

The Making of Corporate Rishi

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Abstract

'Crucibles of Leadership' is a Western leadership concept. A crucible refers to a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity. Warren Bennis used the term 'crucible' for the first time in the context of leadership. The key message is that the essence of leadership is learning and the most valuable learning comes from crucible experiences or more precisely transformational experiences. There are different types of crucible experiences – Mentoring, New Territory, Suspension, and Reversal. Rishi as Re-see Model of Leadership is an Indian leadership model. Wise and successful leaders learn from a crucible experience (LFC). This leads to a mindset change in them. The leaders undergo transformation because they re-see the crucible experience, adopt a personal learning strategy, are resilient, and have an adaptive capacity. This in turn makes them a Corporate Rishi. In short, the paper tries to link the Western leadership concept of crucibles with the Indian Re-see Model, thereby, explaining the making of a Corporate Rishi.

Keyword: Crucibles of Leadership, Mentoring, New Territory, Suspension, Reversal, Corporate Rishi, Learning from a Crucible

Introduction to 'Crucibles of Leadership' – A Theoretical Background

Experience is not so much what happens to you, it is what you make of what happens to you.

– Aldous Huxley

The leader's voyage of development is not an easy one. Some people change little in their lifetimes; some change substantially.

Everyone is tested by life, but only a few extract strength and wisdom from their experiences. They're the ones we call leaders. Why do certain people seem to naturally inspire confidence, loyalty, and hard work, while others stumble? It has something to do with the different ways that people deal with adversity and find meaning in negative events and learn from even the worst circumstances. The skills required to conquer adversity and emerge stronger and more committed are the same ones that make for extraordinary leaders.

Experience is life's greatest teacher. Two people can have the same experience and come away with profoundly different reactions: one may blossom and grow while the other is unchanged or even depleted. The same can be said for any pair of fired CEOs, successful project leaders, failed entrepreneurs, rookie supervisors, and those on international duty. Exposure to life changing experiences often holds the key to the development of a great leader. But experiences have a lasting impact only if we are prepared to learn from them.

For learning to happen, we should anticipate 'crucible' experiences, be good at drawing insights from them and most importantly apply the learning in our jobs, especially the way we manage people. Crucibles are vessels used by medieval alchemists to convert ordinary metals into gold.

A crucible in the above context refers to a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity i.e. the person extracts his or her 'gold': a new or an altered sense of identity. Warren Bennis used the term 'crucible' for the first time in the context of leadership. In the book by Robert Thomas (2008a), several successful leaders are profiled whose lives changed because of "crucibles" of experience, hence the name "Crucibles of Leadership." The key message is that the essence of leadership is learning and the most valuable learning comes from experiences or more precisely transformational experiences. Infact, HBR's one of the 10 Must Reads on Leadership is the article,

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“Crucibles of Leadership” by Warren G Bennis (2011).

As Thomas (2008a) mentions, “crucible is not the same as a life stage or transition, like moving from adolescence to adulthood or from midlife to retirement. Crucibles are more like trials or tests that corner individuals and force them to answer questions about who they are and what is really important to them.”

Crucibles invariably rupture the status quo. Sometimes they sever a comfortable web of relationships, as in the case of war, insurrection, or terrorist attack. Sometimes they change a person’s expectations dramatically and unpredictably. Occasionally they challenge an individual’s identity also. Crucibles can be inflection points in our lives.

While experience matters, it is what and how we learn from experience that is probably more important. Extracting insight from experience is a competence especially relevant to men and women in leadership positions in business and government, and to those who aspire to leadership, because their professional lives so often consist of complex, uncertain, and fluid situations for which there is no practical guide and where resolution depends on the exercise of judgement. Judgement can only be acquired through experience.

The crucibles contain two valuable lessons—one in leadership and the other in learning. Like a stretched rubber band, a crucible embodies potential energy—energy that can be released productively or unproductively.

Some crucible experiences illuminate a hidden and suppressed area of the soul. In fact, they can involve a positive, if deeply challenging, experience such as having a demanding boss or mentor.

The “crucible” is different for everybody. Military service for Colin Powell, discrimination for Vernon Jordan, stuttering for Jack Welch, dyslexia for George Patton!

Four main types of Crucible Experiences

- **Mentoring/Encounter:** These experiences involve sometimes a relationship with a life changing mentor or by encountering someone who has a huge impact on the leader. A great coach or mentor can contribute a wealth of experience and an objective eye. They help most by putting events in con-

text, in helping others create a more robust awareness of the things that were going on around them. Swami Vivekananda’s meeting with Ramakrishna Paramahansa in November 1881 proved to be a turning point in his life.

E.g. – Influence of parents, grandparents, teachers, boss, friends, colleagues, neighbours, spouse, children or just anybody.

- **New Territory (Immersion):** These experiences help leaders become more alert to new information and honing skills in making sense out of a confusing situation. The challenge is to overcome the disorientation that comes with any situation and weave it into one’s experience. A crucible experience in new territory both demands and teaches an almost preternatural alertness.

E.g. - Early work/first day of work, first supervision, foreign assignment, new kid on the block, lost in the woods, music camp

- **Reversal (Disruption and Loss):** Such experiences are associated with loss or failure. They teach both endurance and imagination. Typically, something believed to be permanent, turns out to be temporary or what is believed to be true, turns out to be false. Reversal tests both wherewithal and imagination. It stretches to the limits an individual’s self-confidence.

E.g. – Project failure, bad quarter, audit, death/ loss of loved ones, bankruptcy, divorce/ defeat

- **Suspension:** Crucibles of this type involve a hiatus, often one that is unanticipated, during which a well-known set of behaviours and routines is set aside, sometimes forcibly, and replaced with a regimented structure or no structure at all. These experiences involve an extended period of contemplation or deliberation. Here, the leaders are challenged to clarify their core values and purpose in life.

E.g. – Sabbatical, night/rotating shifts, temporary layoffs, long term illness, long term unemployment, going back to school, extended retreat

The Learning from a Crucible (LFC)

A leader can be the most effective leader through a practice of learning from adversity. Great leaders become great by finding meaning in adversity – in traumatic and

unplanned crucible experiences – and then transforming those experiences into improved performance. Indeed, great leaders treat each day as a new opportunity to learn and sharpen their skills. Practice trumps talent – in business as well as in sports and the performing arts. Talent matters, but the right combination of ambition, instruction, and feedback can turn someone with modest talent into a serious competitor. A leader can transform crucible experiences into lessons that will make him more effective. The ability to find meaning and strength in adversity distinguishes leaders from non-leaders.

In the book “Crucibles of Leadership” by Thomas Robert J (2008a), the leaders said their crucibles invoked as well as strengthened something crucial: their adaptive capacity. Adaptive capacity is all about learning – about oneself, about the world, and about what it takes to adjust to, and make, change. Adaptive capacity is what makes it possible to live with the doubt that accompanies a double bind, to open up to possibilities rather than shutting down and retreating. Resilience, a central facet of adaptive capacity, makes it possible for leaders to find calm in the face of tension and to begin the search for answers. Resilience manifested itself in different moments in leaders’ crucible stories.

The three key moments in the process of resilience are recognising the tension that accompanies a crucible, reframing the tension as something knowable and manageable, and resolving the tension constructively. Also what distinguishes leaders who do continue to learn and grow is their approach to learning. Every leader fashioned a Personal Learning Strategy that enabled them to notice the tension that accompanies a crucible, to manage it, and in virtually every instance, to resolve it productively.

Introduction to a Selected Indian Model of Leadership – Rishi as Re-See Model

This paper focuses on one particular Indian Management thinker, Dr. Subhash Sharma and his selected Indian leadership concept/model which is Rishi as Re-see concept.

Introduction to Dr. Subhash Sharma

Dr. Subhash Sharma is an acknowledged new age management thinker and has made a number of scholarly and creative contributions to the development of Indian

management thought. In his work, Dr. Sharma combines in a creative manner Eastern and Western management ideas and approaches and provides a futuristic vision of synthesis through the metaphor of Western Windows Eastern Doors. His significant academic contributions towards a creative synthesis of Western and Eastern concepts in management and social thought have received wide attention and acknowledgement by many reputed scholars, at national and global levels. UN Report on Responsible Management Education (2012) has included his two frameworks, which are Basket of Needs and Modes of Thinking, as core correlates in the field of management.

Dr Subhash Sharma has suggested a number of leadership models. However, for the purpose of this paper, only one model is subjected to empirical study.

Rishi as Re-see Model (Sharma, 2001)

This model is rooted in the interpretation of Rishi concept as Re-see concept. A rishi is one, who can re-see the things, events, and actions around him or her in a new perspective in addition to providing a touch of humanness. He/she is also a Self-Responsible Individual (SRI) and a Matured – Self Responsible Individual (MS). This model considers knowledge creation in terms of rationality, intuition and revelation in a hierarchical order. Rationality is at the lowest step, intuition is the next step and revelation is the third step. Through re- see approach, leaders use their intuition effectively and thus arrive at new interpretations and revelations that lead to radical changes in the organisation and society. Re-see leaders use the radical approach for being always in touch with the happenings around them and also for envisioning the future. We can also refer to them as ‘full circle leaders’, as they see and re – see the environment through full circle radical visioning approach. Sharma also suggests an integrative synthesis of the ‘modern prince’ and ‘modern rishi’ for corporate leaders. This integrative embrace combines the yin and yang together, and is therefore holistic in nature. In essence, the leader will have a ‘holistic mindset’.

Rishi leaders will have the ability to re-see the things, events and actions around him or her in new perspectives. As illustrations of this model, Sharma mentions examples of Narayan Murthy and Azim Premji who are considered by many as ‘Corporate Rishis’ because of their high standards of ethical leadership.

Table 1: Indian Models of Leadership

<i>Model</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Key Concept</i>
Vijigshu	Kautilya (ancient times)	Desirous of victory (Vijaya + Ikshuk)
Nurturant Task Leadership	Sinha (1980)	Ideal leader is both nurturing and task oriented
OCTAPACE Model	Pareek (1981)	Eight leadership values are Openness, Collaboration, Trust, Authenticity, Pro-activity, Autonomy, Confrontation & Experimentation
Karta Model	Singh & Bhandarkar (1990)	Leadership style based on the metaphor of Karta – head of the joint family
Four Steps Enlightened Leadership Model	Sharma (1995)	Enlightened Leader harmonizes vision, mission and action through HOPE – Higher Order Purpose of Existence and VEDA (Vision, Enlightenment, Devotion and Action)
Yin-Trinity Model	Sharma (1996)	Leader combines the qualities of yin-trinity viz. Laxmi, Saraswati and Durga in his /her leadership style
Theory K	Sharma (1998)	A model of Enlightened Leadership based on interpretation of Indian Guna theory with Theories X, Y and Z
Mother Leadership	Banerjee (1998)	Self – realised leader with a long term perspective that helps sustainability and promotes values
Workshop Model of Leadership	Chatterjee (1998)	Inner pathos to leadership based on (i) Discipline (ii) Righteousness (iii) Sacrifice; (iv) Transcendence
Wisdom Model of Leadership	Chakraborty (1999)	Rajrishi framework as a basis of leadership
Contribution Model of Leadership	Anup Singh (2000)	Every person is known by his / her contribution
24 Hour Leadership/ Responsible Leadership	Bhatta (2000)	Leaders is in 24 hours duty and not merely 9 to 5
Rishi as Re-see	Sharma (2001)	Corporate Rishi is Matured and Self Responsible Individual (MS). He/ she has ability to re-see things in new perspectives
Renaissance Leadership	Singh & Bhandarkar (2002)	Need to move to Renaissance Leadership
Shreshtra Dharma	Athreya (2002)	A leader as superior human being
Theory T	Sharma (2003)	A leader uses a mix of T1 (Transactional), T2 (Transformational) and T3 (Transcendental) approaches depending upon situational requirements
PECI Model of Leadership	Chakraborty & Chakraborty (2004)	Leadership based on based on the twin pillars of ‘purification of emotions’ (PE), and ‘clarity of intelligence’ (CI)
CEO as Creative, Enlightened and Organic Leader	Sharma (2005)	A leader exhibits creativity, is an enlightened individual and develops organic relationships with stakeholders
Energy Systems Model of Leadership	Sharma (2006)	Effective use of X,Y,Z forms of energies
KT Leadership Grid	Sharma (2007)	Grid provides various combinations of X,Y,Z and T1, T2 and T3 approaches
5K Model of Leadership	Sharma (2007)	Kannu (Eyes), Kivi (Ears), Kuttige (Neck), Kai (Hand) and Kaa-lu (Legs), A Corporate Rishi keeps his eyes and ears open, keeps his head straight, works with his own hands and walks the talk
SHARMAN Model of Leadership	Sharma (2009)	Leadership based on Seven ‘SHARMAN’ states of consciousness reflected by Scientist (S), Humanist (H), Artist (A), Rishi (R), Muni (M), Avatara (A) and Nirvana (N) states of consciousness
CH3 Model of Leadership	Sharma (2010)	Consciousness, Head, Heart, Hand as an integrative model for strategic thinking and management
Corporate OSHE Model of Leadership	Sharma (2010)	Enlightened Leadership based on OSHE Philosophy. A leader brings Oneness, Spiritual, Humanistic and Existential dimensions into play in managing the organisation
Spiritual Wisdom Model of Leadership	Meera & Bonin (2012)	Employees efforts in an union with the Divine lead them to higher state of consciousness where they are able to achieve more

Summary of Indian Models of Leadership

A summary of the Indian models of leadership is presented in Table 1. This is an updated version of an earlier summary by Sharma (2002).

Reason for Selection of Dr Sharma's Model for this Study

The book 'Crucibles of Leadership' by Robert Thomas (2008a), profiles several successful leaders whose lives changed because of a powerful crucible experience. In short, it is a re-seeing experience.

Dr Sharma in his Re-see model mentions examples of Narayan Murthy and Azim Premji, leaders of the well-known IT companies in Bangalore as 'Corporate Rishis'. The researcher wants to explore whether a crucible experience makes a leader a Corporate Rishi.

Justification and Significance

The study is significant because it attempts to explore if there are any relationships between the Learning from the crucible (LFC) concept and the Re-see concept.

Objective

The objective of this study is to draw conclusions about the 'Making of a Corporate Rishi'.

Research Methodology

The study is quantitative in nature; the main purpose being to describe and explain. The research method selected in this study is empirical in nature.

General Proposition

There is a relationship between 'Learning from a crucible experience' (LFC) and the Re-see concept.

Regression Analysis

Researchers are constantly interested in predicting one thing based on another. The statistical device is regression

which permits us to predict one variable from known another variable. Simple regression is used to examine the relationship between one dependent and one independent variable. After performing an analysis, the regression statistics can be used to predict the dependent variable when the independent variable is known. If we are using more than one variable to predict another variable then it is called multiple regression.

Regression makes use of the correlation between variables and the notion of a straight line to develop a prediction equation. Once a relationship has been established between two variables then an equation can be developed, that will allow us to predict the score of one variable with another.

The regression equation for a straight line is $y = a + bx$, where y is the dependent variable and x is the independent variable. 'a' and 'b' are constants and calculated from the data. 'a' is called intercept constant and 'b' regression coefficient.

(The researcher, as part of her thesis, developed a Leadership Development Questionnaire, which explored the role of crucibles in leadership development as well as the Corporate Rishi concept. This questionnaire was given to 54 CEO's of the IT sector in Bangalore. Factor Analysis was done and factor loadings have been used to do the following regression analysis.)

The dependent variable is the LFC Concept.

The independent variable is the Re-see concept.

The above variables are considered for regression analysis and the relationship between the variables can be specified as –

LFC Concept = f (Re-see Concept)

The regression equation can be specified as

$LFC = a + b \text{ Re-see}$

where

The dependent variable is the LFC Concept. The explanatory variable represents the Re-see concept. 'a' and 'b' are the intercept and slope coefficients.

Simple Regression is used. The independent variable that is considered in the regression is Re-see concept. The

dependent variable is the LFC Concept. Here we see that the correlation coefficient between Learning from the Crucible and Re-see Concept is +0.438 which indicates that it is significantly correlated.

Table 2: Correlation between Independent and Dependent Variables of the Regression Analysis

	LFC	Re-see	
Pearson Correlation	LFC	1000	438
	Re-see	.438	1000
Sig. (1-tailed)	LFC	.	.000
	Re-see	.000	.
N	LFC	54	54
	Re-see	54	54

Table 3: The Variables Entered/Removed in the Regression Analysis

Variables Entered/Removed ^b			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Re-see ^a		Enter

a. All requested variables entered
 b. Dependent Variable: FLC

The independent variable that is considered in the regression is Re-see concept. The dependent variable is the LFC Concept.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std error of the estimate
1	.438	.192	.177	1.58036

a. Predictors: (Constant), Re-see

Table 5: Analysis of Variance in the Regression Analysis

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.896	1	30.896	12.371	.001a
	Residual	129.872	52	2.498		
	Total	160.768	53			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Re-see
 b. Dependent Variable: LFC

R Square is the coefficient of determination which is .192. This indicates that 19.2% of the variation in LFC Concept can be explained under this framework using Re-see concept as an explanatory variable.

Table 5 indicates that the regression results are valid as F-value is significant at 1% level.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients of the Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std error	Beta		
1 (constant)	3.356	1.837	.438	1.827	.073
Re-see	.528	.150		3.517	.001

The estimated regression coefficients show that the LFC Concept and Re-see Concept are significantly positively associated. The estimated slope coefficient which is significant at 1% level shows that one unit increase in Re-see Concept will increase LFC Concept by 0.528 units. By looking into the standardised coefficient, we can interpret the result as an increase in explanatory variable (Re-see Concept) by one standard deviation unit, on an average the dependent variable (LFC Concept) will increase by 0.438 standard deviation unit.

So there is a significant and positive impact of Re-see Concept on the LFC concept.

Results of the Regression Analysis

From this simple regression, it has been found that LFC can be predicted by using Re-see concept.

Results show that LFC is significantly related to the Re-see concept. An estimated 19.2% of variance in LFC can be attributed by Re-see concept. So there is a significant and positive impact of Re-see concept on LFC.

The above findings accepts the following general proposition -

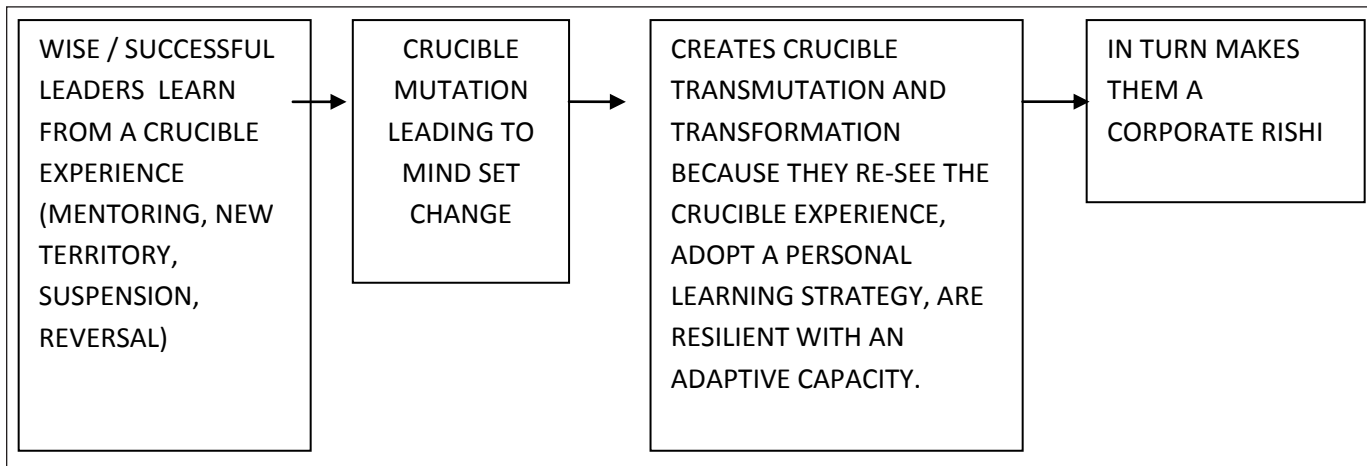
There is a relationship between ‘Learning from a Crucible experience (LFC)’ and the Re-see concept.

A Corporate Rishi is one, who can re-see the things, events, and actions around him or her in a new perspective in addition to providing a touch of humanness. This

Table7: Analysis of the Regression Findings

	<i>LFC is Absent</i>	<i>LFC is Present</i>
<i>Positive Crucible Experience</i>	<i>BLIND LEADER (no ability to re-see, no personal learning strategy)</i>	<i>SUCCESSFUL LEADER (ability to re-see, adopts a personal learning strategy)</i>
Negative Crucible Experience	IMMATURE/FRAIL LEADER (no re-see ability, no resilience, no adaptive capacity, no personal learning strategy)	WISE LEADER (has re-see ability, has resilience, has adaptive capacity and adopts a personal learning strategy)

Fig. 1: Summary of Findings which Explains ‘The Making of Corporate Rishi’



model considers knowledge creation in terms of rationality, intuition and revelation in a hierarchical order. Rationality is at the lowest step, intuition is the next step and revelation is the third step. Through Re-see approach, leader’s use their intuition effectively and thus arrive at new interpretations and revelations that lead to radical changes in the organisation and society. Re-see leaders use the radical approach for being always in touch with the happenings around them and also for envisioning the future. A good corporate leader is a Re-see leader.

Corporate Rishi operates from Direct Vision state of mind. He/she demonstrates the ability to re-see, the events, changes and world views in new perspectives. His/ her ‘re-see competence’ is of a high order because he/she operates from the III quantum state of mind viz the Direct – perception or Darshan state. Hence he/she is a visionary.

Regression results prove that the LFC can be predicted by using Re-see concept. An estimated 19.2% of variance in LFC can be attributed by Re-see concept. So there is a significant and positive impact of Re-see concept on LFC.

If a leader can re-see, then he will definitely learn from all types of crucibles, which in turn will lead to enlightened

leadership and he becomes a ‘Corporate Rishi’.

Apart from the significant and positive impact of Re-see concept on Learning from a Mentoring Crucible and Enlightened leadership development, the other independent variables can be Adaptive Capacity, Resilience, and Personal Learning Strategy.

The analysis of the regression findings is presented in Table 7.

Wise and successful leaders learn from crucible experiences. ‘Crucible Chemistry of Leadership’ or ‘Crucible transformation’ is seen taking place in them. These experiences help in leadership development and to become a Corporate Rishi. Blind and immature leaders do not learn from crucible experiences. ‘Crucible Chemistry of Leadership’ or ‘Crucible transformation’ does not happen in them.

Findings of the Study

There is a significant and positive impact of Re-see concept on Learning from a Crucible (LFC). This shows the linkage between crucibles and some Indian Models

of Leadership. It also shows that learning from a crucible experience (LFC) can make the leader a 'Corporate Rishi'.

Wise/successful leaders encounter different types of crucibles and learn from it. A crucible experience leads to 'Crucible Mutation'. This creates transmutation which leads to the transformation of the leader into a 'Corporate Rishi'. The summary of the findings which explains the 'The Making of the Corporate Rishi' is shown in Fig. 1.

Implication

Organisations can train leaders to Re-see things, events and perspectives. This will make their learning more effective.

The ability to re-see helps in 'Learning from a Crucible'.

Conclusion

There is a significant and positive impact of Re-see concept on Learning from a Crucible (LFC).

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