

Leadership

POINTS TO DEVELOP

Leadership common in all social animals.

A leader essential for the smooth functioning of any society.

Qualities of a leader.

Power associated with leadership and the ills of this combination.

Conclusion: leaders are important to a group, a society, a nation.

Leadership is a quality common to all social animals. A pride of lions is led by one dominant male, a herd of elephants too has a leader, migratory birds show social behavior and are led by a dominant individual, and all human societies, groups and communities have their respective leaders. Invariably, every congregation of human beings, be it at the micro level of religious or other groups and communities, or at the macro level of societies and nations, is bound to be headed by someone who stands out above the others and acts as a guide or a leader. Why is a leader necessary? What makes a leader a leader?

Looking at any sort of animal society one factor becomes immediately clear, namely division of labor. It is essential for the proper functioning of any society that work be clearly defined and assigned to different individuals, or groups of individuals, within the society. In a primitive society, the areas of work may just be food gathering, rearing young ones and defending the colony or society against intruders and predators. A more complex society, any human society for example, will have highly evolved and differentiated areas of work. In both cases, nevertheless, an individual would be required to supervise activities in each specialized area of work. These individuals, in turn, may be superseded by another individual who would coordinate and supervise their work. A leader is thus essential for smooth and proper functioning of any society animal or human, primitive or highly evolved.

What are the qualities which go on to constitute a leader? Going by the prime responsibility of a leader which is to ensure that the society or group functions effectively and in a healthy manner, a leader must be socially aware and conscious. Other qualities generally considered essential for a leader include a magnetic personality, highly developed communication skills, courage, physical fitness, acumen of mind, pragmatism, tolerance and care for others. A leader must be capable of envisioning the future reality of his or her society and be able

to effectively and convincingly communicate it to 'the people. A leader should be totally committed to the cause and should be prepared to go to all extents of self-sacrifice for the betterment of the society and the realization of his or her ideals. Leadership may at times also demand of the leader that he or she be extremely well-versed in certain specific areas depending upon the needs of the particular group or society.

How does one become a leader? In monarchies and similar authoritarian societies leaders acquire their prerogative to lead and rule by birth. The eldest son (or daughter) in a monarch's family automatically inherits the position of the leader (monarch) under certain conditions. These conditions could be the demise of the monarch or his incapability to rule and govern. But monarchies and authoritarian societies are on the decline with more and more societies and nations opting for democracy. Under a democratic set-up, leadership normally is not reduced to a hereditary right of a particular family. The whole process of selection of a leader itself becomes a democratic procedure. Such a choice has the advantage of ensuring that only a person with genuine capabilities and qualifications would emerge as a leader. In yet another kind of situation, leaders could be nominated or assigned by a former leader. This process is probably most evident in religious groups or sects where a departing leader normally nominates his or her successor. People wielding considerable power, often military power, are commonly known to topple governments and carry out coups to establish themselves as leaders. Many republics and nations in recent history have witnessed successful or unsuccessful coups. The democratic set-up, being by far the most popular and the commonest, has evolved specialized institutions to impart training to prospective leaders. In other words, people are now being trained to become leaders. It is not necessary to mention that certain basic abilities or qualifications are prerequisites to such selections. Since leadership is becoming a highly evolved field relying not just on basic inherent qualities but also on vast and specialized knowledge, it is but natural that chosen persons should be trained and educated to emerge as successful leaders.

One major attraction of leadership is the immense power the position incorporates. It is unfortunate that many people motivated solely by their greed for power aspire to become leaders and often become so too; they cause damage to the social fabric through their selfish preoccupations. Nepotism in bureaucratic and private sectors is a clear-cut example of misuse of power. Another important precondition for a leader, therefore, is that the leader should not allow power to corrupt him or her. A leader's prime motivation to lead should stem from his or her dedication to the cause of the particular group, society or nation and not from his or her greed for power.

A leader is necessary for a group, society or nation. Without a capable leader a society generally tends to degenerate, fall victim to decadence and finally disintegrate. Good leaders are immensely popular, enjoy massive support and often leave an indelible impression on a nation's character besides providing standards of excellence and dedication.