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Leadership

17.1 Introduction

Imagine that you were living in the year 1915 when the whole country was distressed by the tortures inflicted by the British. Everybody wanted freedom but there was no unity and which made the British successful in ruling our country. At that time Mahatma Gandhi arrived from South Africa. He felt the need to unite the country towards its freedom struggle. Under his leadership the movement gathered momentum and ultimately India achieved freedom. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi proved to be one of the major causes in achieving political freedom of the country.

Leadership is a necessary part of the social process. Any group, association, organization or community functions the way its leader leads it. It is more true in the collectivistic cultures like India where people follow the path shown by the great people (महाजनो जेन मत:- स पन्था:-). In this lesson you will read about leadership, its characteristics, various approaches and types of leadership.

17.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson you will be able to

- explain the concept of leadership,
- describe the attributes of a leader,
- explain the major approaches to leadership, and
- describe various types of leadership.
17.3 What is Leadership?

Leadership is an integral part of work and social life. In fact in any given situation where a group of people want to accomplish a common goal, a leader may be required. Leadership behaviour occurs in almost all formal and informal social situations. Even in a non formal situation such as a group of friends some sort of a leadership behaviour occurs wherein one individual usually takes a lead in most of the group activities. You may have observed this is the group of your friends too. Sometimes you may have also seen how the change of situation leads to emergence of a new leader in a group. You also know leadership behaviour occurs in political and organizational set-up, wherein the leaders may or may not be having formal authority but may exhibit leadership behaviour by influencing people to work towards common goals.

Some characteristics of Leaders are

a) adaptable of situations  
b) alert towards social situation  
c) cooperative  
d) decisive  
e) dependable  
f) assertive  
g) confident and persistent  
h) knowledge

Various theories have been propounded to explain the phenomenon of leadership. They have attempted to define leadership in various ways and have tried to identify the attributes and qualities of a successful leader. Leadership is often considered as the ability to influence a group of people toward the achievement of goals. Thus it is an activity – an influence process – in which an individual gains trust and commitment of others with or without reliance on formal position or authority moves the group to the accomplishment of one or more tasks.

We can identify the key elements in any leadership situation as follows:

- Leadership is an activity or a process  
- The leadership process involves such things as influence, exemplary behaviour or persuasion  
- It involves actors who are both leaders and followers  
- The leadership process has various outcomes – most obviously the achievement of goals, but also commitment of individuals to such goals.
Each of the above mentioned components vary depending upon the situation at hand and the individuals involved. For instance in a war situation, the army commander needs to adopt a completely different type of leadership behaviour. Even the followers in this situation would have a completely different profile, than in any civilian situation. An army commander has to be task oriented. He has to accomplish specific goals in a limited period of time. He has to be a strict task-master. On the other hand, the followers have to be good at taking and carrying out instructions. They should also have the ability to come up with novel situations for any unforeseen circumstances, though most of the tasks being performed would be highly structured in nature. In a political situation and democratic set up the skills required by the leaders as well as the profile of the followers would be completely different.

Let us take the Indian democratic set-up, which is a vote based democracy. The profile of a politician who is contesting an election from a metropolitan city would be completely different from the profile of a politician contesting an election from a rural constituency. In order to become an effective politician a person may require excellent oratorial and networking skills. He should be perceived as commanding a lot of power and at the same time is perceived as benevolent and helpful. He should be popular among the masses. But it is very important to point out that all these skills may or may not ultimately assure success as a leader.

The situation in a school is completely different and even within a school situation may vary from school to school and even within one school from year to year. For instance by the virtue of being the captain of the football team a student may be elected as the Head Boy because the school has a very good football team and interschool football championship is considered the hottest event of the year. This situational factor proved to be a boon for his election and later on he proved to be a good head boy. But reversing the situation if the Interschool musical competition had been a popular event, which the school had valued, the favour may tilt towards other student who might have proved to an equally good leader. Though it must be pointed out that being a good football player or being a good musician and an audience holder does not guarantee in any way being a good head boy.

Thus situational and contextual factors play an important role. The profile of a good leader varies from situation to situation and would also depend upon the profile of followers as well as the specific parameters of the leadership success as defined by the particular situation at a particular point of time. This would hold true across all types of leadership situations be it economic, political, social organizational.

### 17.4 Approaches to Leadership

“The leader must put the group or organization into a position where the highest level of performance is necessary in order to succeed. There is no escape from commitment.”

Sun Tzu.
A kaleidoscopic range of thoughts and theories on leadership exist. Even the history is full of examples of good leaders and great men and women. A brief overview of various approaches to leadership is given below. Each approach describes the various characteristics of leadership.

**The Great Man Approach**

The earlier view to understand leadership emphasized on the great man approach. The attention was focused on great men and women leaders in history and on their personalities. It was based on the assumption that the route to become an effective leader was to study their lives and emulate them. But the world’s most effective leaders display widely different personal qualities. Also, emulating these great men would altogether be a difficult process. This approach is still being pursued in the industrial and commercial world where great business leaders such as Bill Gates or JRD Tata take prominent position.

**Trait Approach**

This approach to leadership attempts to link leadership qualities not with particular individuals. Instead, it involves listing a number of traits, which are believed in general to relate with effective leadership. It can be defined as a set of theories that seek personal, social or intellectual traits that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. The five key leadership attributes that have been identified in many studies are as follows:

- The ability to build effective teams
- The ability to listen
- The capability to make decisions on his or her own
- The ability to retain good people
- The ability to surround himself or herself with good people

There have been innumerable studies under the trait approach. However, leadership is a dynamic process, varying from situation to situation with changes in leader, the followers and the situation. Because of this there may be helping or hindering traits in a given situation. There is no universal set of traits that ensures successful leadership.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.1**

1. What is leadership?

2. Which factors play role in determining leadership?

3. What is the assumption of the Great man approach?
Attitudinal Approach

By attitudinal approaches we mean approaches that emphasize attitudes or predispositions towards leader behaviour. Early research led to the postulation of two major dimensions of leader behaviour—consideration and initiation structure.

Consideration is behaviour showing concern for members of the group, such as giving recognition, nurturing self-esteem, developing mutual trust, inviting participation etc.

Initiation of structure is defined as behaviours that organize the group, define relationships, specify the task and how it is to be done, emphasizing the need to hit dead lines and maintain quality, defining lines of responsibility and clarifying roles.

Extensive research, based on these definitions, found that leaders high on initiating structure and consideration (High-High) leader tended to achieve high subordinate performance and satisfaction more frequently than those who rated low on either consideration or initiating structure or both. But it did not always result in positive consequences. For instance an army drill instructor is high on initiating structure. In boot camp, they give orders and structure recruits’ activities from sunrise to bedtime. Emphasis on task accomplishment takes precedence over the recruits’ personal needs because much learning must be condensed into a short period and emphasis is placed on accepting authority. Thus there were enough exceptions to high-high style of leadership being the best style in all situations.

Some researchers tried to study leadership by locating clusters of characteristics that seemed to be related to each other and various indicators of effectiveness. The studies identified two concepts, which they call employee orientation and production orientation. Leaders who are described as employee oriented emphasize the relationship aspect of the job. They feel that every employee is important and take interest in everyone, accepting their individualities and personal needs. Production-oriented leaders emphasize production and technical aspects, employees are seen as tools to accomplish the goals of the organization. Focus on concern for production (task) and concern for people (relationship) has led to identification of four leadership styles.

1. **Impoverished**: This style emphasizes exertion of minimum effort to get the required work done. It is appropriate to sustain organizational membership.
2. **Country Club**: It involves thoughtful attention to needs of people for satisfying relationships. It leads to a comfortable friendly atmosphere and work tempo.
3. **Task**: This type of leadership emphasizes on efficiency in operations based on arranging the conditions of work in such a way that human elements interfere to the minimum degree.
4. **Middle-of-the-Road**: This type of leadership assumes that adequate organizational performance is possible through balancing the necessity to get out the work while maintaining morale of the people at satisfactory level.
5. **Team**: It holds that work accomplishment is from committed people. It involves interdependence through a "common stake" in organization. The relationships of trust and respect are found very important.

Having looked at the major types of attitudinal approaches – we may ask the question – *Is there a best style of leadership? The style that maximizes productivity and satisfaction, and growth and development in all situations.* The answer may be a "no". The successful and effective leaders are able to adapt their style to fit the requirements of situations. Leadership has been compared to sailing – one has to make a lot of navigational decisions and do a lot of things to adjust to currents and winds. Thus, we safely claim that the effectiveness of a particular leadership is contingent upon the situation in which it is utilized.

4. **Situational Leadership**

It has been argued that leaders exhibit a degree of versatility and flexibility that enables them to adapt their behaviour to the changing demands made on them. The focus in situational approaches is on the observed behaviour, not on any acquired ability or potential for leadership. The emphasis is on the behaviour of leaders and their group members (followers) and various situations. We can think of an analogy to explain this. We can think of ‘coat’ as analogous to the “situation”. In terms of leadership, if the individuals’ style is very narrow then we need to fit in the right individual in the appropriate size of the coat. On the other hand if the leadership behaviour is flexible then the individual has to adjust himself to the size of the coat if they are to lead successfully. We would be discussing few prominent theories within this approach.

Fiedler proposed that effective leadership behaviour depends upon proper match between a leader’s style of interacting with the subordinates and the degree to which the situation gives control and influence to the leader. There are three factors that determine the nature of the situation.

1. **Leader-member Relations**: the degree of confidence, trust and respect subordinates have in their leader.
2. **Task-Structure**: the degree to which task assignments are procedurized.
3. **Position Power**: the degree of influence a leader has over power variables such as hiring, firing, discipline, promotions and salary increases.

Leaders hold more control when the role is highly structured. It has been found that the task-oriented leaders tended to perform better in situations that were very favourable as well as when they were unfavourable. For instance taking the same example of army drill instructor where the situation is highly favourable a task oriented leader is likely to be most effective. On the other hand, relationship oriented leaders would function more effectively in moderate situations. The implication is that either you can change the leader according the situation or vice versa.
In summary leadership deals with the following:
- Providing meaning and support
- Focusing on right things to do
- Structuring environment to achieve the organization’s goals
- Getting others to do what you want
- Motivating people to get things done willingly
- Enabling others to take responsibility
- Empowering others to do what they think is right
- Helping people feel less fearful, more confident

### 17.5 Types of Leadership

There are many ways in which leadership can be categorized. Accordingly there are many types of leaders as given below.

**Visionary Leader**

Visionary leader is the one who has a long-term perspective, who is externally oriented and has a broad interest in industry, economy, regulations, and politics. His tasks include forming a mission statement, vision and values. He is supposed to transform and structure the organization to ensure survival and growth. Example of visionary leader can be a director, senior executive, chair and head of school, senior partner etc.

**Integration Leader**

Integration leader is the one who has medium-term perspective. He has an inside out orientation where his main focus is on his own organization. His main function is to develop organization’s systems and processes. He reconciles conflicting interests. He develops and champions a strong culture. He ensures effective running of whole organization by using and innovating corporate knowledge and recruiting and retaining talent.

**Fulfilment Leader**

Fulfilment leader is the one who has a short-term perspective. He is a knowledge expert who is result oriented and who has customer service thinking. He pleases the customer by delivering results on time. He makes continuous improvement by unlocking individual potential and optimum usage of resources.

**Transactional Leader**

Transactional leaders are the ones who take the initiative in offering some form of need satisfaction in return for something valued by the employees, such as pay promotion,
improved job satisfaction or recognition. The leader sets clear goals, and is adept at understanding the needs of employees and selects appropriate, motivating rewards.

**Transformational Leaders**

Transformational leadership is the process of engaging the commitment of the employees in the context of the shared values and the shared vision. It is particularly relevant in the context of managing change. It involves relationship of mutual trust between the leaders and the followers. Transformational leadership has following components.

1. **Idealized Influence**: It involves having a clear vision and a sense of purpose. Such leaders are able to win the trust and respect of the followers. They build a base for future mission, which enables them to obtain extra efforts from the followers.

2. **Individual Consideration**: It involves paying attention to the needs and potential for development of individual followers. It also involves delegating, coaching and giving constructive feedback.

3. **Intellectual Stimulation**: It involves soliciting new ideas and new ways of doing things.

4. **Inspiration**: It involves motivating people, generating enthusiasm, setting an example, being seen to share the load.

An ideal example of transformational leadership would be what Mrs. Kiran Bedi achieved with Tihar Jail inmates. She brought about a complete transformation in the followers as well as the institutional processes.

**Charismatic Leader**

Till now we have read about different types of leaders but sometimes it happens that we are awed by a leader and follow him/her blindly. The personal charm of the person influences us. These types of leaders are known as charismatic leaders. Mahatma Gandhi was also an example of charismatic leader. The charismatic leaders have the ability to carry the masses the them. They have a great deal of emotional appeal. Swami Vivekanand was another charismatic leader. Some characteristic of charismatic leaders are –

- followers accept the leader unquestioningly.
- followers obey the leader willingly.
- followers beleif are similar to the leader’s beleifs.
- followers trust the correctness of the leader’s beleif.

**Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez–Faire**

Autocratic and democratic style of leadership is one of the classical distinctions made in leadership behaviour. An autocratic leader takes decisions and imposes them on the group,
expecting group members to put them into effect without questioning the reasons for them. The democratic leader, on the other hand, encourages the members of his or her group to share the decision making process and sees himself as a coordinator of group effort, rather as the decision taker. A third type of leadership style has also been examined which is termed as the laissez-faire. This type of leader plays a passive role in group affairs, normally interacts with the group members only on their initiative.

The classification described above is not exhaustive in any way. There are various other leadership styles as diverse as the situation in which the leadership behaviour occur. The classification is also not mutually exclusive where various categories may have similarities.

We are all surrounded by leaders and potential leader exists in all of us. The need is to harness our leadership potential and the various theories and understandings would help us in doing so. Like in the game of cricket individual achievement may be lauded but winning as a team is much more important. Same is going to be true for organizational, social and political arena. Leadership also needs to take into account the diversity and variation cropping up in the business and social environment, where minorities and women will have an increasingly important role to play. Leaders of tomorrow may be more feminine, and less masculine in approach. They will act as stewards, coaches and mentors showing concern for followers, shareholders and customers. The era of future would be of greater flexibility and innovation characterized by ability to evolve meaningfully and adapting to newer and ever changing business and cultural environment.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.2

A) Match the following

1. Impoverished leadership a) balancing the necessity to get work while maintaining morale
2. Country club leadership b) exertion of minimum effort for work
3. Task leadership c) interdependence through a common stake.
4. Middle of the Road leadership d) adapt their behaviour to the changing demands
5. Team leadership e) attention to comfortable condition at work
6. Situational leadership f) less interference of human elements.

B) List any two characteristic of Charismatic leader.
17.6 What you have learnt

- Leadership is often considered as the ability to influence a group of people toward the achievement of goals.

- Leadership is an activity or a process. The leadership process involves such things as influence, exemplary behaviour or persuasion.

- By attitudinal approaches we mean approaches that emphasize attitudes or predispositions towards leader behaviour.

- Leaders exhibit a degree of versatility and flexibility that enables them to adapt their behaviour to the changing demands made on them. The focus in situational approaches is on the observed behaviour, not on any acquired ability or potential for leadership.

- There are many ways in which leadership can be categorized such as visionary leader, integration leader, transactional leader, transformational leader, charismatic leader.

17.7 Terminal Exercise

1. Explain the concept of leadership with example.

2. Write short notes on
   (i) Trait approach
   (ii) Situational leadership
   (iii) Transformational leader
Key to Intext Questions

17.1
1. The ability to influence a group of people toward the achievement of goals.
2. situational and contextual factors.
3. the route to become an effective leader was to study the lives of great people and emulate them.

17.2

(A) 1. b
2. e
3. f
4. a
5. c
6. d

(B) 1. followers accept unquestioningly
2. obey the leader willingly
3. beleifs similar to the leader.
4. trust the correctness of the leader’s beleif.(Any two)