GREAT POWERS, GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES

"With great power comes great responsibility."

A phrase made popular by the fictional superhero comic series, Spider-Man. The exact version of this phrase premiered in the 2002 movie uttered by Spider-Man's uncle Benjamin Parker, popularly known as Uncle Ben. The phrase in the movie was slightly different from the original phrase that appeared in the Amazing Fantasy #15 comic issued in August 1962 when Spider-Man was first introduced. In the comic, the phrase appeared as a narration rather than a spoken dialogue – "with great power there must also come – great responsibility."

Actually, the phrase pre-dates back to 1894, spoken by J. Hector Fezandie in a graduation address at the Stevens Institute of Technology. There were also many other records of prominent individuals uttering similar phrases. For instance, in 1906, Winston Churchill was recorded as saying "where there is great power there is great responsibility" during his tenure as the Secretary of States for the Colonies.

In the comic, the main intention of the phrase was to emphasise the huge responsibility the main character and superhero, Spider-Man had to carry after obtaining his superpowers i.e. to ensure public safety.

In real life, this phrase is much more suitable to represent and describe the importance of leadership. Leadership is never about having high status, benefits, power or name. The core of any leadership has always been about responsibilities.

> *Leadership is not about being in charge.*
> *Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.*
> Simon Sinek, author

As leaders, we are responsible for the overall management of the matter at hand including the people involved. A king, prime minister or president is responsible for his country and people, a CEO for a company and its employees, a General for his army, a father for his household, a mother for her children, teachers for their school and students – the list goes on. Everyone is responsible for something or someone, making us a leader in our own different capacities. At the very minimum, we are responsible for leading ourselves to a path of righteousness.

The only difference is the size or magnitude of our responsibilities, whether big or small. Some of us have bigger responsibilities covering a larger group of people and area such as kings or CEOs, while others are only responsible for smaller settings such as their household or immediate family.

> *And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.*
> Al-An'am 6: 165

Regardless of how small our responsibilities may seem to be, we should never see it as trivial or irrelevant. Each one of us matters in our own way,

making a difference to someone else and in the bigger picture, the world in general.

> *It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: Beware, every one of you is a shepherd and everyone is answerable with regard to his flock. The Caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about his subjects (as to how he conducted their affairs). A man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about them (as to how he looked after their physical and moral well-being). A woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about them (as to how she managed the household and brought up the children). A slave is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about it (as to how he safeguarded his trust). Beware, every one of you is a guardian and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his trust.*
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> Muslim

At the end of the day, we will be held responsible and answerable for everything we do in our capacity as a leader. Although in essence, we are answerable for everything we do in general, there is a slight difference when it comes to being answerable as a leader. As a leader, we are not only answerable for our individual self and the actions we take on an individual basis, but we are also responsible and answerable on what we are supposed to do "for others".

One may argue that there may also be actions that are taken on an individual basis but involves other people. The key word that differentiates the two is the word "for"; leadership involves actions "for others" and not "to others".

This is the reason why many people avoid leadership positions. People shy away from the heavy responsibilities that come with the position as they are unconfident of their abilities to carry such a heavy burden. However, there will be instances where we are left with no other choice but to take up the

leadership role especially when it involves matters that are directly related to our own personal life.

Significance and Importance

When I first had the idea of writing this book, I decided to write on the topic of leadership last, as I found it to be a difficult topic to write. At the same time, it is an important topic that needs to be discussed and deeply internalised. With these factors in mind, I adopted a "sandwich" approach in determining the position of the chapters in this compilation. I intentionally positioned two of the most important topics (at least to my personal opinion) at the start and end of the compilation – reverting or repentance as an opener and leadership as the closure. Hopefully by doing this, the key takeaways from these two topics could be easily registered in the readers' minds and recalled whenever needed.

However, I must admit that this chapter does not really do justice to the topic. If we were to really write about leadership in detail, a chapter would not be sufficient; it would turn out to be a book at the very least, if not a series. There are many dimensions of leadership for us to explore and acquire, covering various topics such as leadership styles, different traits of leadership, leadership communication approaches and many more.

Fundamentally, however, what is more imperative is for us to realise the importance of developing our leadership skills, as each of us practise leadership in one way or another throughout our lives.

In this chapter, besides establishing a basic understanding of leadership, we will attempt to discuss and understand some of the factors that could influence our leadership abilities, both positive and negative. Hopefully by having a better understanding of these factors, we would be able to develop ourselves to become better and more effective leaders.

What About Leadership?

So what is leadership all about? What do we really mean by leadership? Before we go into specific definitions or interpretations on leadership, let us revisit the history of our existence.

Generally, we were put into this world as a leader, to lead our way through this world that Allah has created for us and make the best out of it. Our body, mind and spirit were designed to take on this role. We stand above the other creations of this world as we are blessed with the ability to think, which enables us to carry out this important role.

> *And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."*
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> Al Baqarah 2: 30

Establishing this fact of life proves that we are all leaders by nature. We live and lead in our own capacities through our journey in life, making it compulsory for us to learn the ways of leadership.

As we live in a communal world full of diversities, a hierarchy of command is naturally established to bring order to our lives. Because of this, there are those among us who are lifted and granted specific leadership roles responsible to lead specific groups of people or community. As the hierarchy goes upwards, leaders are granted larger authority and power as they are responsible for a larger group of people. The relationship between power and responsibilities is proportionate to each other – the higher we are on the hierarchy, the more powerful we get but the greater responsibilities we carry.

> *Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.*
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> Az-Zukhruf 43: 32

The classic example is the running of a country. At the top, we have the king, president or prime minister holding the ultimate leadership position responsible for the whole country and its entire population. He or she is supported by a lineup of ministers responsible for different portfolios or states. This expands further as it goes down the hierarchy; district head, village head, etc.

The same trend can be seen in corporate organisations; a CEO sits at the top, responsible for the overall management of the company and its employees. Going down the hierarchy, the CEO is then supported by the senior management team, heads of divisions, heads of departments, heads of units, team leads and others. This hierarchy forms an organisational structure, which allocates the appropriate authority, relationships and responsibilities in detail to enable the organisation to function efficiently and effectively.

Coming back to the original question, what is leadership? What does a leader actually do?

Leadership means different things to different people around the world. It also means different things in different situations. To answer this question generically, let us go back to the root of the word, "lead". Basically, the main role of a leader is to lead others towards a purpose, objectives or goals. It is about pulling people together, aligning them with each other, developing, directing and driving them forward.

> *If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.*
> John Quincy Adams, 6th U.S. President

People generally have the tendency to simplify and conclude that management and leadership is one and the same thing. In actual fact, management and leadership are different; they might be similar but they are not the same. Good managers do not necessarily make good leaders and the same goes the other way round, good leaders does not necessarily make good managers. Leadership is positioned at a higher level, capturing the surrounding through vision and strategies, while the managers execute and implement these strategies effectively to achieve results. In summary, leadership is about setting the agenda and empowering people to produce change.

> *Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights,*
> *Raising their performance to a higher standard,*
> *Building a personality beyond its normal limitations.*
> Peter Drucker

Yes, the key to leadership is empowering people. Leaders do not need to operationalise matters on their own, their role is motivate others to do so. At the same time, leaders who are on the ground are well respected. We have cited before the story of how Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) himself was digging the trench during the Battle of *Khandaq* and how he was together with the Muslim army during most of the battles such as Battle of *Badr* and *Uhud*.

Nevertheless, during these battles, he had also empowered people who had the best credentials and credibility to carry out specific tasks. He would set the general directions or guidelines and left it to the best judgment of the appointed experts to operationalise the details. This was among the key

success factors for the early Muslim army and the first Islamic state in general for that matter – Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) practised empowerment – a method or approach used by Prophet (ﷺ) over 1400 years ago, which has proven to be effective as proclaimed by numerous leadership gurus of today.

> *As we look ahead in the next century,*
> *leaders will be those who empower others.*
> Bill Gates

Leaders Bring the Best out of People

Essentially what this tells us is that leaders do not need to be really good at doing something in specific – they don't have to be the experts who do great things. What leaders need to be really good at is getting the people around them to unleash their true potentials and from there, achieve great things.

People usually have different types of skill sets and are good in their respective areas of specialty; one person can be good with numbers while another at building – the possibilities are limitless.

When all of these skill sets and results are put together, it produces one great outcome – this is the role of a leader, aligning and putting everything together.

> *The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things;*
> *he is the one who gets the people to do the greatest things.*
> Ronald Reagan, 40th U.S. President

I have once read or heard somewhere that the secret to being a good leader is to master the ability to transfer and translate an idea to another person

for their execution as if it is the other person's idea to begin with. This approach produces two things for the other person; sense of ownership and sense of importance.

People perform better when they feel important, when their contribution matters – people cherish the feeling of being appreciated. People also perform better when they strongly feel they are a part of something, owning the responsibilities to deliver and develop, growing and taking care of it as if it is theirs.

In order to do this, leaders need to lower, or even better, let go of the ego that comes with the title of a leader; a title of authority and power. Instead of imposing authority through power and fear, effective leaders do the total opposite; they do it through empowerment and love.

This does not mean that leaders are necessarily soft or weak – in cascading down the idea, they would still need to be firm and at times, even stern. Nevertheless, it should be done in a respectful way, expressing believe and trust in the capabilities of the other person. In no way such a positive approach is considered to be weak; it is actually the strongest form of leadership.

This is similar to Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) approach when he managed the first Islamic state of Madinah. He has always been known to be a person who speaks in the most respectful manner to friends or foes alike. He was also the leader who propagated the concept of *shura*; to decide on affairs in consultation with those affected by the situation. Such approach provides leaders with the platform to create the two important feelings we had discussed among their followers whenever a decision is formed; the sense of ownership and the sense of importance.

In short, it is among the primary duty of leaders to bring out the best in people for the benefit of the larger shared purpose and also for the person's individual development, even if it means pushing the person to the limit.

I remember hearing this at a leadership course – great leaders are the ones who push their people to the limit, with the intention of unleashing their true potentials to tremendously improve themselves.

I almost forgot about this important component of leadership until on one particular afternoon, my protégé Intan came to see me to discuss about the various projects I had tasked her to drive – she was tasked to drive three large projects simultaneously. I had consciously and intentionally tasked her with such a difficult assignment with no other intention than to develop her, just like how I was pushed into a similar situation during the early years of my career. I consciously made the decision because I knew and believed that she would be able to do it.

Nevertheless, I cannot deny that it is indeed a tall order and a challenging task, especially for someone who had just taken on the role for slightly more than a year. It was expected that she would feel overwhelmed and in no time at all it became too obvious to go unnoticed. I needed to address it quickly before she gets frustrated and give up.

The discussion I had with her that afternoon revolved around the difficulties she was facing in engaging and driving the other project team members to be onboard. These members came from various departments and none of them were dedicated to work on a particular project. They still had their normal routine work to do. She felt that it was difficult to move forward as everyone claimed to be overwhelmed by the things they already have on their plates. She felt bad if she were to burden them further with the additional work required to complete the projects.

I did not buy the excuses; I couldn't even if I wanted to. Firstly, these projects were mainly regulatory in nature; it did not leave us with much choice. By hook or by crook, we needed to complete the projects for us to comply with the regulatory requirements. Secondly, times were tough and economic conditions weren't too good. It is very unlikely that we would be able to hire additional resources. Considering that we were a fairly young company that had just celebrated its fifth year anniversary, we would need to make do with the small team we have to implement and execute things. This is a common sight for startups and young companies – limited in resources, we got to just make do with what we have.

It was at this juncture that I remembered the important leadership lesson of pushing people to their limits, not with the intention of punishing the person but with a sincere intention of developing them – true leaders care enough for their people to do so. We should not, however, mistake it with the methods used by tyrants or ruthless kings, such as the Pharaoh as told in history. Here we are referring to guided pushing; we push them to their limits but we pull them back whenever we see them falling, giving them the support and guidance to push them back up.

Many times we are doubtful of our own capabilities, thinking that there are limits to what we can do. Actually, we are the ones who decided that there is no more bandwidth available for us to handle multiple things – how would we know our true capabilities and capacity unless we try? If we were to give in to this mentality of limiting ourselves, we would never be able to find out the answer. Nevertheless, it is pretty natural for us to feel this way, especially if our surroundings behave in such a manner – we tend to choose the easier way out rather than push ourselves.

This is where a leader needs to play their role – to take away that choice and push the person to strive through the challenging tasks. It does not mean it has to be done in a rough manner. Rightfully, it should be done through engagement, encouragement and motivation. In doing this, communication is key.

After explaining to her about the entire concept and relating it to my own experiences, she quickly understood. I was also pushed to my limits before; there were instances where I literally worked on large projects single handedly. But it was through these projects that I learned to become more effective and efficient.

Most of us would think that it applies to only large leadership roles. In actual fact, unleashing people's potentials are more important in smaller and personalised settings, such as in a family. Parents should put in continuous efforts to identify and develop their child's specialty. Parents would also need to push their child to the limits, but in a cautious and tender manner – a push full of love. Many parents misunderstand this concept; they tend to force it into their child ruthlessly, instead of guiding them.

The right type of pushing requires a lot of understanding, it needs to come with proper monitoring and interventions when need be – a structured yet flexible process of bringing the best out of people.

Concept of Leadership in Islam

For Muslims, without a doubt, the best example of leadership that we should emulate is Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). It was through his leadership that Islam, which started off by being rejected and ridiculed by the majority of people around him, spread across the Arabian Peninsula and subsequently the world.

It was through his leadership that the first Islamic state was established, founded on the right principles, which provided us the guidance in running a political state effectively. It was through his leadership that Muslims survived various challenges caused by internal and external struggles. It was through his leadership that Muslims became victorious in fighting for their rights, winning numerous battles and finally freeing the holy city of Makkah. It was through his leadership that the Arabs of his time left their pagan ways replacing it with the righteous ways of Islam. It was through his leadership that the rights of everyone, regardless of ethnicity, gender, status or age were rightfully put in place and fought for.

If we were to discuss about the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in detail, it would at least take a whole book to complete everything. At this stage, we have not even started to discuss the leadership traits of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and I am already facing difficulties listing down his good points as it seems to be never ending. For the purpose of this chapter, at least, let us agree and establish that ultimately, the leadership ways of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) represents the fundamental concept of leadership in Islam.

Let us also learn from Abu Bakar as Siddiq, the closest companion and student of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and also the first person to lead the Muslim community after the demise of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). If there is one statement that could represent the concept of leadership in Islam after Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), it would be the one made by him in his first address as Caliph or Head of the Islamic state:

"I have been chosen to rule over you, though I am not the best among you. Help me if I am right, correct me if I am wrong.

The weak among you will be strong until I have attained for him his due and the strong among you will be weak until I have made him give what he owes.

Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Prophet; if I do not obey them, you owe me no obedience".

Abu Bakar as Siddiq

First and foremost, his statement shouts out the most fundamental concept of leadership in Islam – leadership is about fighting for a higher shared purpose that is beyond us; it is never about a personal agenda or individual glory.

For Muslim leaders, their main purpose is to spread and uplift the ways of Islam set by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This purpose continued to be carried out by his companions and successors. However, there came a point in time when Islamic leaders started to forget this fundamental and important purpose, resulting in the downfall of the leader and the true form of an Islamic state.

If we were to further analyse Abu Bakar as Siddiq's statement, he accepted his leadership position with utmost humility. To him, he was just one of Prophet's (ﷺ) companions, all whom have worthy qualities. Being selected as a leader did not automatically make him a better Muslim or person but instead, it conferred on him heavier responsibilities.

Next, he defined that leadership is an ongoing and two-way relationship with people. It goes both downwards and upwards, defining a transparent governance structure where people are engaged and feedback is encouraged.

The next statement positions an integral component of Islam in the limelight of leadership – fairness. He made it clear that social justice was a central concern of Islam. Everyone has their respective rights and should be treated equally in the eyes of justice, regardless of status or wealth.

Lastly, he stated that leaders have their limits as well, as in no way are leaders above the law and immune to mistakes. Leaders deserve loyalty and are to be followed but this is only as long as they are on the path of righteousness.

If a leader slips from the righteous path, the right to demand loyalty falls together with it.

For Muslims, the benchmark of loyalty has been set for our ease of reference; when a leader no longer obeys Islamic teachings, he is no longer on the righteous path hence no longer deserves our loyalty.

Islam puts a strong emphasis on leadership: it is explicitly mentioned that everyone is a leader in some way or another and is responsible for someone or something. This was made clear in the earlier hadith, which uses the analogy of a Muslim being a shepherd to his flock. To reflect its importance, Muslims are encouraged to appoint and follow a leader, even for simple tasks such as traveling.

> *Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri and Abu Hurairah reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "When three persons set out on a journey, they should appoint one of them as their leader."*
>
> Abu Dawud

What is more important for us to understand is that in Islam, leadership is not to be seen or treated as a privilege; it is an *amanah* (a trust) that comes with great responsibilities. On the Day of Judgment, leaders would be questioned in detail on how they have carried out their responsibilities. Each decision and action they took as a leader would be accounted for and any act of unfairness will not go unnoticed.

> *Abu Dharr reported: I said to Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): "Why do you not appoint me to an (official) position?"*
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> *He (ﷺ) patted me on the shoulder with his hand and said, "O Abu Dharr, you are a weak man and it is a trust and it will be a cause of disgrace and remorse on the Day of Resurrection except for the one who takes it up with*

a full sense of responsibility and fulfills what is entrusted to him (discharges its obligations efficiently).

Muslim

For this reason Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) reminded us to be cautious of leadership positions – we should not be power crazy to seek a leadership position. Leadership position is best given to people who deserve it, the ones who have the right knowledge, skills and abilities to carry out the job.

The best leadership positions are the ones assigned to us and not the ones we seek. For such appointments, we are entrusted by the people to hold the leadership position because they believe that we are capable of being a true leader.

More importantly, such a position came to us because Allah has ordained it for us. He knows better if we are suitable for a leadership position. Once chosen by Him, He would provide us with the necessary support for us to carry out the job in one way or another.

'Abdur-Rahman bin Samurah narrated: That the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "O 'Abdur-Rahman! Do not ask for a position of leadership, for if you receive it due to asking, you will be left alone with it, and if you receive it without asking, then you will be aided in it. And if you take an oath and you see that something else is better than it, then do what is better, and make an atonement for your oath."

At-Tirmidhi

Leadership Styles

All around the world, numerous studies on leadership have been conducted, which resulted in the development of various leadership theories. Among the main focus of such studies is the practice of different leadership styles. Understanding these leadership styles would enable us to identify the

most suitable method of leadership for the different types of audience and situation encountered.

There are various theories, models and categorisation of leadership styles developed by numerous leadership or management researchers and gurus. Different researchers categorise it using different names and analogies to make it easy for people to relate to. However, in essence, the basic principles behind the different categorisation of styles are not much different from one another. Most of the time, it is just a matter of how they are presented.

Among the models I am familiar with is the model introduced by Daniel Goleman in his book "Leadership That Gets Results" published in 2000. He divided leadership into six styles:

1. Commanding	A leader who adopts this style demands immediate compliance – "do what I tell you to do." Such style is best used in a crisis or when dealing with problematic people or to kick start a turnaround. However, it usually leaves a negative impact on the overall climate and morale.
2. Visionary	A leader who adopts this style leverages on mobilising people towards a vision – "come with me." This style is best used when a change requires a new vision or in situations where clear direction is needed.
3. Affiliative	A leader who adopts this style focuses on creating harmony and emotional bonds – "people comes

	first." The style is most suitable to motivate people during stressful times or to mend rifts in a team.
4. Democratic	A leader who adopts this style forges consensus through participation, always asking – "what do you think?" Such style is most suitable for collaborations and communication tasks.
5. Pacesetting	A leader who adopts this style sets high performance standards – "do as I do now." The style is suitable to get quick results from a highly competent and motivated team.
6. Coaching	A leader who adopts this style focuses on developing people for the future – "try this." This style helps people to improve performance and develop long term strengths for future benefits.

In reality a leader might adopt more than one style in performing their role. At the same time, he or she would, however, have a dominant style. It is not our place to conclude which style is the best as the appropriateness of a style depends on a variety of factors. Among the key factors to be considered are the situation and audience we are facing.

To me, the most effective leadership style is a combination of the different leadership styles, executed at appropriate moments – situational leadership. In situational leadership, a leader would need to adjust their leadership style according to the situation with the intention of producing the best outcome. For instance, it would not be appropriate for an army General to

adopt a democratic style while leading his army on the battlefield during war. In such a situation, a commanding style would be the most appropriate leadership style to adopt. But then he might choose to adopt a different leadership style, maybe a less intimidating one, when determining human related policies for his army.

Again, the best example to illustrate situational leadership is none other than Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). We have previously discussed about how he had treated a same matter with different people differently depending on the circumstances and the characteristics of the people involved. Some of the examples cited that illustrates his situational leadership are such as the different rulings of a husband kissing his wife during fasting month, the treatment of the Bedouin who urinated in the mosque and the different war tactics adopted for the various wars fought. There are many more examples that demonstrates Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) situational leadership qualities. He would adjust his ways to adapt to the situation. At times, when visiting different tribes, he would dress according to their custom to blend and fit in. There are times when he appeared stern and firm but most times, he was gentle and kind.

In implementing situational leadership, the most important thing is respect, which is reflected mainly in how a person talks and approaches another.

And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]."

Taha 20: 44

This is the reason why Allah taught us to be gentle and caring in our approach. Who in the right mind likes to be approached in a harsh manner? Sometimes we know the message brought upon us is good for us. However, we

decide to shoot it down and reject it altogether because of the way it was communicated to us.

Once we are able to absorb and appreciate the concept of kindness in communicating, we will be able to execute situational leadership at its best.

> *So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].*
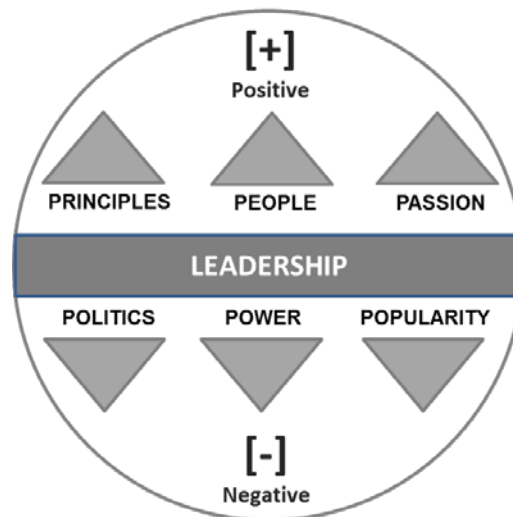>
> Ali Imran 3: 159

Driving Factors of Leadership

I had made a conscious decision to not write on the various traits of leaders, there are many good books and references on it around. Instead, I would like to highlight some driving factors that could either give a positive or negative impact to our leadership – it can either elevate us as a leader or pull us down. These factors will help determine whether we will become an effective leader or not at the end.

There are three factors on each side of the coin, a tag team of three that greatly influences a person's leadership abilities and level. I call it "3P vs. 3P".

The effects of the 3Ps are two sided; it can either be positive or negative depending on our ability to manage them.

The ability to effectively manage these triple Ps is by optimising the positive factors and minimising the negative ones. This would enable us to determine our level of effectiveness as a leader. At the end of the day, what every leader wants is to be a good leader and the best way to measure it lies in the effectiveness of a leader – operationally, emotionally and spiritually.

The Positive and Negative Triple Ps

Positive Triple Ps

We will first discuss the three driving factors that gives a positive impact to the leadership capabilities of a person. If we are able to inculcate, optimise and maximise these factors in our everyday leadership practice, the people around us will start to follow us and over a period of time, pledge their loyalty to us. Once this is achieved, it would not be difficult to move and motivate the people under us towards the shared goals and subsequently produce the desired results.

Nevertheless, the failure to practise these factors will result in people judging our intentions and assessing our competencies as a leader. People would start to assess whether their value system is aligned with ours and would hasten to make a decision on whether or not they want to continue following us as their leader.

This is how fundamental these factors are as they form an inherent part of leadership. Therefore, it makes it easy for people to notice if any of the factors is missing in a leader.

1. People

Leaders are meant to lead people; it only makes sense for people to be at the core of leadership.

People should always be the top consideration whenever a leader makes a decision or take action. Leaders need to take into consideration the impact of a decision or an action on their people, be it positive or negative. The focus of a leader's decision or action is to maximise the benefits and minimise any negative impacts to the people. This rule of thumb is in line with the responsibilities that a leader should bear: to take care of the people.

For a leader to maximise the positive impact on people, the key contributing factor is none other than sincerity. Sincerity is easily identified by people. The effect it has on people is simply remarkable. The more we are seen or perceived to be sincere, the more people would open up to us, gets engaged and eventually follow us.

This is most important because at the end of the day, it benefits the leaders as well; leaders have nothing if they don't have their people. Ultimately, it is the people who make things happen for leaders. No leader can do it alone. As much as the people need a leader to fight and stand up for them, leaders also require help from people to do the actual fighting – it is a two-way relationship.

> ***A boss has a title. A leader has the people.***
> Simon Sinek, an author best known for popularizing the concept of "the golden circle" and to "Start With Why"

Although it sounds simple, in reality, a lot of leaders actually put people aside in their leadership. Instead of treating people as important assets (and as claimed by many people and organisations), people are treated as an item that

is part of a chain, or a pawn necessary to deliver results, continuously pushed as if they are emotionless and individually unimportant.

For such leaders, people are similar to machines and are treated as such. This type of leaders might think that they are powerful but history has proven that they don't stay at the top for long. Let us take a look at ruthless dictatorships throughout history. Most of them eventually fall and when they do, they fall hard. There are many examples in history where whenever a leader starts to forget about the people and chase selfish dreams; it marks the downfall of even the strongest empires.

This is why it is important for leaders to remember that fundamentally, people are the reason leaders are leaders in the first place. Without people, who would leaders lead? Would they actually be leaders?

We are often told to keep things professional and not discuss about people or individuals when faced with a crisis or problem. This is indeed a mistake; 90% of our problems are due to people – attitude, misbehaviours, communication, etc. How can leaders solve problems if they cannot discuss and address the root cause i.e. people.

The only part we need to be sensitive about and manage fairly is when we are required to discuss matters regarding an individual; we should never take it personal. We need to be objective and focus on resolving the issue and not vent in on the person specifically. Only if it happens to be that the issue involves the character or personality of the person, then we need to address it at such a personal level; not because we dislike the person but because it disturbs the whole chain – the negative impact it would have on others.

In Islam, people are considered a very important component of the overall Islamic life system. People have their respective rights over each other and their surroundings. To demonstrate the importance of people, Islam puts a

lot of emphasis on maintaining good relationship between people. To further reflect its importance, Allah had included an additional requirement when it comes to repentance involving infringement of other people's rights. Allah would forgive all other sins except for sins involving other people – we have to settle it between each other first. We need to apologise and obtain forgiveness from the person wronged. This is how important people are in Islam.

As a leader, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) always put people as a high priority, regardless of friend or foe. He would take good care of everyone under his purview and responsibility, be it people who liked or disliked him. He always welcomed guests with respect and warmth. He made sure that even prisoners of wars are taken care of, and given food and shelter. This is the true example of a leader, always putting people first.

2. Principles

In a position of power, it is important for leaders to be perceived to continuously do the right things. The ability to do so represents the leaders' capabilities and credibility.

By default, everyone expects a leader to practise strong governance and good values. Leaders are entrusted with the authority to manage the subject matter but more importantly, they are entrusted to take care of the people.

Although the direct correlation and impact might not seem obvious, ethics and fairness form an integral part of effective leadership. This is why we see certain professional careers, such as accountants or appointed actuaries, emphasise a lot on ethics and fairness. These are examples of principle based professions that focuses on producing outcomes in line with the common ethics definitions of the majority. They will try to be fair to the various stakeholders, both internal and external to their best capabilities. As these are high profile

professions, we can sort of conclude that the higher up you are in a leadership position, the more principle based and sensitive you must be.

Acting based on principles basically means doing the right thing. We check ourselves against the common values system and assess whether our decisions or actions are in line with it. We assess the impact it may have on others and evaluate whether the outcomes are fair to the affected parties.

While straightforwardly it may make a lot of sense for us to practise it, many times people fail to do so. Many of us give in to the pressures of the moment or situation especially if we are put in a situation where we are pushed to the wall. Intentionally or unintentionally, we usually end up making decisions or taking actions that resolves the issue but may not be principally right. Such decisions or actions would usually cause negative impacts in the future with long term repercussions.

A classic example is the subprime crisis that caused the downfall of Lehman Brothers and subsequently causing the global economic crisis in 2008. The strategies the leadership team took might have resulted in quick and short term profits but it eventually led to the company's downfall in September 2008. It remains to be largest bankruptcy filling in the United States history with over $600 million assets involved. This is what happens when we choose money over principles.

How did such a deal go through in the first place? Wasn't there anyone who knew or noticed that this would eventually happen?

The answer is most probably a yes – there were people who did but could not do anything. Why?

The reason is because everything was done above board and went through the right process. They did not miss any governance requirements and

when the strategies were presented to the respective governing committees, be it at management or board level, everyone agreed to it.

Yes, they did things right.

But this highlights to us an important point – doing things right does not necessarily mean that it is the right thing to do.

> ***Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.***
> Peter Drucker, management consultant, educator, and author

The one mistake that a lot of us tend to do is to focus too much on satisfying the man-made processes and red tapes rather than addressing the actual issue at hand. Even for obvious matters such as humanitarian efforts, relief-related items are sometimes released late due to the bureaucracy stumbling blocks. While we are arguing about paperwork, people are dying of starvation and sickness. This may happen if we are too obsessed with doing things right instead of doing the right things – in this case, how can people's lives be less important than a set of processes?

We are not saying that doing things right is not necessary or bad, it is there for a reason – to impose control and discipline. However, when assessing something, we need to take a step back and ask ourselves whether it is the right thing to do, especially in terms of principle. This step is particularly important for leaders, as they are in a position of authority that could make or break a situation.

People on the ground may not have enough power to change the process and they may have to adhere to it even though they disagree with it. At the end of the day, they still need to earn a living.

Leaders, on the other hand, have the power to affect change – they just need to decide whether or not they want to do the right things.

Many times, doing the right thing is not the most popular thing to do. For instance, asking a non-performer to leave an organisation. It is natural for us to consider humanitarian factors concerning the non-performer – the non-performer might be personally and emotionally close to the people in the team and also, at a more individual level, the person basically needs to earn a living. The question is however, are we being fair to the organisation and everyone else if we allow a free loader to continue to be on the team. While others are working their hearts out, this person is just sitting back and watch.

First and foremost, as leaders, we need to clearly address the non-performance issue with the person and give him a chance to buck up. If even after having that heart-to-heart talk the person still refuses to improve himself, the right to do is to ask the person to leave and replace the vacancy with a more capable person.

Doing the right things based on principles does not guarantee happiness for everyone, but it does cater for the ones who are deserving. There are bound to be people who will be unhappy, sometimes this can even be the majority of people. But then again, it is still the right to do. There are leaders who choose decisions in the favor of the majority to avoid making them unhappy, although rightfully the ones who deserve it are the minorities. Whatever the justification given, it does not make such approach right – good intentions do not make a wrong act permissible.

> *Don't be too concerned what people think, just do the right thing.*
> Unknown

I had once encountered an incident where a leader gave in to achieving numbers over principles. In a business review meeting, one of the business development personnel was giving out lame excuses for the shortfall. However,

the leader did not want to offend the personnel as he was probably worried that the personnel would stop producing. So he allowed the ridiculous scene to continue. I stood up and expressed my disappointment but was left to fight the battle alone even though everyone agreed it was wrong. I was personally troubled with the incident, which caused my respect for that particular leader to drop significantly.

In another instance, I overheard a leader (a head of department, to be specific) openly declared to her superior that she is going to make one of her staff a scapegoat for a mistake. Her superior only expressed his concerns but in the end did not stop her from doing it. I later overheard her team members jokingly say that they have learned the skill of blaming others when something goes wrong from the master. This is what happens when leaders do principally wrong things – they spread a virus.

Remember, as leaders, we set the tone from the top; our people observe and learn from us. This is why people say leaders mold the behaviour of their people – people literally learn and follow their leader's style and behaviour, consciously and subconsciously.

Leaders need to hold on strong to their principles, and they need to decide and act based on those principles. Fundamentally, this is what makes a leader an effective and respectable one.

3. Passion

It is always easier for us to do something that we love, be it work related or recreational. We can continue talking about it for hours, passionately sharing it with others in an attempt to get them to see and appreciate it just as much as we do – how we see and love it.

When we do the things we love, we would naturally and automatically give our best, enjoying each moment, even during difficult or tiring times. Tiredness doesn't seem to exist in our dictionary when we enjoy what we're doing.

This is what we call passion.

> *Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress.*
> *Working hard for something we love is called passion.*
> Simon Sinek

Among a leader's primary role is to establish and drive a vision for the people. This role involves a lot of inspiring, influencing and motivating – leaders have to sell the idea to the people. They need to believe in it as if it is theirs. This is the reason passion is an important component of leadership. It is much easier to inspire others about something that we ourselves love and believe in; it is also more effective to do so. People would open up and start to follow us if they feel that we are the real deal. There is no better way to do it than through passion where people are able to sense our high spirits. They would then be able to feel our sincerity in wanting for it to happen and succeed.

Let us look at some of the most influential leaders who had changed the world. Nelson Mandela was passionate about freeing South Africa from apartheid policies. Despite all the difficulties and torture he had to go through, he held on strong to his cause. His passion eventually moved so many others to join and believe in the cause as well. In 1990, after being locked up for 27 years, he joined the negotiations to abolish apartheid. He managed to establish South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994, which led him to become the country's first black president. This marked the end of apartheid policies in South Africa. We have seen many other prominent freedom fighters such as Mathama

Gandhi, who was equally passionate in their cause, inspiring and leading others to it.

Another leader, who had, in a different capacity, moved and changed how things are done, is the founder of Apple Inc., Steve Jobs. His passion in creating something new and making a difference was the secret to Apple's success. Despite his stern leadership style, he managed to influence and convince others to follow him, mainly because they were moved by his passion. Although he failed numerous times in his journey (even to the extent of losing the company he founded), he stayed true to his passion. When he finally managed to return and obtain control of Apple, he continued to drive and inspire others through his passion, which led to the birth of life-changing products such as the iPod, iTunes, iPads (which incidentally is the tool I am writing this chapter on) and the first ever smart phone – the iPhone.

There are so many things that we can learn from him. Among them is the lesson on passion – passion is what drives us to achieve excellence and come out on top. Because of the strong love we have for what we do, we are driven to continuously innovate to improve. Let us fall back to a core component of effective leadership – pushing others to improve and that is where passion comes in, it enables us to do just that.

> *Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.*
> Steve Job

Again (and I'm sounding like a broken record), it goes without saying that the best example to illustrate effective use of passion would be our beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). It was his passion for the divine cause for Allah and his mission to create a better life for everyone that led to the successful spreading of the message of Islam throughout the whole world.

It was his passion – how he loved and believed in it – that opened up to others to believe the same. It was the same passion that moved people to fight for the weak, establish an Islamic state and change their lifestyle towards a righteous one.

This is the reason why passion forms an important part of effective leadership. Once a leader is able to harvest and communicate his or her passion effectively to others, inspiring them to get on the boat and continue to be on it while the leader steers the direction, the leader can surely achieve remarkable results in no time.

Negative Triple Ps

Let us now look at the negative factors that may hinder a leader from being effective. The following three driving factors could contribute to the downfall of a leader. It is important for us to understand these factors so that we are able to avoid them in our journey to become an effective leader.

1. Popularity

Everyone wants to be liked. We want to be accepted and to be recognized – everyone wants to fit in. This is a natural human trait. We psychologically strive towards achieving it, adjusting our decisions and actions to win the hearts of others.

This is not a problem as long as fundamentally, our decisions or actions are in line with the right principles and values. However, it will start to become a problem when we are willing to compromise principles and values in order to please others, when we are worried that people will dislike or hate us if we were to make an unpopular (but right) decision. If we continue to do this over a long

period of time, we might even lose our true self at its core. This is among the top (if not the worst) mistakes a leader can make.

> ***Don't lose yourself trying to be everything to everyone.***
> Tony Gaskins, motivational speaker, author and life coach

Likability and success rarely go together – being a good leader does not always mean making people happy. I remember my mentor telling me, "we do not want to be a popular leader; we want to be an effective one." What he meant was as a leader, we are bound to make unpopular decisions that would not satisfy and make everyone happy. In most cases, the majority would be the ones dissatisfied and unhappy. But then, we need to be strong enough to follow through the difficult decision to achieve long term success. As long as our conscience is right, and knowing that it is for the benefit of everyone in the long run, we need to stand firm with our decision even if it is means that we will end up being disliked. Bear in mind, people do not necessarily know what is good for them, it is the responsibility of a leader to guide and decide what's best for their people.

> ***…But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not.***
> Al Baqarah 2: 216

Sad but true, many leaders tend to fall into the trap of chasing popularity. It is natural for leaders wanting to be liked by their people. It goes without saying that it is difficult to lead a bunch of grumpy people. Nevertheless, leaders need to be liked for the right reasons. Effective leaders may not be popular at first, mainly because of their firm and straightforward approach in dealing with things. However, over time, when people are able to see and appreciate their

true intentions, which is usually followed and backed up by positive results, effective leaders will end up being the most respectable and loved leaders. This is the highest form of respect worthy of a leader; being liked for being effective.

On the other hand, people who consciously chase popularity and fame usually end up being the most forgettable and hated ones. Firstly, it would only be a matter of time before people see through their selfish intentions. Before we know it, people would doubt their sincerity and start questioning whether they are real.

But for this type of leaders, even when it is obvious that people feel this way about them, they would still continuously seek recognition from others, as they feel that their efforts are unreal unless they are recognised. To them, it is all about attention and perception, not about whether it is the best or right thing to do.

> *Don't chase fame. It's greed for attention.*
> *If addicted to it, you feel you can't be 'real' unless your experiences are recognized by all.*
> Mufti Ismail Menk

There are a variety of negative impacts on a leader and his people should the leader continue to choose the path of chasing popularity. One thing for sure is that it affects the leadership and decision making styles of a leader.

I personally had the chance to observe and experience some of these negative impacts and outcomes:

i. **Unclear directions, indecisive decisions.**

As leaders who chase popularity do whatever they can to please others, they have a tendency of making vague decisions to cater to the different opinions and preferences of the different groups of people. This results in a situation

where there isn't a clear direction to move forward. In the end, instead of gaining popularity, the leader ends up with a frustrated majority.

ii.   **Throwing people under the bus.**

Popularity chasing leaders refuse to be seen as the bad person – they would never be caught dead as the bad cop. So even when there is a critical need to reprimand or highlight a mistake, they choose to pull other people together with them. I had personally observed a leader who had been complaining about the performance of his subordinate and asked advice on how to deal with her. The person advising the leader told him to be honest and tell the subordinate the truth – how he was unhappy with her performance. So the leader took up the advice and decided to confront his subordinate. But instead of telling her that he was not satisfied with her performance, he started off by saying "It is not that I am not happy with you, but so and so has been saying that they are not happy with what you are doing" – he then goes on pulling other people's names into the story. The message obviously got distorted. In the end, the subordinate came out from the room feeling frustrated and said "I'll be ok if he tells me what I did wrong or told me off for not doing my work but telling me other people are not happy with me instead, he is such a Mr. Popular." The leader managed to achieve a double negative impact; he lost the respect of the underperforming subordinate and also lost the respect of the people whose names he pulled out in the conversation – a classic example of a leader throwing people under the bus.

iii.   **Lack of accountability – culture of passing the bulk.**

The habit of making indecisive decisions gives birth to a major problem – lack of accountability. As things remain to be gray without clear directions and

boundaries, people misuse the situation to pass work around to others by claiming that it is not their job. Everyone refuses to take accountability and responsibility. Usually, the work will end up on the lap of an innocent victim who has nothing to do with the work in the first place. This simply happens because the person is the weakest in the chain; he or she is not loud enough to push it back to others. This is what we refer to as "the survival of the fittest". Such unfairness happened because the leader is unable to decide and assign the work to the correct person, just because the leader wants to be popular.

iv. **Curse of the performer.**

In an environment where things are gray and people do not want to take accountability, the ones who usually end up becoming victims of the situation are the performers. Because there are so many things unattended and unsettled, leaders can only depend on the performers to clean things up. While the ones who are supposed to be responsible for the matter gets away with murder, the performers need to come in, work extra hard and clean up the mess. This unfair situation is what we refer to as the "curse of the performer"; being penalised for doing a good job and expected to cover for other people. Again, such a situation happens because the leader decides to be popular rather than effective – the leader doesn't realise that he is slowly killing the top performers.

v. **Empty promises.**

Popular chasing leaders have a high tendency of promising great things to people, especially during the initial period when the leaders desperately want to win the people's hearts. This is commonly seen in leaders running campaigns for political candidacy – they promise the sky if they were to win

the elections, but when the time actually comes for them to fulfill their part of the bargain, they fail to do so. Instead of becoming popular, they lose the trust of the people.

Nobody in the right mind would be happy to be in such an unhealthy environment. Instead of having loyal and devoted followers, popular chasing leaders end up with a bunch of frustrated people, who eventually stop supporting them and look for a way out.

Being likable is not wrong but let us be likable for the right reasons i.e. for being effective. Popularity reduces over time but effectiveness leaves a mark in history.

It's not the popularity that makes a difference, it's the impact we leave that does, which we can easily achieve through effectiveness. Always be wary of the trap of popularity if ever we want to be remembered as a *great* leader.

> *Confidence is not "they will like me".*
> *Confidence is "I'll be fine if they don't."*
> Unknown

2. Politics

Politics in life is unavoidable; it remains an important component of our life – it is a survival skill. Basically, politics, taken from the Greek word *politikos*, is the practice and theory of influencing other people. Eventually, it leads to the use of power by a person (or a leader, to be specific) to affect the behavior of the people under his responsibility.

Even though politics is required in life, too much of it is unhealthy. We will end up not knowing what is real and what is not, and not being able to

differentiate between who are our friends and who are our enemies. We will be blinded by the political curtains laid down in front of us.

This is why it is important for leaders to be aware of the political conditions around them so that they are able to manage the situation appropriately. There will always be people around waiting for an opportunity to take advantage of a leader's power.

Politics and power are closely related. In short, we can say that politics is a means to obtain and utilise power. If used in the right context, politics could change the world. But in reality, politics are often practised in a rather dirty and brutal manner. Backstabbing, badmouthing, slanders – these are some of the common negative practices in politics, which are driven and powered by human greed.

In a position of power, leaders are bound to face politics in most parts of their lives. There would always be people who would try to catch the attention of a leader and by all means try to be in the leader's good books hoping that one day, they would be able to benefit from the good relationship they have developed with the leader.

These kinds of people usually manipulate and maneuver their way through continuous praises, intentionally given to make leaders feel good about themselves, which eventually makes them feel arrogant.

> *Don't be afraid of criticism;*
> *especially sincere ones made with the best of intentions.*
> *But be afraid of praises that make you arrogant!*
> Mufti Ismail Menk

Although arrogant people appear to be tough, they are the easiest to manipulate. Why is that so? Because it is easy to make them happy – a simple

praise melts their hearts and when that happens, they become vulnerable, making it easy for them to be taken advantage of – this is the true danger of politics.

Leaders need to be able to manage politics around them so that they don't end up becoming victims of the system. Politics can cause a leader's credibility to crumble overnight; it can kill people's trust with just one wrong move.

Among the main reasons people lose trust in their leaders is when they perceive their leaders to practise favouritism, which makes them feel that they have been treated unfairly. Favouritism is a product of unmanaged politics. Correcting the damage done from favouritism is never easy as changing people's perception is difficult, especially if it is a negative one.

At the same time, we must admit that it is natural for humans to favour one person over another. Among our first social interaction in life is having a best friend, which simply proves that it is normal for us to favour certain people more than others. The same applies to our family and acquaintances.

However, for leaders, we need to be extra careful and sensitive about this law of nature. Yes, we cannot run away from the human nature of favouring certain people but at the same time, we need to be fair, or at least perceived to be as fair. Treat the ones who perform better as special instead of favouring someone just because we like the person. There is a clear difference between the two. Although, the actual implementation is still subjective and debatable, it still allows us to manage unhealthy politics to a minimal level.

3. Power

Power is the thrust of leadership; it gives leaders the necessary authority to carry out the role of a leader. We have touched on the relationship between

leaders and power numerous times throughout the chapter. Basically, it tells us that the biggest challenge for leaders is how they exercise their power.

Despite it being closely related to other factors such as politics, power is a negative factor affecting leadership on its own and it may well be the most dangerous one. Power can change a person, even to the core of a person's character.

> *Nearly all men can stand adversity,*
> *but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.*
> Abraham Lincoln

Power provides the ability for people to do things that they could not do before. Each time we achieve success through power, our confidence builds up and we start to hunger for more. We then become greedier knowing that with power, there are fewer barriers stopping us from achieving our desires. This is when the problem starts – power, at least in an unmanaged form, triggers greed and selfishness. We start to forget the reason and purpose of us becoming a leader in the first place.

> *Power is always dangerous.*
> *Power attracts the worst and corrupts the best.*
> Edward Abbey, Author

As leaders, we need to continuously be wary of the dangers of power. As long as we don't give in to our own selfishness and be consciously careful to not put our self-interest above others, we should be able to avoid any misuse of power. Misuse of power only gives us temporary satisfaction. One thing for sure, there would definitely be no satisfaction in the hereafter as we would be held

accountable for every single misuse of power including the smallest ones, which we will be punished accordingly for it in the fairest manner.

But even here in this world, leaders who misuse power usually does not stay long. We have seen the downfall of so many world leaders throughout history due to their misuse of power – royalties, government leaders, dictators – due to their crimes such as bribery and misappropriation of funds.

These crimes can never go unnoticed forever. There will be a time when the people would stand up and fight once they are unable to tolerate the continuous unfairness. There are various examples in history we can refer to such as the French revolution against the royal family in the late 18th century and the Arab Spring revolution, which began in late 2010 till mid-2012 (for most of the Arab countries, some continued on after that).

The best way for leaders to manage their natural hunger for power is humility. We just need to remember that the power conferred to us is not entirely ours but is lent to us by Allah for us to do what we are required to do. Eventually, the power would be returned to its Creator and we are here only as an intermediary to serve a bigger purpose i.e. to serve others in the name of Allah.

Becoming A Great Leader

Everyone is a leader in their own capacity; we have established this fact earlier in the chapter. The next fact we need to establish is that everyone can be a great leader but it takes a lot of practice and patience.

Becoming a great and effective leader is a journey; it requires us to acquire hands-on experiences that can teach us to become a better leader day by day. The journey would never stop as we continuously learn through the different leadership situations and scenarios that we face daily.

We will grow and mature through these lessons but it does not make us the ultimate expert in leadership. But then again, we don't really need to be the best leader; we just need to be a great one, especially for the people under our care.

Although the lessons on leadership are never ending, we can still become a great leader if we continuously assess our leadership practices against the driving factors that we have discussed – people, principle and passion as well as popularity, politics and power. As long as we are able to tackle and manage these factors in our leadership practices, we should turn out fine.

The best method to gauge our effectiveness as a leader is to look at how our people see us. The best of leaders are the ones who are loved by their people for the right reasons – for being fair, effective, warm, caring etc. People would sincerely want the best for their leaders.

The worst leaders are the ones who the people do not want to be associated with. They are leaders that people don't have anything good to say about them. Let us pray hard that we will never fall into this category of leaders.

> *Umar bin Al-Khattab narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Shall I not inform you of the best of your leaders and the worst of them: The best of them are those whom you love and they love you, you supplicate for them, and they supplicate for you. And the evilest of your leaders are those who hate you, and you hate them, and they curse you and you curse them."*
>
> At-Tirmidhi

May we be given the guidance to become effective leaders, equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to serve our role. May we also be given the strength and perseverance to carry the great responsibilities that comes with the title – an *amanah* entrusted to us by Allah.