

A Blend of Integrity and Skill in Leadership

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Abstract—What is it that makes a leader successful and at the same time makes him a conscientious person? While it is knowledge and skill which propels a leader towards success, it is the uprightness which gives him self-satisfaction. It is easy to speak about integrity but most leaders forgo their morals as they start relying on their skills alone. What benefit would it give a successful leader if he can't answer his own conscience while enjoying his success? How does the combination of integrity and skill become an asset in leadership? What most leaders need is this combination to balance their success with moral satisfaction. To know about this unique quality and to add moral ethics into the leadership style, would indeed make followers aspire to become such eminent leaders.

Keywords: Integrity, Trust, Skill, Leadership, Honesty.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders today are very skilful but they lack ethics which is preventing them from enjoying the fruit of their success. Roger Lipe said, "The world is full of skilful leaders, but they often have hearts full of compromise and mixed motives. It is the rare leader who has purity in heart, uncompromised by self-interests or divided loyalties." And yes, it is true and this has become a growing trend over time. It is only through integrity that a leader can put a full stop to such thinking in his leadership style.

Dictionary defines integrity as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. It is the moral uprightness of people. The word "integrity" is derived into a Late Middle English term from a French word 'intégrité' and a Latin word 'integritas' which means the state of being whole and undivided. Roger Lipe said, "We must develop our skill and guard our hearts in order to maintain integrity." So what does this skill mean? The word skill refers to the ability to do something well. It is an expertise over something. But how does skill blend with integrity, is a question people usually don't question themselves. It is easy to be unethical and practice alike the unjust but it takes real courage to be ethically moral in the society.

2. THE INTEGRITY FACTOR

Leadership is about willingness irrespective of the amount of authority possessed by a leader. It demands the assimilation of the work force, training them and integrating them as a whole

to work for the benefit of the organization. Sometimes a leader may not be able to integrate everyone when he is not honest to himself and work for his selfish ambitions. A leader should be transparent in his motives and must put them straight in front of his followers. This allows trust and confidence to prevail in such leadership.

In a survey, when a professor was asked about what integrity meant to her, she said that integrity is a state of being at peace with who she was, what she was and what she was doing. Integrity is a sync among what you are doing, why you are doing, how you are doing and what is your output; demonstrating a reciprocal relationship between the end and the means.

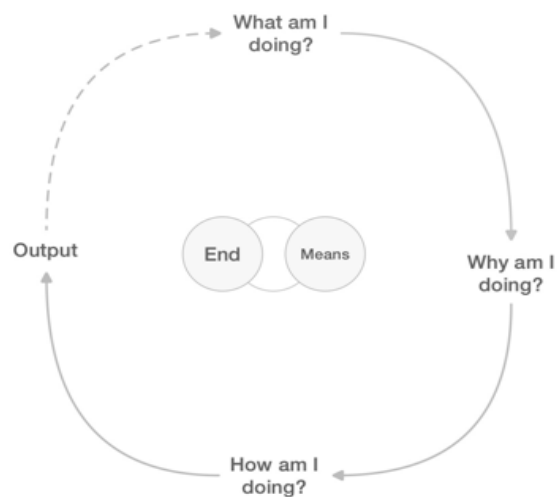


Fig. 1: The Integrity Factor

The output in such cases can't be paralleled anywhere else. When a leader is enjoying the trust of his followers, he knows that it is because of what he has invested. If a leader sows integrity, he will reap the trust of the people, being content.

3. HOW DOES SKILL WITHOUT INTEGRITY WORK OUT?

"When we use people skills with integrity, we lift everyone to new heights of success and happiness," says Kate Nasser. She

also says, "Those who use people skills for purely selfish gains, manipulate instead of influence." Most businessmen, composing about 90% of them, feel why they should waste their money in giving away the taxes to the government. If taxes were a waste of money, why would they collect it in the first place? The public blames the government for almost everything that happens in the economy. But how far is this, the integrity of people? We evade from paying taxes and expect the government to provide us A-class facilities, don't we? In developing democratic countries like India, people fight tooth and nail for their better living conditions but how far can the government help when we don't provide them with enough revenues? It is the amount of integrity we possess that the government reflects. To dream of making our cities like that of New York, London, Paris, Sydney and Singapore is easy; but why is it that we are still a developing country? When is India going to become a fully developed country?

One of the most recent case studies of Greece tells us about how their system utterly failed. The most highlighting causes for its economic crisis is the evasion of taxes, inefficient pension system, high unemployment and work culture evasion. People are hired for their skill but because of their lack of integrity, they tend to earn more but work a little. Leaders who feel this way are not being honest to themselves. It is only the power and self earning, they look for. Had the government of Greece adhered to a right policy, the tax payers would have had to pay off their credit causing no big trouble. If 100% of the Indian business class men have been paying taxes earnestly, and are honest to themselves, the government of India would proudly say that we have enough revenue which can help us to boom up to becoming a fully developed nation.

Many times, it so happens, the workers who don't know what it means to cheat, and how to manipulate their accounts, are the only ones who end up paying the complete tax which is due to the government. It is good that our country is being the way it is because of such honest people. But what about people who are skilled in the area of tax evasion. This is a type of skill too, isn't it? Nowadays, skills like these are, most of the times, being encouraged by the leaders themselves. Such leaders are not only responsible for their own dishonesty but also lead their honest followers to deviate from integrity. Sadly, India is filled with this kind of leaders today. If we were to take the example of Maggi, had the authorities of Nestlé been uncompromising, the innocent people wouldn't be paying the price today.

Now how do these series of events lead to corruption? Nepal has faced one of the most terrifying tragedies recently this year, with earthquakes devouring the lives of many tourists and locals. Now again, it was mostly the tourists who paid the price because of this uncertain turn of events. Sources say that the geographical areas where the earth quaked weren't suitable for building huge ventures. Then knowing this, who gave them the permission for constructing the existing concrete jungles?

Most leaders today are happy with bags full of money. It is their only concern whether the public is ready to bribe them or not. Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil." If the leaders and their followers have any integrity, they won't meet up for such ethically unresolved matters at all. Integrity, is the bottom line, which can put an end to all these atrocities.

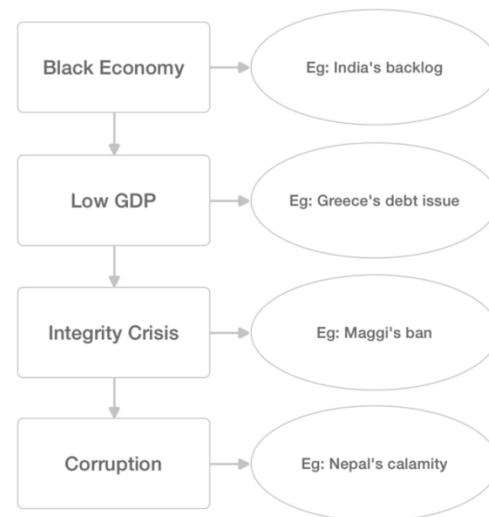


Fig. 2: Results of Lack of Integrity

4. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT

The Bible talks about leaders who were very skilful and full of integrity. The ants set an amazing example as they work faithfully and need no outside accountability to keep them doing right. Bible records of their integrity in Proverbs 6:6-8.

"Joshua compromised his leadership when he made a treaty with the Gibeonites but once he made a covenant with them, he knew it was his duty to defend them. Integrity means that you keep your oath and 'swear to your own hurt' regardless of the cost," quotes Dr. John C. Maxwell. He also says, "Good leaders don't settle for less than excellence. They don't merely set goals, they set standards that raise a bar for everyone."

5. THE FRUIT OF INTEGRITY

Why does the profession of business lack that respect which is given to that of doctors and engineers today? It's because, though business management is a descent field, due to the lack of integrity of the business leaders over time, most people have lost dignity and respect towards business. We learn law to be lawful but if we take advantage of the knowledge we possess, it is us we are answerable to. More than anyone else, we are accountable to our own conscience. It is ultimately the peace of mind and the calmness of spirit, what any rational human would want to have in life. And this is a result of how much of integrity that person lived with. No matter how stressed you are, you will contain the peace all throughout,

when you work with honesty. It is you that you ought to be answerable to, by the end of the day.

Integrity makes room for peace and gives courage to a person. Leaders who walk with integrity are not afraid of what people think about them. They will be ready to confront people with any kind of criticism, when they have the self-assurance in the integrity they walk in. King David, in the Bible, who was a great leader was full of integrity. That was what made him a role model who people to look at even to this day. Integrity won't let you shatter because you already feel rewarded. You won't be buckled down when you are honest to yourself. Mother Theresa is another classic example who walked in the path of integrity she believed in. When she started her campaign, she faced criticism but she wasn't moved by that because she knew what she was doing was right. She believed in her objectives and was honest to herself throughout the service she rendered. That is what made her a global icon who everyone learns about, at least once their lifetime.

People who lack integrity put others into trouble but themselves in a safezone. It's not they who pay the price but the innocent followers do, for what this leader, who doesn't walk in integrity, does. If we were to consider leaders who influence their power over the traffic officers and break the safety rules, it is the common man who has to pay the price in times of uncertain tragedies.

6. CONCLUSION

We live in a world full of compromise, don't we? But is there an obligation for us to carry along the flow of this world? It's our choice which makes a difference. To stand out is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a gift, every skill leads to. But the misfortune is that leaders are not ready to accept this wonderful gift. Integrity is not a trait, one needs to teach. It is the conscious which supplies you with the knowledge of discerning what is right and what is wrong. So are you ready to walk in the path of integrity?

King David made that difference. Mother Theresa too! But what about you?

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