

# An Aristotelian Paradigm of Leadership

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## **ABSTRACT**

Leadership in a traditional sense has meant conveying a set of instructions from hierarchical structures (such as management) to others to attain certain goals and objectives. This has been followed in businesses for several years and continues to be followed. In view of new emerging business environments, supported with technology developments and threatened by newer forms of competitions, leadership will be searching for other dimensions. This aspect needs a rethink in perspectives of various stakeholders involved within it. Now it is expected that the leadership must take care of all the stakeholders and fulfill their expectations. So, what exactly does the leadership to the next generation organizations look like or do? It is attempted to list some of the characteristics. This list of characteristics is just indicative and not exhaustive. Also, it does not mean that the next generation organization would not necessarily demonstrate these entire characteristics, but it would likely embody some of these traits. Some of them are Impact Driven, Finance and Business Centric, Technology and Digital Savvy, Continuous Learning, Shared Leadership, Multicultural and Culturally Competent, Consideration to Work-Life Boundaries, Social Responsibility and Environmental Concerns. All these characteristics together result in value addition to the Management (Board). Thus apart from paying attention to the routine & regular aspects such as making the organization profitable, managing the competition and complying to relevant statutory and legal regulations, leadership tomorrow demands some more. It has to be environment friendly and encompass social empathy. It may give due attention to needs of underprivileged sections of the society and by suitable means try to fulfill those needs. This may not be for image building but for keeping the organization active in the real world. The leadership may try to do activities that result in

conservation of natural resources by the organization by undertaking suitable activities that are synergic to their business operations and satisfy, to some extent, needs of all their stakeholders. Indeed, tomorrow's leadership is challenging, evolving and is in the process of ongoing learning; in the quest for acquiring new knowledge to maintain its coveted position. That's not impossible but certainly a demanding task ahead of all the new and emerging organizations of tomorrow.

**Objective :** The present study compares the Indian and Western Leadership Models & their variables.

**Research Methodology:** Extensive review and analysis of various research papers and articles published over past few years. Resources quoted and borrowed are duly acknowledged.

**Outcome:** An understanding of the variables of Eastern and Western Model of Leadership.

## **KEYWORDS**

Leadership, Next Generation Leaders, Developing tomorrow's Leaders, Challenges in Leadership

### **Part I: Eastern & Western Models of Leadership**

#### **Introduction**

Without capable leadership, there will be chaos.

There is no second opinion that organizations depend on good talent to prosper. Today in India, there is a huge growth impetus. This momentum, however, presents significant leadership challenges as well. The question is whether India is developing enough leaders fast enough to keep up with this growth and subsequent demand. There is no doubt that it will need more and stronger leaders for India. The sustained growth of Indian businesses has put a strain on existing leaders while creating an increased demand for "ready now" leaders. It is required to identify practices and strategies to not only accelerate the next generation of leaders but to sustain and support them.

Most organizations invest in short-term training and programs, but very few persist with the long-term commitment required to develop a leadership strategy that goes in

tandem with the business strategy. Instead of creating the talent masterpiece required for the future, most organizations want to doodle when it comes to people and talent development.

The war for talent is intensifying at all levels locally and globally. In India, foreign organizations MNCs (multinational corporations), local large organizations, and even start-ups, are competing for the “best-in-class” talent. Indian talent is also being courted to take up overseas positions in global companies. The key question organizations are grappling with is how to attract, keep, and develop the best?

As India pushes ahead on the development path and occupies center stage in the global economy, it will need talented men and women who can lead rapid, well-orchestrated, and inclusive growth.

### **Eastern Model of Leadership**

Eastern model of business leadership, as a research topic, is a relatively new phenomenon that emerged about three decades ago. Ongoing studies however, suggest that Eastern and especially the Indian business practices will continue to follow traditional beliefs and long-established cultural traits. Such beliefs may be influenced by cultural forces and may be conceptually linked with political, social, and industrial paradigms. Within this philosophical framework, leadership has to focus on being humanistic and improving followers through personal development.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Eastern model of leadership, the leaders are expected to rate ethical values and considerations above the achievement of profit.<sup>2</sup> It is said that a leader can be a (role) model and a source of inspiration for (others) subordinates by using persuasion rather than compulsion; promoting synergy with nature and with others; and setting a personal example by promoting equality, simple living, and so on.<sup>3</sup> Last but not the least, the leader should exert minimal influence on subordinates.<sup>4</sup> Although described as discrete elements, these principles are interlinked and interdependent.

Exhibit 1 shows some of the indicative aspects of Eastern Model of Leadership



Exhibit 1: Some Indicative aspects of Eastern Model of Leadership

### **Western Model of Leadership**

Western leadership principles and management theories have always remained business centric with focus on revenues and profit generation.<sup>5</sup> Western leadership principles vary to some extent across European and American cultures.<sup>6</sup> Though, it was observed that specific leadership aspects remain the same which follow specific leadership practices.<sup>7</sup> The difference is only with the extent of significance given to certain features.<sup>8</sup> According to the Western model of leadership, the leaders are expected to give more importance to business specific aspects.<sup>9</sup> Such leadership style has created rather specialist practices rather than generalist leadership practices. Such special aspects include articulating a view of the future for followers, supporting and management of innovation, fostering human relations, and strategic planning.<sup>10</sup>

Exhibit 2 shows some of the indicative aspects of Western Model of Leadership

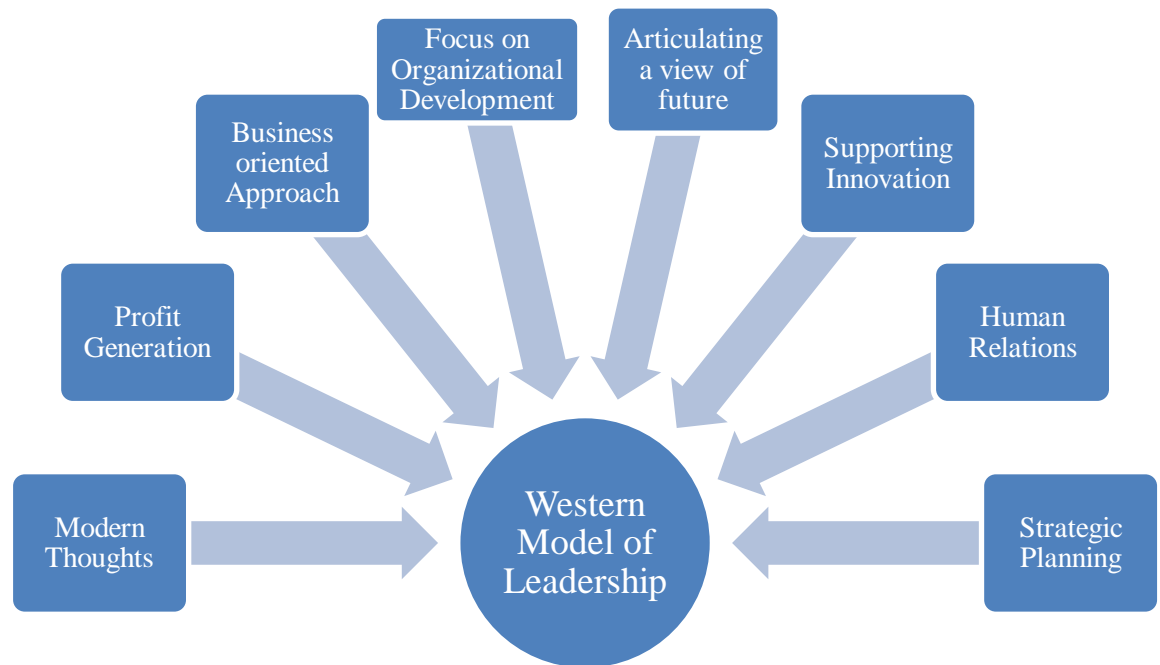


Exhibit 2: Some Indicative aspects of Western Model of Leadership

### **Part II: Aristotelian Paradigm of Leadership**

We have to evolve a framework in terms of which each one of the variables discussed above viz. variables related to the Eastern and Western Models of Leadership and variables related to the External factors shaping the new Leadership of tomorrow, may be accepted from the points of truth they contain. In other words change in Leadership of 21<sup>st</sup> Century is not merely accepting the Eastern One and rejecting the western, but rather harmonizing them and giving each its respective place in our conception of Leadership as a whole.

The framework, which we shall be using, is based on the Aristotelian doctrine of four causes.<sup>11</sup> For Aristotle, a full understanding of anything requires that we consider it from four perspectives or points of view. They are

- i. material cause
- ii. formal cause
- iii. efficient cause
- iv. Final cause

(The word “cause” here is to understood not in the Human sense of an antecedent event, but cause, here, stands for a ‘point of view’ or ‘perspective’.)

The significant point about Aristotle’s scheme of four causes is

- i. a full understanding of anything is possible only if the thing in question is considered from the four points of view
- ii. these views are to be seen as connected with each other

Hence, the Aristotelian schema is an integrated framework. It is this feature, which is helpful for us, for all variables of both Eastern and Western Leadership models and the contemporary external factors shaping the leadership tomorrow are also integrated.

The four points of view or four causes can be explained in terms of his own example.

- i. He illustrates the material cause by the formless bronze from which a sculptor fashions his statue.
- ii. The formal cause is the pattern or the structure, which is to become embodied in the thing after it is well fashioned. In the case of the statue it is the plan or the idea of itself as conceived by the sculptor
- iii. The efficient cause is the agent which produces the thing as the effect. The efficient cause of the statue is the chisels, hammers, the will of the agent and other instruments used by the sculptor.
- iv. The final cause is the end or the purpose towards which the thing is directed. In the example of sculpturing, it is the fully complete and realized statue.

In this way Aristotle explains the four causes by his own example of sculpturing. But what is important to note is that Aristotle himself extends this schema to more complex, non - physical cases as shown in his works-

- i. arguments for persuasion as described in Rhetorics
- ii. scientific theories in Prior Analytics.

There is, therefore, some basis for extending the Aristotelian causal model not only to material objects or events but also to conceptual constructions such as Leadership.

With this brief introduction, in the present issue, we propose to use this as a framework for the discussions of some of the dimensions of Leadership. But before proceeding to do so, I would like to emphasize that the use of the framework, which I am attempting now is an interpretative and not a causal one. In Aristotle, the doctrine of four causes is presented as four perspectives or points of view from which anything may be considered. More importantly, these four perspectives are not alternatives rather they are related with each other such that a total understanding requires all the four. It is this unifying and integrating character that proves useful in our attempt to understand the concept of Leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> Century in all aspects. While using this schema we shall observe a certain sequence of discussion, i.e. the order in which we can arrange our discussion is

- i. the material cause point of view
- ii. The efficient cause point of view
- iii. The formal cause point of view
- iv. The final cause point of view.

In anticipation, the material cause perspective will identify the substance or the content which is said to be transformed (i.e. personal variables of Leadership), the efficient cause identifies the agency which brings about the transformation (i.e. the

variables of organizational environment), the formal cause –the pattern of transformation (i.e. the variables of External environment ) and the final cause –the goal of transformation(i.e. Leadership leading the organization towards its goal).

As we have seen earlier, the eastern model of Leadership has the following variables:

i. Traditional Beliefs ,ii. Cultural Traits, iii. Humanistic Approach, iv. Focus on Personal Development, v. Ethical Behaviour , vi. Promote Synergy, vii. Minimum influence, viii. Use of Persuasion

Continuing with the Western Model of Leadership, we have the following :

ix. Modern Thoughts, x. Profit Generation, xi. Business Oriented approach, xii. Focus on OD  
xiii. Articulating view of future, xiv. Supporting Innovation, xv. Human Relations, xvi. Strategic planning

As proposed earlier, to develop a holistic concept of Leadership which is pragmatic for 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can have the following variables in the respective perspectives.

**a. Material Cause : (i.e. Personal Variables of Leadership )**

Traditional Beliefs, Cultural Traits, Focus on Personal Development, Ethical Behaviour ,promotion of synergy, use of persuasion and human relations.

**b. Efficient cause ( i.e.Variables of Organizational Environment)**

Modern Thoughts, Minimum Influence, Focus on OD, Articulating View of Future, Supporting Innovation, Strategic Planning

**c. Formal cause (i.e. Variables of External Environment)**

VUCA, Technological Changes & Innovation, Government Influences, Increased Competition, Ever changing systems and processes, Emerging New Business Approaches, Middle class values and attitudes

**d. Final cause(i.e. Leadership leading the organization towards its goal).**



Profit Generation, Concern for Society, Consideration for environment, Sustainable Cultural impact

### **Concluding Remarks**

The preceding attempt to place the basic concepts and ideas of Leadership within a philosophical conceptual framework may have two interesting implications. First of all such a framework may allow us to recognize the interconnections and inter-relationships between various variables of Leadership per se. Secondly and more importantly, it may also provide a basis in terms of which sustained comparisons with other theories of Leadership may be made. For example, if one were to elaborate the Transformational or Transactional theories of Leadership in such a unifying framework, it may, perhaps, be easier, to have some kind of critical judgements regarding the limits of these three models. In this sense, the framework used in this paper may provide a philosophical basis for comparative studies of theories of Leadership. To the extent that it provides such a basis I believe that philosophical theory may serve an important function for the human sciences.

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