



## BUILDING THE CAPABILITY FOR MORAL LEADERSHIP

Prof. Sanjeev Sonawane<sup>1</sup> & L. Azadi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Dean, Inter-disciplinary Studies, SPPU, Pune) and

<sup>2</sup>(Director, Baha'i Academy, Panchgani)

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### Abstract

*Humanity is passing through a very turbulent period of transition to a new stage of its collective life. This stage can be likened to the period of adolescence of an individual where he should find his right identity and values to guide his life. This role today should be played by leaders who not only can inspire noble acts in others but their own life is a proof that moral principles are true even in this period when society is fast driving away from moral standards. This kind of leadership that we call moral leadership is possible through developing moral capabilities that require certain skills, right attitudes and spiritual and moral qualities appropriate to the tasks expected of a moral leader.*



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### Values for the World in Transition

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, transition refers to “a change from one form or type to another, or the process by which this happens...” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) Transition can be social, economic, health or any other aspect where there is a process of change from one condition to another. Here when we say the ‘world in transition’ we are referring to the process of global changes that are happening in the world in every aspect of its life as mentioned above. Transition can be likened to the period in the life of an individual when he is passing from adolescence to adulthood.

“The human race...has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.”(Universal House of Justice, 1986). It is in this period that one needs strong values to shape his identity and guide his steps.

As mentioned earlier, humanity is passing through one of its most turbulent periods in its evolution, when it is moving towards becoming an interdependent global community. Hence in the same way that the individual needs clear values to give shape to his identity and actions, the world today is in greatest need for values. “A concern with exclusively material considerations will fail to appreciate the degree to which religious, ideological, and cultural variables shape diplomacy and decision-making. In an effort to move beyond a community of nations bound by primarily economic relationships to one with shared responsibilities for one another's well-being and security, the question of values must take a central place in deliberations, be articulated and made explicit. We can no longer be content with a passive tolerance of each other's worldviews; what is required is an active search for those common values and moral principles which will lift up the condition of every woman, man, and child, regardless of race, class, religion, or political opinion.” (One Country 1, 2020)

### **Moral Leadership**

According to World Economic Forum, Moral leadership is a leadership that “is providing values or meaning for people to live by, inspiration to act and motivation to hold oneself accountable. When you don't see someone stepping up to provide purpose and doing what is best for the greater good, step up. Leadership is a responsibility. It's also a power, not to be taken for granted. The late author Toni Morrison said, “If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.” Your best self is when you use your power to lead others.”(World Economic Forum, 2020)

Moral leadership abilities implies that leaders should provide values and meaning to the life of others and motivate them when no one else is doing anything and to live a life of values and ethics that they acquire through action and experience. There are a number of such values needed by a moral leader. They include truthfulness, integrity, sincerity, and accountability, freedom from prejudices, inclusion, fairness towards all and service to humanity. The leader should be able to control his ego, welcome diversity of opinions and perspectives, build consensus and unity. Nevertheless truthfulness is the foundation of all virtues. (FUNDAEC, 2003)

Unfortunately the present condition of the society does not provide good examples of leadership. Moral leaders should be concerned with rendering service to the society rather than promoting their own ideas, privileges and interests. “Morality in leadership does matter. In some countries, the collapse of entire economies can be traced to varying forms of

government and/or corporate corruption. Other leaders have made war to retain political power, satisfy ego, or uphold the privilege of a particular tribe or class. On the local level, immoral leaders have deprived communities of funds for development, forced the adoption of ill-advised policies, and stirred ethnic or religious hatreds.” (One Country 2, 2020) Hence a new paradigm is required and leadership needs to be redefined. “To put it another way, the primary characteristic of a moral leader must be "one who serves the community most" rather than "one who dominates the community most." (ibid) Accordingly community service is a requirement in developing moral capabilities.

### **Skills for Moral Leadership**

A Moral Leader is expected to carry out many tasks. For example motivating and inspiring others, identifying the needs and resources of the community, participatory planning with the community members, evaluating the success of programmes, and many more. In doing so the leader has to have a number of skills, otherwise he/she will fail in fulfilling the trust put upon him. “Leadership skills are the strengths and abilities individuals demonstrate that help the oversee processes, guide initiatives and steer their employees toward the achievement of goals.”( Margaret Rouse, n.d.)

Researches have shown that one of the important factors in the success of an organization is the qualities of its leaders. This “explains companies’ large investments in leadership-focused initiatives...Despite the criticality of quality leadership, 84 per-cent of organizations predict that they will experience a shortage of skilled leaders in the next five years. (Northeastern University, 2019) Therefore to be a successful moral leader in the present time, a different set of skills suitable for this age of transition is needed.

One of the elements that should be included in the programmes for building the capability of moral leadership is the development of skills such as creative thinking, communicating with individuals, consultation and conflict resolution, speaking in groups, reflection, listening skills, team work, decision making, etc. Hence it is necessary to acknowledge that without skills moral leadership cannot be developed. However these are required in the context of the moral leader becoming a ‘true servant off humanity’, when one does not wish to act superior to others, when one’s words and actions have positive influence on society, one becomes the source of joy and inspiration to others and his words and deeds become the cause of resolving conflicts. (FUNDAEC, 2003)

### **Attitudes for Moral Leadership**

“Attitudes refer to the way we respond to situations as a result of our upbringing and experience.” (FUNDAEC, 2003) According to Cambridge Dictionary attitude is “a feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) This includes one’s outlook, frame of mind, approach, and view point. Attitudes may be positive and constructive or may be negative and harmful to a moral leader and indeed to anyone who wishes to contribute to the betterment of the society.

“A great leader is an individual who has earned the respect of others and who leads them effectively and in the right direction. Leadership is able to inspire at all times, and the key to this is your attitude” says Sylvie Di Giusto , the Author of “The Image of Leadership" and the Creator of “How You Impress ”. (Sylvie Di Giusto. n.d.) The attitudes that are necessary for such effective leadership include controlling one’s passion when it deviates one from the right path, having responsible attitude towards others, his duties and his actions, be precise in what one says or does, forgiving the mistakes of others, and alertness not to become victim of one’s own ego and self-righteousness.(FUNDAEC, 2003)

The challenge is how does one develop right attitudes? According to Clarke University website since mind is very powerful if we keep a positive state of mind the positive attitudes follow. There are several ways to develop healthy attitudes. First is by turning negative thoughts into positive thoughts. Secondly ensure you are in the company of positive people and are positive environment and places, such as places that revive your good memories. Thirdly volunteer to help others to get a sense of inner happiness and satisfaction. The fourth suggestion is to laugh and get pleasure from simple things. And finally love and let you be loved. (ibid) An inspiring leader welcomes diverse opinions and does not worry if views against his are expressed by others. He finds complementarity in diversity and chances for agreement at higher levels. Lastly it is a great attitude for a moral leader to always be a learner. (FUNDAEC, 2003)

### **Spiritual and Moral Qualities for Moral Leadership**

The word “spirit” is derived from the Latin words “spiritus” (meaning breath, courage, vigor, or soul) and the word “spirare” (meaning to breathe) (Hjelm JR. , 2010). Five characteristics of spirituality include: meaning, value, transcendence, connecting (with oneself, others, God/supreme power and the environment), and becoming (the growth and progress in life)

(Knapik GP, 2018). Although when we speak of ‘spiritual’ various perspectives are given by different people—perspective such as religious, individualistic, and material world-oriented (ibid) our point of reference is “spiritual” in the context of the qualities of human spirit. In this regard McDowel speaks of ‘sensitivity’ to a ‘certain sort of requirement which situations impose on behavior”, to which he refers as ‘perceptual capacity”. For example a kind individual has the reliable sensitivity to the requirements which the situation imposes on behavior, not as a result of a ‘blind, non-rational habit or instinct.’ (Farid-Arbab Sona, 2016, P.309) So, spiritual qualities need to be reflected in action willingly.

With regards to ‘moral qualities’, they are not a set of ‘passive ‘ attributes but those that work ‘constructively’ towards the ‘creation of the environments within which the essential relationships characterizing a mature human race are to take shape and manifest themselves.’(ibid, p.302)

Considering the above perspectives on both spiritual and moral qualities, the moral leader who should inspire people to nobility, even when others sit idle, has to be a reservoir of spiritual and moral qualities and practice them through his thoughts and actions. In fact the rectitude of his conduct should be the proof that moral principles are true and work even in a society that is in dire need of moral standards. (Fundaeac, 2003) “Very often we see that the educated people do crimes in their everyday lives. Societies are different. Crimes are also different in terms of intensity. The questions arise: Does the formal education system help our students become good citizens? Is not it expected that educated people will act with better morality than others?” (Das Rajib Lochan, 2018) This makes one reflect on the objective of education. According to John Dewy, the father of the movement of progressive education, “education is the living of life, not a preparation of life. Auguste Comte, the father of Sociology, contended that education should aim at cultivating sympathy for, and understanding of our fellowmen. Herbert Spencer asserted that education should prepare the individuals for a well-rounded life in society.” (Mohita Negi, n.d.)

### **Conclusion:**

The period of transition through which the worlds is passing resembles the period of adolescence in the life of an individual, during which turbulence and confusion characterizes the thought and actions of the person. This condition requires a new type of value-based leadership we may call Moral Leadership to inspire people for noble acts. However such leadership requires essential skills commensurate with the tasks expected of him. But skills

alone do not ensure success unless they are accompanied with positive attitudes which in turn come from the spiritual and moral qualities that one manages to nurture within himself.

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