



**"Greater energy and greater passion is more extraordinary than greater genius."  
— Lt. General Arjun Ray, (Retd.), PVSM, VSM**

**Issue 133, February 2014**

**Dear Friends,**

### **The Transformers: Leaders for change**

Transformational leaders come in varied avatars. They can be statesmen, politicians, business leaders or scientists, or educators, but all display some common characteristics. The common factor is that they influence, motivate and inspire people. They do not use just the power of position, but their personal "power" to lead change in people and in society.

Transformational leaders become who they are through their personal visionary charisma, and their ferocious commitment to purpose. They are innovative risk-takers, they are authoritarian when they need to be, and they provide intellectual stimulation for their teams and followers by creating cognitive dissonance, inspiring and eliciting creativity. Such leaders encourage independent thinking, but keep for themselves the responsibility of decision making. Transforming others is never easy, it is a long process, requiring patience, risk taking, faith in others, and freedom from bias about people and issues. Transformational leaders do not mistake authority for power nor do they misuse their positional power. Transforming others is a leader's goal; consensus is a milestone in achieving this.

Leadership style is strongly influenced by culture. Indian culture lends itself to transformational leadership because there is a respect for hierarchy and a preference for action (Karmayog), personalized relationships and a universal respect for duty and obligation. Leadership therefore

invests in a personalized rather than contractual relationship. Preference for action and very strong commitment to goals is or should be the hallmark of a leader, who transforms by example rather than rhetoric; adopts the path of a Karmayogi and shows a preference for action without personal gain, He/she considers duty and obligation to be the motive for change, action or protest.

Leaders who make a difference lead by vision, by their conviction, even in the face of challenges and initial failures. Conviction is the power of the leader's beliefs, his ideas and those of his team. Conviction has the power to draw a following, in spite of the rocky path that must inevitably be taken. The transformational leader races ahead and shows the way. Yet he is behind those who follow! His purpose is to win over people to his strategy, not to please and be popular! Being an effective communicator, such a leader engages his team, facilitates agile thinking and builds his followers, individual by individual.

For this, leaders must be empathic by nature, easily accepting their group's failure as a challenge to overcome, rather than a stumbling block. Sacrifices from such leaders, both personal and aspirational, lie at the heart of achieving for the general or public good. The good news is that such sacrifice rewards a leader in drawing others into her /his way of thinking and effecting transformation. Moreover, personal sacrifices strengthens a leader's credibility, as they support his/her conviction. A great leader is a conviction leader, not a "Mr. Nice guy".

Decentralization of decision making and power, while it is the order of the day, requires a strong, transformational leader to retain at least twenty percent of such authority and power, to take crucial decisions, lead through situations of crises and conflict. He may be seen as domineering, authoritative, and a centralized thinker at such times; but he must be decisive and his subordinates must show faith in his quick decisions. Delegation is not a synonym for abdication.

The leader's intuition must provide the basis for strong and important decisions, in the absence of accurate or ready information. "Big picture thinking" of a leader, is required for decision making at such times. Detailed consultations are not always possible for lack of time and leaders must take strong decisions with or without consensus. Critical situations call for quick decisions and the group or the team should trust and back their leader when such decisions are to be made.

What then, distinguishes a transactional leader from a transformational one? First and foremost, there is a great deal of personal transparency which the leader must have. He or she must be seen as a moral exemplar. Only if leaders possess this idealized influence can they bring together the diversity that defines any group of people, in a team, an institution or even a nation. Such a leader's aim is to win the trust, respect and loyalty, without which there are often negative reactions to a leader's strategy and decisions.

A leader must bring purpose and meaning to the group and convey this not just by words, but by unflagging optimism towards the goal. Positivism brings strength to any work, project or mission and if the leader has it, the followers will have it. It is often called for in times of stress, failure and reverses. It infuses a mission or project with vitality and a predilection for success.

So here we have it, the transformational leader must be many things in one person; a strategist, an achiever, an example, but even more of a facilitator and an engager. In addition he must be self-sacrificing, morally upright, driven by commitment, a strong believer in people and a cause. Only then can he take others forward towards change, improvement and progress.

**With warm regards,**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arjun Ray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

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Chief Executive Officer  
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