

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: TRANSFORMATION IN LEADER'S APPROACH

Abstract

In India Servant Leadership was propounded several centuries back and the epic such as Ramayana and Mahabharata have given several instances which project ancient India has lived by example for the world regarding servant leadership. The study is descriptive in nature. Observations through the performance of leaders of various companies and countries are the basis of findings. Servant leadership leads employees to put an optimal effort in achieving the objectives of the organization as they feel included and valued. The study concludes that the transformation to servant leadership brings positive results for the employees in their individual capacity as well as in teams and ultimately for the organization.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Performance, Transformation, Attitude, Approach.

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The Servant leadership is a significant concept in the dynamic business scenario when managers / leaders are trying to gain confidence of all with their moral behavior and attitude. In India Servant Leadership was propounded several centuries back and the epic such as Ramayana and Mahabharata have given several instances which project ancient India has lived by example for the world regarding servant leadership. But when discussing about modern management theories which discuss leadership approaches and attributes, the pioneer to introduce the concept of servant leadership was Robert K. Greenleaf the Servant as Leader, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, Greenleaf said: The servant-leadership is a trait according to which the leader works with the team work spirit and does not behave like a boss. She/he makes the difference as a leader by the attitude and approach with which he meets works and performs in the organization. It is always the trait of leader-first or the servant-first, however servant first does not mean to belittle the dignity but it is the attitude with which one can be dedicated towards the organization. The difference is created by the approach and not the leadership style as servant leader manifests itself in the dedication to ensure that other employees are also given the priority. The intention is to bring out the best as a person and as the performer of the organization which all the employees wish to do.

I. TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP STYLES

The leaders who have the approach to serve not just for money are focused on empowering and uplifting their team members. Such leaders are not autocrats as to command others but work democratically, involving everyone and respecting views of others. The servant leader takes a step ahead to deal with people and situation as an important pillar of management, actively seeks support and cooperation to build positive environment which ultimately helps the employees to develop sense of purpose with the company mission.

Employees feel they are significant as they are involved and this gives them a sense of belongingness which ultimately results in the growth of individual as well as the organization. This decreases employees turnover.

Also knowledge management and knowledge transformation process becomes smooth in the organisation. Servant leadership several years (As cited by great Kabir Dasji “Dheere dheere re mna dheere sab kuch hoye, mali seenche sau ghada ritu aye fal hoye” which may be understood as -the leader cannot expect to get immediate results of his / her efforts. Action with resilience is required many times. Servant leadership ultimately starts with a ‘selfless motive’. It has to be less about ‘self’ and more about ‘apart from self’. Moreover, the organization at large needs to sustain a workplace culture in which this type of leadership can thrive.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature of ancient India (The Indian Knowledge System IKS) has several examples leading the kingdom with servant leadership.

Swami Vivekananda gave The Concept of Servant Leadership Many years ago. Swami Vivekananda said, "Shiva Jnana Jiva Seva." which means," Worship the God in man. He also said, Unselfishness is more paying in the long run. You vacate the air out of this room. Fresh air will come automatically. The tendency to share adds to the resources of knowledge .The unselfishness and giving back to the society is a must.

In an influential 1977 article, "Essentials of Servant Leadership," Robert Greenleaf, an AT&T executive and management researcher, proposed a leadership style in which leaders put the needs, aspirations, and interests of their followers above their own. These leaders seek to help their followers "grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants," Greenleaf wrote. If the primary goal of traditional leadership is to further the organization's goals, the purpose of servant leadership is to "serve others to be what they are capable of becoming," write Sen Sendjaya and James C. Sarros of Monash University in Australia in a 2002 article.

Over 2,000 years ago, ancient monarchs also practiced servant leadership, "acknowledging they were in the service of their country and their people," though the monarchs' actions were often inconsistent with these goals, write Sendjaya and Sarros. The authors also cite the biblical story of Jesus Christ washing his disciples' feet as a concrete illustration of servant leadership.

In contemporary organizations, a servant leadership style contrasts with the traditional image of leaders issuing top-down directives. Herb Kelleher, co-founder of Southwest Airlines and its CEO from 1981 to 2009, is often cited as a successful servant leader. Under his leadership, Southwest was known for its fun-loving, employee-centered culture. "I have always believed that the best leader is the best server," Kelleher once said. "And if you're a servant, by definition, you're not controlling. We try to value each person individually and to be cognizant of them as human beings—not just people who work for our company."

The servant leadership approach has recently gained popularity as companies look to flatten their organizations, empowering employees and teams to make decisions in an effort to keep up with a fast-moving business environment. In the team structure, leaders are there to lend support, do research, provide supplies and even run errands, Neil Kokemuller wrote in "Problems with the Servant Leadership Model."

But servant leadership can also lead to problems, Kokemuller and others argue. The practice can minimize the authority of leaders, undercutting the service and advice intended to improve employees' lives. In addition, a leader who is always there to help employees may actually demotivate them to solve problems on their own, in the same way that parents who run interference for a child may cripple the child's maturity. In any case, most management experts agree that servant leadership is not a short-term approach and takes time to be successful.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature. Observations through the performance of leaders of various companies and countries are the basis of findings.

IV. FINDINGS

The pioneer of the concept of servant leadership in the modern management theories Robert Greenleaf is popular in the global companies. Falotico followed the servant leadership and leads IBM.

In practice, Southwest Airlines, under the guidance of founder Herb Kelleher, is frequently cited as the model servant leadership corporation. Kelleher's philosophy of putting employees first resulted in a highly engaged, low-turnover workforce and 35-plus consecutive years of profitability, an unheard-of record in the turbulent airline industry. Barter, who now leads the California-based Servant Leadership Institute, came to the concept by a circuitous path—working for companies that did not follow its practices. "I spent 20 to 25 years working at public companies that believed in the power model—it was all about what you could do for me in this quarter," he says. He then became acquainted with the work of management expert and servant leader advocate Ken Blanchard. In 2004, when Barter became the CEO of Datron, a tactical communications equipment supplier, he was determined to head the firm as a servant leader. The results were dramatic. The company's revenue grew from \$10 million to \$200 million in six years.

V. SUGGESTIONS

- 1. Best Practices:** The leadership style of servant leadership may be given the status of best practices to encourage the budding managers adopt the attribute of servant leadership. Best Practices lead by example and inspire people at all levels to work with the intention to serve which may surely help them in future to become successful servant leaders. It has largely been observed that a successful person and a successful organization are the result of attitude and approach and serving selflessly is one such factor contributing to attainment of individual as well as organizational goals. During on boarding, after the initial introductions, getting-acquainted conversations, and explanations about how operations work, the servant leader should solicit the new hire's observations, impressions and opinions. This conveys the message, from the onset, that the employee's thoughts are valued.
- 2. Pillars for Transformation: Encouragement, Humility, And Trustworthiness:** Trustworthiness is a defining personality trait and may give a wonderful outcome if a leader is transforming towards servant leadership. It's important to consider that servant leaders serve as selfless servants as well as leaders. Competencies of the leader show a track record of high ability and achieving results, with skills that are most important. Character means that results and accomplishments are achieved with integrity and ethics.

Trustworthiness is a prerequisite for the leaders / managers to be recognized as servant leaders, because the leaders must be trustworthy to lead by example for other employees to perform in such a way that are also trusted. Practicing servant leadership generates trust in the employees, who may be inspired by their manager's competence and character and convinced by their manager's serve-first practice that he or she has their best interests at heart. "Trust is one of the means to achieve servant leadership, and it is also an end that is achieved by servant leadership,"

Servant leadership is not a leadership style or technique as such. Rather it's a way of behaving that you adopt over the longer term.

However, servant leadership is problematic in hierarchical, autocratic cultures where managers and leaders are expected to make all the decisions. Here, servant leaders may struggle to earn respect. Servant leaders are likely to have more

engaged employees and enjoy better relationships with team members and other stakeholders than leaders who don't put the interests of others before their own.

According to Larry C. Spears, former president of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, these are the 10 most important characteristics of servant leaders:

From "Character and Servant Leadership: 10 Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders" by Larry C. Spears, published in "The Journal of Virtues and Leadership," Vol. 1, Issue 1.

- **Listening:** The difference of listening and hearing brings difference of commitment. A leader needs to make all the employees realize that they are listened with utmost sincerity and their 'say' is significant. The leader needs to develop an approach that signifies that he/ she is paying full attention. Body language plays important role to give the positive message among employees. The sincere effort of leader to listen to employees gives them a sense of belongingness towards the organization.
- **Empathy:** Servant leaders should strive to understand intentions and perspectives of employees. He/ She need to realize that his/her behavior with the employees should ensure them the empathetic approach and develop confidence among them
- **Healing:** In the changing times the holistic development of organization through the spiritual quotient, emotional quotient and resilience among the employees is the actual requirement which can be achieved through servant leadership. Ensuring proper knowledge management for effective and efficient performance of responsibilities assigned may bring remarkable results in an organization. Also it will ensure most efficient utilization of resources making it a better workplace.
- **Self-Awareness:** Self-awareness is the ability to look at yourself, think deeply about your emotions and behavior, and consider how they affect the people around you and align with your values. Servant Leaders hip may help the employees generate self-awareness doing their SWOT analysis They will also learn to manage their emotions and understand that their words actions and behavior should bring positive results in their peer team members..
- **Persuasion:** Servant leaders behave in persuasive way instead of being authoritarian. Servant leaders aim to be democratic and not autocratic and try to build consensus when it comes to taking decision .There are many theories , models and modern tools that can be used to persuade and convince the employees. It is important to note that being persuasive may also be inspiring as employees learn with the example of leaders.
- **Conceptualization:** Servant leadership has to conceptualize the vision and mission of the organization. The strategies may be properly implemented only when the conceptualization is upto the mark. The personal objectives of

employees and organizational objectives can be achieved when the employees are in sync with conceptualization of the strategies adopted. The leaders, create mission and vision statements for their team, and make it clear how people's roles tie in with their team's and organization's long-term objectives. Also, develop long-term focus so that the employees stay motivated to achieve their goals, without getting distracted.

- **Foresight:** Foresight is when the leader can predict what's likely to happen in the future by learning from past experiences, identifying what's happening now, and understanding the consequences of your decisions. The servant leader needs have fore sightedness for the success of organization.
- **Stewardship:** Stewardship is about taking responsibility for the actions and performance of team, and being accountable for the role team members play in the organization. As a leader one has the responsibility and accountability for the performance of team as well the organization as a whole. Henceforth it is mandatory for the leader to lead by example by demonstrating the values and behaviors that is expected from employees. Servant leader has the natural instinct of stewardship.
- **Commitment to the Growth of People:** Servant leaders are committed to the personal and professional development of everyone on their teams. Development of people through Training & Development programs and timely assessment of their performance gives the employees motivation to develop their skills and perform their jobs with efficacy. The servant leader is a great observer and does what is good for employees as well as organization. He/she is eager to find out what are the personal goals of employees and assign them the projects or additional responsibilities that will help them grow and achieve their goals.
- **Building Community:** The servant leader always paves way for their team members to develop a harmonious environment which further helps in building a sense of community within the organization. The servant leader takes the onus of growth of employees and provides them the opportunities to communicate and interact with all levels of employees without any reservations or prejudices thus a conducive atmosphere by building community helps the employees attain their individual goals as well as contribute their utmost to achieve the organizational goals. The harmony of 'people' i.e human resource which is the self driven most efficient resource acts as the major indicator to the success of any organization Servant leaders aspire to serve their team and the organization first , ahead of personal objectives. It is a selfless leadership style where a leader possesses a natural feeling to serve for the greater good.

Servant leadership leads employees to put an optimal effort in achieving the objectives of the organization as they feel included and valued. It's been gaining momentum since its establishment, with several organizations already adopting it, notably Starbucks, FedEx, Marriot International, and The Container Store.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the transformation to servant leadership brings positive results for the employees in their individual capacity as well as in teams and ultimately for the organization. The results may be concluded as follows:

- 1. Improved Performance of Teams:** The teams perform much better when the leader has transformed as a servant leader. The productivity of individual as well as team is high which brings employees satisfaction.
- 2. Conducive Work Environment:** Working alongside the leader in an organization implants a positive working environment where interactions are more constructive and there is less competition to impress the leader through selfish political squabbles.
- 3. Resilience:** The employees develop resilience when they see and experience the traits of servant leader .Resilience is an important factor that contributes in positive way to the personal and organizational performance
- 4. Knowledge Management:** Servant leaders create conducive environment which reduces unhealthy competition and insecurities. Knowledge management becomes smooth in organisations having servant leaders.
- 5. Alignment of Personal and Professional Goals:** The support and encouragement of personal and professional development from a servant leader allow employees to align their personal and professional objectives to organizational goals. The alignment improves employee engagement, commitment, and loyalty to the organization ultimately increasing productivity and profit.
- 6. Improved Organizational Agility:** Teams that receive support from their leaders are more flexible in the face of a changing environment delivering an agile organization. Professional development supported by leaders augments employee learning and development process where strengths are enhanced and weaknesses are addressed.
- 7. Servant Leadership-Transformation to Trait:** The servant leadership is now seen as a need In other words it is now in the phase of transformation to trait i.e team members learn to take responsibility and ownership accelerating their leadership capabilities by seeing their leader's good qualities.
- 8. Motivated Employees:** Servant leadership improves employee motivation. Motivated employees are dedicated innovative and perform well thus contributing their best towards growth of their organization.

REFERENCES

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