highest level then that poem is a hymn. The rhythm carries the thought movement in the word, the total meaning of a hymn is something more than that given by the individual words. When chanted repeatedly, the meaning flashes in chanter's inner being. Like painting or sculpture, poetry appeals to the spirit of man through significant images. The essential power of the poetic word is to make us see, not to make us think or feel, thought and feeling must arise out of the sight or be included in it. Hymn conveys its essence through its form. The essential power of the hymn is to make us see the world or thought beyond our senses. This contact with the supra-physical world endows the person, who sees, with a certain power, the intensity of which varies from person to person. The objective of Hymn is not mere realistic imitation of nature, but to reveal the happenings in many planes closed to our ordinary waking consciousness. A person who repeats the hymn with full faith will eventually have the vision of the non-physical world. The essential power of the hymn is to make us see the world or thought beyond our senses. The hymn can create new subjective states in ourselves, alter our psychical being, reveal knowledge and faculties we did not possess before, it can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which result in effects, in actions and even in the production of material forms on the physical plane.

Hymns are in appreciation, praise of a Devas, on reciting the corresponding cosmic power enters the chanter's subtle body as energy and turns into a trait or capability. The following table lists the traits / capability and the corresponding Deva to be invoked to get the trait.

Two sample hymns to Agni from Rigveda

1. अग्निः पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजं । होतां रत्नधातमम् ॥
   Agniḥ purohitam yajnasya devam rutchijam hotaṁ ratna-dhatamam ॥
   Meaning: I adore Agni placed in front; he the deva of the yajna, the invoker or the summoning priest in the yajna and the carrier of felicities.

2. अग्निḥ पूर्वीभिः रत्नमृत्विजं से देवाः एह वंशति
   Agniḥ puurvebhiḥ ratna-dhatijam se devaḥ eah vashati ॥
   Meaning: Agni, adored by the ancient Seers, is also adorae to the later Seers. He brings here the deva-s.
**LIST OF TRAITS & COSMIC POWER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No.</th>
<th>Trait/Psychological</th>
<th>Cosmic power / Deva</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Will power</td>
<td>Agni</td>
<td>Physical aspect is fire, It is the cosmic power of heat and light, will power brings in other powers, Agni brings in other cosmic powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>Ashwin</td>
<td>Symbol of strength, energy and life force, divine physicians who cure ailments, physical and mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Clean Mind</td>
<td>Indra</td>
<td>Helps in developing abilities, knowledge to do actions both physical and mental. It protects individual from hostile forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Knowledge, Intelligence, Protection</td>
<td>Vayu</td>
<td>Physical – Air, gives life-energies, inspirer of breath or life, energy ‘Prana’, supports the functioning of nerves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Intellectual (Jnana)</td>
<td>Apas</td>
<td>Physical – Water, fill sap of delight in consciousness, washes out physical and psychological disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Delight of work, life</td>
<td>Soma</td>
<td>It’s the distilled essence of all experiences, It’s happiness that springs when work is done consciously, recognise that all activities involve dominating role of cosmic forces and humans are facilitators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Big Picture, Vast</td>
<td>Varuna</td>
<td>Concept of infinity, ocean, space etc. impurities are caused by narrowness, narrow outlook which are removed by this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Truth &amp; honesty</td>
<td>Mitra</td>
<td>Brings about the state of harmony and benevolence, brings in ability to discriminate truth and falsehood, good and evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Inspiration, Intellectual, Viveka, Truth</td>
<td>Sarasvati</td>
<td>Force behind the speech, knowledge, thoughts, gives inspiration needed for all activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few traits and corresponding cosmic power is listed in the above table, by chanting the Hymn addressed to the Deva, the cosmic power enters the chanter, sprouts and grows. Psychological power Will with Cosmic power Agni is appearing as first item in the list, will power is the most important and essential thing required for progress of an individual, will power in turn bring in the other traits, the Vedic interpretation for this is Agni is the most important Deva and he is the one who brings the other Devas.
Pictorial form of how cosmic power descends down into humans and becomes a trait or characteristics is as shown in fig 2.

Fig 2.
CONCLUSION

The source of anything and everything in this universe is energy, it manifests into physical material, capabilities, characteristics, intelligence, knowledge etc, energy is present in abundance in the universe. Energy and power are same, when power is exerted we say energy is spent. Cosmic power refers to the supreme principle which is the substratum of all existence. An individual becomes a leader by his ability to understand the situation, and respond appropriately, the mechanism of generating the response depends on his traits and abilities like intelligence, intellect, past experience and goals. The traits and abilities are manifestation of cosmic powers. Veda provides the understanding of cosmic powers and the means of accessing these powers. Hymns are the means of accessing the cosmic powers and sprouting them in self.

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