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Leaders Yet Servants

Robert Greenleaf – father of servant leadership describes a servant leader, as “The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first”. While that was about servant leaders, not much different is the story about Social Entrepreneurs. This chapter evaluates, how Social Entrepreneurs fit the frame of Greenleaf’s servant leadership.

Like many other traits, the leadership traits of the social entrepreneurs are also unlike their business counterparts. Social Entrepreneurs bring in a few exceptional traits of leadership that help in getting themselves closer to the target audience. The behavioral and the attitudinal tendencies of the Social Entrepreneurs reflect more of servanthip than leadership. Social Entrepreneurs assume leadership with the sense of responsibility, accountability and compelling resoluteness to improve the society. Hence, the style of Social Entrepreneurs is more like servant leaders than any other.

Entrepreneurs with Servant Nature

The earlier understanding was that entrepreneurs are into making money, whereas a social worker is involved in social service banking on charities, donations. An entrepreneur being a servant leader used to sound like a paradox. However, entrepreneurial ideas are no more

confined to making money. The rise of the breed called *Social Entrepreneurs* illustrates that entrepreneurship and service orientation can go together. The trend is changing and a larger community of entrepreneurs is embracing the servant leadership – the much debated school of thought on the grounds of practicability – while observing the change in the past two decades it can be noticed that earlier social service revolved around practices like philanthropy, donation, charities, sponsorships etc., and then they offer some services at no cost or subsidized cost to people. Hence, the service was at the mercy of the donor's availability. The scope of service orientation has broadened by leaps and bounds. School of servant leadership has graduated from philanthropy to entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial aspect involved in the social service is gaining more prominence than earlier. The cost aspect is being paid due attention. Cost recovery is becoming more important.

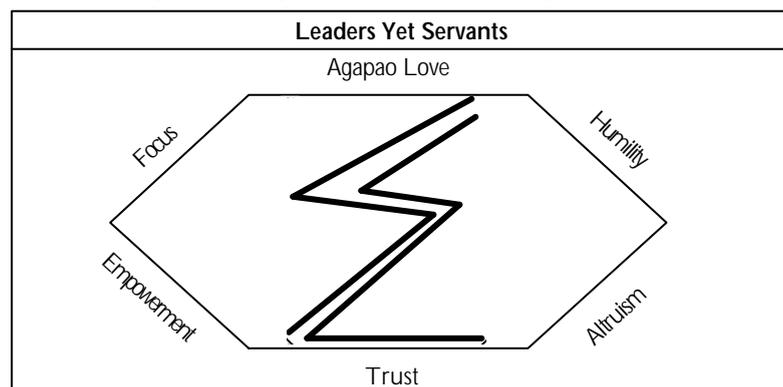
Opining on this, Dr. Rajagopalan of TIDE says "One might work on grants; still it is not 100% grant. People would want to recover cost that is one trend. Financially, social sector would like to be independent." This is perhaps how the Social Entrepreneurship is bringing in the co-existence of both the schools of thought; Entrepreneurship and Service orientation.

One more reason of Social Entrepreneurship and service orientation going together is the growing level of professionalism in social areas. Professionalism has been more in managing enterprises whereas in social service, since focus was on charity, the internal management of these organizations were not patterned on entrepreneurial style. However, with the emergence of Social Entrepreneurship, professionalism is now a crucial feature of social works too. One more important factor that has brought the entrepreneurship and service orientation on a common platform called Social Entrepreneurship is dropping average age of people entering this sector. Dr. Rajagopalan says, "Earlier somebody would work in

formal sectors for some years, he gains experience and also secure his future as there is always uncertainty associated with the social sector. So when you are about 50 years old you feel that now it is the time to move to pursue social service. But Social Entrepreneurship has paved a platform to view social service as the first occupation, as a career.”

The Social Servant Leaders

Robert Greenleaf in year 1977 had coined the term servant leadership and identified a set of attributes that define a servant leader. However, the practicability of servant leadership has always been a subject of debate. There are a handful of companies that claim to be exercising servant leadership at the workplace. However, during the course of our research on Social Entrepreneurs, many attributes that Social Entrepreneurs have been practising bore a close resemblance with Robert Greenleaf's school of thought. The resemblance could be attributed to the very objective of a Social Entrepreneur to serve the society by generating sustainable source of earned income. While appreciating the reflections of the principles of servant leadership in the action of a Social Entrepreneur, a part of research focused for comparing and advocating Robert Greenleaf's principles of servant leadership in the context of the leadership style of the Social Entrepreneurs. The attributes that weave the common thread through Social Entrepreneurship and servant leadership are:



Focus

Servant leadership is more about focus (Stone Russell and Patterson). The very focus of the servant leadership is on the followers. The servant leader would be more interested in the interest of the people first than the organization's. The servant leader's behavior towards the employees suggests that the reason behind their very existence is their followers. In other words, the focus of servant leaders revolves around several aspects like well-being, motivation, health, rights, etc., of the followers.

Undeniably, similar is our observation when it comes to Social Entrepreneurs. As discussed above, the advent of Social Entrepreneurs has demystified the meaning of the terms like social work and philanthropy. Social Entrepreneurs are certainly among the pioneers who played a vibrant role in bringing the aspects like social work and philanthropy by propelling a paradigm shift of focus from material to men. The focus, the vision, the missions, the goals, and the objectives (Box 1) of the Social Entrepreneurs are clearly and candidly designed in the interest of the people's well being. Thus, this establishes the symmetry between the principle of servant leadership and the focus of Social Entrepreneurs.

Focus of Social Entrepreneurs: Reflecting Servant Leadership

Ravi Agarwal Srishto: Toxics Link

Ravi Agarwal is changing the urban waste management system in India by involving local communities and the informal sector of rag pickers in waste disposal, and by advocating for a cleaner materials policy in industry.

Adriana Abraham Perez: CERODIH

In Uruguay, Adriana Abraham is creating an innovative and comprehensive center to combine service to street people with programs to prevent vulnerable populations from falling into this condition.

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<p>Kedar Ranjan Banerjee: National Institute of Behavioural Science (NIBS) Kedar Banerjee, one of India's only 600 psychiatrists, is developing a preventive, therapeutic, and rehabilitative approach to the growing problem of drug addiction and mental disorders. He is also demonstrating how to reach those most affected – young slum dwellers—starting in North Calcutta.</p> <p>Didid Adidananta: Humana Didid Adidananta, 27 years old, is helping street children develop viable futures. He is working in the urban areas of Yogyakarta.</p> <p>Arvind Kerjival: Parivartan Arvind Kejriwal uses a new state law to fight corruption in India, training ordinary citizens to secure transparency and accountability at all levels of government.</p>
<i>Courtesy: www.ashoka.org</i>

Agapao Love

Agapao Love is one of the chief components of the Servant Leadership Model. Agapao Love has been defined as moral and respectful consideration and treatment of others (patterson). Another advocate of servant leadership – Winston defines Agapao Love as “Love in a social or moral sense, embracing the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety.” Winston also advocates the seven principles that characterise the Agapao love in a person: which according to our research are mostly found and certainly are the august assets of the Social Entrepreneurs. Those seven characteristics of Agapao love are:

- Humility or the teachableness of the leader
- Genuine concern for others
- Controlled discipline
- Seeking what is right and good for the organization (society)
- Showing mercy in beliefs and actions of all people
- Focusing on the purpose of the organization
- Creating and sustaining peace among the target communities.

Humility

Humility may be defined as the non-overestimation of one's merits (Hare). Humility is the common trait we found in most of the Social Entrepreneurs we had interviewed during the research. Social Entrepreneurs are more interested in what to do than who is involved behind the task. They are not interested in hogging the attention after the task is accomplished. Social Entrepreneurs are not self-focused; instead their focus is always on others. For a Social Entrepreneur, every accomplishment paves a road towards another social challenge. In this context a Social Entrepreneur's behaviour also bears a resemblance with the description of Jim Collin's level 5 leader (Box 1).

Box 1

Jim Collins defines a level 5 leader as an individual who blends extreme personal humility with intense professional will. He puts level 5 leadership as the highest level of leadership in the executive capabilities. Level 5 leadership is based on the belief that results can be achieved by voluntary respect towards people, selflessness by the leader and compelling commitment towards the goal. Jim Collins puts the formula of level 5 leadership as:

Right people + Humility + Professional will = Success

In the words of Jim Collins, "Level 5 leaders never wanted to become larger-than-life heroes. They never aspired to be put on a pedestal or become unreachable icons. They were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results". This explanation goes in lines with the servant leadership, highlighting the characteristics of voluntary subordination, humility, and a risk-steady determination. The servant leaders also exhibit the 'window and mirror' explanation given by Jim Collins which says that the level 5 leaders look out of the window to recognize the factors (other people, and resources) behind success and look into the mirror (himself) to find faults that resulted in failure. Hence the quest for level 5 leadership can be a litmus test for the practice of servant leadership.

Humility is one of the touchstones of the Servant leaders too. Humility in the context of servant leadership is explained as the peaceful virtue that rejects self glorification (Lawrence, 2002). Other

characteristics attributed to a servant leader which are also in symmetry with the Social Entrepreneurs are fair, humble, negative self interest, accountability, listening, patience to listen, open to criticism & advices, consensus oriented, compelling modesty, negative reaction to public adulation, calm determination, setting up of successors for great success.

Altruism

The term altruism was first coined by the French philosopher Auguste Comte which was later inducted into the English Dictionary as *altruism*. Altruism basically means the set of moral acts intended to promote the happiness of others.

The literature on altruism as a trait of the servant leaders defines the term at the individual level as 'helping others just for the sake of helping'. Researchers believe that altruism benefits the other person however often risk or sacrifice is involved in altruism. Often this risk or sacrifice is against one's own personal interest (Monroe and Kaplan; 1994 and 2000 respectively). According to Monroe (1994), altruism is not merely about good intentions but is more about genuine concern for the welfare of others. From the survey we carried out among the Social Entrepreneurs, our findings, suggest that the vision, the mission and the objectives of the Social Entrepreneurs are in perfect accordance with this definition of altruism, which is one of the components of a servant leader. Social Entrepreneurs are genuinely moved by a few crippling issues worrying the society like poverty, homelessness, disability, unemployment, illiteracy, systemic flaws etc. and thus the Social Entrepreneurs jump on the bandwagon of service with a clear focus of serving the society. Thus our research prompts us to attach the tag of altruism to the Social Entrepreneurs qualifying them a step closer to servant leadership.

What it Takes to be a Servant Leader?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do people believe that you are willing to sacrifice your own self-interest for the good of the group? • Do people believe that you want to hear their ideas and will value them? • Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them? • Do people come to you when the chips are down or when something traumatic has happened in their lives? • Do others believe that you have a strong awareness for what is going on? • Do others follow your requests because they want to as opposed to because they “have to”? • Do others communicate their ideas and vision for the organization when you are around? • Do others have confidence in your ability to anticipate the future and its consequences?
<p><i>Source: www.ianr.edu</i></p>

Trust

Collins (2001) says that leadership is as much about trust as it is about vision. Patterson – an advocate on servant leadership claims that trust is another building block for a servant leader. Indeed it is only when the trust factor is established between the leaders and the followers, can the goal be achieved. And the trust must necessarily be a two way mechanism i.e., the leader’s trust in the followers is as important as the follower’s in the leader. Servant leadership’s philosophy with trust as a building block has been defined as ‘helping people to feel comfortable in an open environment where everyone has a voice and everyone works collaboratively and collectively while using skills such as truth telling, trusting etc’.

Considering the interviews and the secondary data about various Social Entrepreneurs, we can see an absolute symmetry between the definition of trust by the servant leadership advocates and the leadership style of the Social Entrepreneurs. Especially, microcredit is a buzz activity in the arena of Social Entrepreneurship, which is based on

the sole ingredient called trust. The huge success of the organizations like Grameen bank is only due to the lenders' confidence in the borrowers and the borrowers trust in the lenders. The sources of Grameen bank say, "Most distinctive feature of Grameen credit is that it is not based on any collateral, or legally enforceable contracts. It is based on "trust", not on legal procedures and system." (www.grameen-info.org). The Social Entrepreneurs promote the trust factor among the target communities by maintaining absolute transparency and total accountability towards all their tasks. Thus this commonality of trust between the servant leader further projects a Social Entrepreneur as a servant leader.

Empowerment

Empowerment is one of the most pivotal components of servant leadership. The fact that Robert Greenleaf was called father of empowerment movement adds to the importance of empowerment as a practice of a servant leader. Sharing of power is spirit behind the practice of servant leadership. Empowerment has been defined by the servant leadership advocates as gesture of entrusting power to others.

In chapter 6 we had an elaborate discussion on empowerment as a touchstone of the Social Entrepreneurs. Social Entrepreneurship in various sectors have been exercising empowerment by educating, coaching, and guiding the target communities towards sustainable social solutions.

The Social Entrepreneurs like Prof. Muhammad Yunus (Grameen bank), Arvind Kejriwal (Parivartan), Dr. Rajat Mitra (Swanchetan) have been serving various causes of society with a common weapon called Empowerment. With the inclusion of empowerment, the Social Entrepreneur may be said to be in complete conformance with Robert Greenleaf's Servant leadership. And thus we can infer that Social Entrepreneurs are the leaders; yet servants of society.

Dr. V – Exemplary Social Servant Leader

He is an eye surgeon, with a clear vision, with a knack of delivering perfection, despite crippling obstacles. With a perfect skill of converting weaknesses into opportunities, this person as a beginner-obstetrician contracted rheumatoid arthritis and became unable to carry out delivery of babies and went on with his further learning in ophthalmology. He was none other than Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy, affectionately known as Dr. V. In addition to finding a career in ophthalmology Dr. V also aligned his intentions of community service to the activity. Since then, Dr. V did not look back, and went on performing the eye surgery and gifted vision to the blind. According to Greenleaf, servant leaders are leaders who put other people's needs, aspirations and interests above their own. The servant leader's deliberate desire is to serve others. Dr. V's leadership approach towards his community-oriented profession was not much different from Greenleaf's definition of Servant Leadership, which is evident from his determination to continue serving the community even after retirement (1976). Soon after his retirement he started an eye hospital accommodating 12 beds, in his brother's home in Madurai, India. As a result of his perseverance, servant attitude, and dedication to his profession, today, he runs five hospitals that perform more than 180,000 operations each year. Point worth noting is that seventy percent of his patients are charity based; the remaining 30% contribute a modest amount for his services recognising his world-class quality of service. Since inception, i.e., in 1976, Dr. V's service has gifted sight to more than 1 million people in India. Nevertheless the hospital is equally concerned about its revenue flows and it is surprising to note that the hospital secures a gross margin of 40%, despite the fact that 70% of the patients pay nothing or close to nothing. And more importantly the hospital does not entertain donations. Dr. V has done it by constantly cutting costs, increasing efficiency, and building his market. Dr. V has managed to curtail the costs in the area of service. The hospital's own Aurolab, started in 1992, began the production of high-quality, low-cost intraocular lenses, to avoid the extra costs. Aurolab today produces 700,000 lenses per year, and Aravind itself uses a quarter of the production. The rest are exported to countries all over the world—except to the United States.

Dr. V's Leadership Approach

For Dr. V, leadership begins with the crucial tenets of self-knowledge and a perfect vision. His question to himself before he starts to work, "How can my work make me a better human being and make a better world?" That question and his resulting leadership style recognizes him as a servant leader. Dr. V's vision and his advocacy on the style of working in a service oriented way has spread across the Aravind Hospital and is adopted by all the doctors. At Aravind Eye Hospital, the work place is sacred, where people are always ready to offer selfless service with love and care. Dr. V underscores on a point that hospitals should have a spiritual, soothing and friendly atmosphere. He feels, this can only be made to happen with dedication of the staff, which is the hallmark of Aravind culture. "Even when there is an unexpected increase in the number of cases on a particular day, we attend to them on the same day," Dr. V says. On an average a doctor performs 20-30 operations a day. "Two qualities for leadership are to be a visionary and to know execution," says Dr. V. "If I can go from consciousness to higher consciousness, then I'll be a leader."

As observed in the discussion, the behavioral traits of Social Entrepreneurs indeed bear a close resemblance with the principles of the servant leadership, thus giving rise to social servant leaders.

At a glance...

- Social Entrepreneurs bring in a few exceptional traits of leadership that help them in getting themselves closer to the target audience.
- Social Entrepreneurs assume leadership with the sense of responsibility, accountability and compelling resoluteness to improve the society.
- Many attributes that Social Entrepreneurs have been practising bore a close resemblance with Robert Greenleaf's Servant Leadership.
- Servant Leadership is all about focus and so is the priority of the Social Entrepreneurs.
- The characteristics of Agapao love (a feature of Servant Leaders) are in accordance with the behavioral traits of the Social Entrepreneurs. The characteristics are Humility, Genuine Concern, Discipline, Seeking right and good for the people, Showing mercy, and Creating and Sustaining peace.
- Social Entrepreneurs are genuinely moved by a few crippling issues like poverty, homelessness, disability, unemployment, etc. which make them altruistic towards society and so are the servant leaders.
- Social Entrepreneurs promote the trust factor among the target communities by maintaining absolute transparency and total accountability towards all their tasks.
- Empowerment is a chief tenet of the Social Entrepreneurs and one of the principles of the servant leaders as well.

