


Chapter 5

Leadership Lessons From Ratan N. Tata

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ABSTRACT

Ratan Tata is an Indian industrialist and philanthropist. He is a visionary leader and managing change is second nature to him. His leadership exudes confidence in others and has inspired many to become leaders in his own company, and through his service-oriented nature, influenced several others outside of his organizational space. Tata's leadership commands respect throughout the world, which is highlighted by the numerous prestigious awards bestowed upon him. This chapter aims to present and explain his leadership practices through case scenarios. These lessons on leadership are transferable and may guide future leaders of tomorrow to lead our world with wisdom, dignity, humility, and authenticity.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the elevation of human condition. Peter F. Drucker, also known as the father of modern management, defined Leadership as lifting an individual's vision to higher sights, raising of performance to an advanced standard and building an individual's personality beyond their normal limitations. He argued that leadership is about knowing when to give an order and when to treat someone like a partner (Drucker, 2002). For Drucker (1992), a leader should view leadership as a responsibility rather than a rank and privilege. He further stated that leaders of tomorrow would have a complex job. They would not be able to lead by charisma

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alone but will need to think through the fundamentals so that other people can work effectively under their guidance.

Adding to the above, according to the article, *Understanding Leadership* in Harvard Business Review (2004), leadership is “the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistants.” Any individual who successfully organizes human collaborators to achieve a particular end is a leader. Therefore, a great leader is someone who can do the above on a consistent basis, day after day, year after year, in a wide variety of circumstances. An influential leader is one who understands his or her fellow workers and the relationship of their individual goals to group goals.

Therefore, this book chapter intends to present leadership lessons of a seasoned business leader from India. Through examination of mini organizational case studies, his leadership approaches will be put forth in this research. Tata group is the organization chosen for this study. The aim of the research is to present lessons from Mr. Ratan Tata’s (Emeritus Chairman, Tata group) esteemed leadership. This knowledge may support contemporary managers in improving their leadership practices and better navigate the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world of business.

The purpose of this research is to educate managers and inform their practices on how to lead with an impact, wisdom, dignity, humanity, efficiency and effectiveness. Ultimately, ideal leadership is an individual’s ability to take a group and drive them towards a common shared purpose. Such leaders raise and develop other under their tutelage to become future leaders of tomorrow. This research suggests approaches to exemplary leadership, so that managers can lead suitably in challenging circumstances.

To understand the environment and context of Mr. Ratan Tata’s leadership, the following section of this research presents a brief overview on contemporary India and the organization background of the Tata group.

OVERVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA

India is a country in South Asia. It covers the seventh-largest area by land. Being a peninsula, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal surround it. Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India share a maritime border with Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia. Additionally, India shares land borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

This sophisticated land, self-contained its political and cultural arena since the Indus valley civilization. Its present day capital is New Delhi, and the government is a constitutional republic representing a diverse population. One-sixth of the world’s total population resides in India and it is the second most populous country in the world after China. While India suffers from various external (security threats) and

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