

Servant Leadership: A New Form of Glocal Leadership

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Abstract

Leadership in the 21st century must deal with problems of global uncertainty, chaos, innovation, change, dynamism, flux, speed, interconnectedness, and complexity therefore, the benefits of practicing servant leadership becomes a critical success factor in any business.

Keywords: Leadership, Servant Leadership, Glocal Leadership

1. Introduction

In a globalizing world of organizations, pressures to change will only increase over the next decades. Given the complexity of the subject, new explanations of leadership are bound to arise and should influence how future leaders behave. Since much of leadership is about change, and the problems that leadership endeavors to address lie with people themselves, those in positions of authority are more often than not apt to collude and shy away from challenges. It follows that leadership of the people, by the people, for the people could conduce change better, coaxing them to clarify what is vital and what is not.

Servant leadership provides a vision of principled, open, caring leadership. Unfortunately, there currently exists no empirical theory that defines servant leadership, distinguishes it from other leadership theory, or explains how it might lead to improved organizational performance. The idea of author behind this article is to understand servant leadership by proposing a definition and examining theory and research on leadership, trust and performance. Since Servant leadership is a very popular leadership model for service organisation and Universities. It was developed by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970. The servant leader serves the people he/she leads, which imply that employees are and in themselves rather than a means to an

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organizational purpose or bottom line. Today the entire world follows the concept of global village. There seems to be a shift in the concept of leadership, which demands leaders who think globally and act locally, popularly known as Global local (Glocal) leaders.

Therefore, all leaders in the 21st century need to be social artists, spiritual visionaries, and cultural innovators. It is insightful that Jeff Iorg, in his book, "The Character of Leadership, states in describing servant leadership, "Servant leadership is, in its essence, an attitude. Servant leadership is defined more by who you are than by what you do" (p.117), and yet our talk must match walk in order to be a true servant leader. How is this essence and attitude lived out for the world to see.

2. History of Servant Leadership

The general concept is ancient. Chanakya wrote in 4th century B.C., in his book Arthashastra:

"the king [leader] shall consider as good, not what pleases himself but what pleases his subjects [followers]" "the king [leader] is a paid servant and enjoys the resources of the state together with the people." There are passages that relate to servant leadership in the Tao Te Ching attributed to Lao-Tzu, who is believed to have lived in China sometime between 570 B.C. and 490 B.C.:

"The highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware. Next comes one whom they love and praise. Next comes one whom they fear. Next comes one whom they despise and defy. When you are lacking in faith, Others will be unfaithful to you. The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words. When his task is accomplished and things have been completed, All the people say, 'We ourselves have achieved it'"

The concept has been included in many religious text such as this quote from the Christian New Testament (Authorized King James): "But ye [shall] not [be] so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" or this quote from Islam's texts: "the leader of a people is their servant".

The term of modern Servant Leadership and servant leader were coined by Robert K Greenleaf in 1970. He coined this phrase in his essay „The Servant as Leader.“ Greenleaf worked a long time at AT&T and spent most of his career on management studies, management development and management training. After working at AT&T he started a career as visiting lecturer and management consultant for many companies, universities, churches and non-profit organisations, for example at the Harvard Business School, University of Virginia, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) or Ford Foundations. In 1964 he founded the international non-profit foundation named Center of Applied Ethics, which was renamed to The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership in 1985.

The idea for his essay the servant as leader came out of reading a novel Hermann Hesse's Journey to the East. The story is about a travel group on an exceptional and mythical journey. The main character of this story is Leo. Leo is the companion and servant of the group, but he also sustains them with his charisma and spirit and give them well-being. Everything was going well till Leo

disappears. The group fall apart and the journey has to be prematurely interrupted. The group cannot exist longer without their servant Leo. After reading this story Greenleaf comes to the knowledge that a good leader is primary servant. A good leader must first be a good servant. Therefore he write down his essay "The servant as leader", which actually has been sold over than 500 000 times.

3. Theoretical Discussion (Review)

Servant leadership takes many forms, some outside corporate boardroom and office. Whether it is being a servant leader attempting to usher in change in a nation, or whether it is being a servant leader in our particular vocation, as a fellow human being, becoming a servant leader is a process that happens over a lifetime. It involves for many of us becoming a work in process as we continue to read, study, and slowly implement change into our lives, developing that servant leadership perspective. Servant leadership is now in the vocabulary of enlightened leadership. It is a practical, altruistic philosophy that supports people who choose to serve first, and then lead, as a way of expanding service to individuals and organizations.

Alvin Toffler, in his book The Third Wave, makes this thought provoking statement: The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" (Starke, Christ-Based Leadership, 2005, p.11). Dr. Bruce Winston, Dean of the School of Global Leadership and Entrepreneurship program at Regent University, has noted in his book (Be A Leader for God's Sake , 2002), the following observations relative to servant leadership:



Employees and followers want leaders who are honest, open, and who keep the organization moving in a positive direction during both calm and stormy seas. Employees and followers want leaders who are "others-centered." Employees and followers want leaders who can bring out the best qualities in them. Beyond this, leaders must also love all the organization's stakeholders from customers, vendors, regulators, shareholders, members, as well as contributors (p.9). In his book, Dr. Winston

refers to Max DePree's book *Leadership Jazz*, and shares an excerpt from his book, providing a wonderful and colorful description of the employer/employee exchanges that happen in servant leadership:

A Jazz band is an expression of servant leadership. The leader of a jazz band has the beautiful opportunity to draw the best out of the other musicians. We have much to learn from jazz-band leaders. For jazz, like leadership, combines the unpredictability of the future with the gifts of individuals (p.10). Kouzes and Posner (*The Truth About Leadership*, 2010), in their chapter *Leadership is an Affair of the Heart*, state, "Exemplary leaders interact in ways that make others feel more confident and capable, elevating people to a higher plane," which is what servant leadership is all about. They quote Gary Strack, former CEO of a regional health care system in Florida, who states that the purpose of leadership is to create a legacy and not a legend, going on to say: I constantly remind myself that my name is not on the organization. I think all leaders, including myself, need to be reminded of that and that we are just in our positions as stewards of our people and organizations which have been entrusted to us (p.139). So how can we evaluate our leadership style and determine if we are servant leaders putting others needs ahead of ours, being good stewards of our followers and our resources?

Calvin Miller (*The Empowered Leader: 10 Keys to Servant Leadership*, 1995) provides Five Evidences of Power Abuse:

- Giving up those disciplines, we still demand of underlings.
- Believing that others owe us whatever use we can make of them.
- Trying to fix things up rather than make things right.
- Closing our minds to every suggestion that we ourselves could be out of line.
- Believing that people in our way are expendable.

In *The Steward Leader: Transforming People, Organizations and Communities*, R. Scott Rodin (2010) quotes leadership expert Max DePree's saying, "The first responsibility of the leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the leader is a servant." In his book, he relates the story told by Robert Greenleaf about a king who asked Confucius what to do about the large number of thieves in his country. Confucius replied, "If you, sir, were not covetous, although you should reward them to do it, they would not steal." Greenleaf goes on to say: This advice places an enormous burden on those who are favored by the rules, and it established how old in the notion that the servant views any problem in the world as in here, inside himself, and not out there. And, if a flaw in the world is to be remedied, to the servant the process of change starts in here, in the servant, and not out there (pp. 17-18).

Perhaps we would be wise to remember this quote from Robert Greenleaf found in *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*: The true test of a servant leader is this: Do those around the servant-leader become wiser, freer, more autonomous, healthier, and better able themselves to become servants? Will the least privileged of society be benefited or at least not further deprived? (2007, opening page in book).

Dr. Corné Bekker, associate professor for the School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship, Regent University, in his paper

Prophet and Servant: Locating Robert K. Greenleaf's Counter-Spirituality of Servant Leadership, (2010), states that for Greenleaf, servant leaders are characterized by:

- Being visionaries
- Having high ethical standards
- Doing things with excellence
- Being persuasive
- Rational thinking
- Being prophetic [futuristic] imaginative
- Ordinariness
- Comfortable with paradox
- Being a good listener
- Accomplishing transformative actions

Dr. Bekker, noting that Greenleaf himself was a religious man, and described servant leaders leading as prophets by (a) healing, (b) persuading, (c) creating systems of thinking, (d) opening alternative avenues for work, (e) serving, (f) inspiring, (g) facilitating individual and societal transformation, (h) empowering followers, (i) uniting leaders and followers, (j) building bridges between organizations and communities, and (k) by ushering in a new era of servant leadership. The intended outcome of these prophetic servant leaders is to re-imagine and reshape the social domain of leaders and organizations (p.10). Referring to Greenleaf, he states that Greenleaf's servant leader is a person who "Seeks to bridge the two opposing worlds of self-interested commerce and the altruistic philosophies of public service and social transformation. Greenleaf proposed that the leader is a prophet that facilitates the formation of a new vision that unites and transforms (both individually and societal).

He imagined a world marked by service, equality, unity, and new possibilities of radical altruism (p.12). Blackaby and Blackaby (2006), remind us servant leaders:

- Delegate
- Give people freedom to fail
- Recognize the success of others
- Give encouragement and support (*Spiritual Leadership*, pp.110-111).

Lee Strobel, a former award-winning journalist at the Chicago Tribune, noted in a section in his book *What Would Jesus Say: to Mother Teresa*, an observation by Warren Wiersbe from his book *On Being a Servant of God*, the distinction between servants who are manufacturers, and those who are distributors, noting: Some people manufacture their compassion for the needy out of whatever is motivating them. For instance, maybe they're feeling guilty over their own influence. Perhaps they pity the poor or altruistically sense they should give something back to the world. Maybe they have a neurotic drive to put the needs of others before their own in order to make themselves feel worthwhile. Whatever the source, they have to create their compassion and, sooner or later, it's probably going to run out. However, Mother Teresa isn't primarily a manufacturer but a distributor, as she empties herself serving others (1994, pp.64).

Jeff Iorg, in his book *The Characteristic of Leadership: Nine Qualities that Define Great Leaders*, says, "Leaders should sacrifice themselves, care for people, and be personally involved with their followers" (p.116). He addresses the issues of motives,

a good way to self examine ourselves to see if we indeed are leading from a servant leaders heart by providing some choices we can make to make sure we are on track:

- **Choose to do a dirty job:** like cleaning toilets, changing diapers, and do it without any fanfare or expectation of appreciation.
- **Choose to serve anonymously:** doing this without recognition or reward helps to purify motives.
- **Choose to serve secretly:** do something for someone else, but do not reveal your personal involvement, let it remain anonymous.
- **Choose to serve an enemy:** help them personally and quietly in their time of need.
- **Choose to make someone else successful:** remember "it is not all about you" and assisting someone else with their accomplishments, helping them succeed is a great way to purify your motives (pp.131-136).

4. Conclusion

Whether you believe Jesus at best was just a good man who lived and died on planet earth some 2000 years ago, read the story found in the Bible's Gospel. It is the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. This is what being a servant leader is about. Would any of us as an organizational leader be humble enough to wash someone's feet if that is what it would take to make him or her committed followers? Who among us is the next Mother Teresa?

However, there is the need of hour to bring changes in this corrupt world to change the scenario and bringing people to the evidences of our history that "honesty is the best policy", and be follower of true leaders. Sh. Kishan Baburao Hazare (Anna Hazare) has shown us the latest example of servant leadership and has appeared as re-birth of MK Gandhi during this need of a true Global leader to fight with the biggest sin of the society i.e., corruption. The entire world is witnessing the impact of his leadership as a local leader. He is a true follower of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of life. To take example of few of them, the servant leadership is new form of glocal (Global-local) Leadership; which can take any organisation to the new heights and create bonding with its subordinates by following a true form of servant leadership. The Society/Organisations have a great need for a philosophy of leadership based on servant leadership, which may be based on the following few, characteristics:-

- a. Value your people; provide them recognition, honor them and reward them.
- b. Develop people; work on their strengths, provide ample opportunities, by elevating them at higher plane.
- c. Build Community; relationship with specialisation/product/services (by creation of community of interest).
- d. Display Authenticity; more transparency and participation of team members
- e. Provide Leadership; support, guide and help people to achieve their goals.
- f. Share Leadership; walk the talk and share with team members.

Servant leadership provides a vision of principled, open, caring leadership. Unfortunately, there currently exists no empirical theory that defines servant leadership, distinguishes it from other leadership theory, or explains how it might lead to improved organizational performance. The above discussion opened a theoretical discussion on servant leadership by proposing a definition and examining theory and research on leadership, trust and performance. This can be a research area for scholar and management practitioners.

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