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A Tale of an Emotional Leader, His Fellows and Millions of Stakeholders

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Abstract:
This paper is built on a leadership journey of a popular leader who was involved to change the social and economic life of unprivileged community people of developing world. It discourses the starting, picking-up, paradigm shifting, falling-down of the leader and the consequences of failure. The paper discusses different theoretical perspectives of emotional leadership and shows how un-assessed and un-controlled emotions override strategies critical to achieve the leadership goals. It shows how overwhelming emotions of leader with power and unearned resources can be detrimental to leader, follower groups and other stakeholders. Building upon the case discussed, it offers a number of theoretical propositions for leadership knowledge domain and indicative learning points for practitioners.

Keywords: Emotional leadership, development organization, leadership failure

1. Introduction

Since time immemorial, individuals characterized as *stars* in fellow groups, communities or in broader perspectives have been playing influential roles with successes and failures around the world. In one sense, the history of world is the history of interventions and roles of that influential ones, the leaders (Chemers, 1997).Within the discourse of leadership literature the terms *leader* and *leadership* have been defined in numerous ways from different viewpoints. Some of the most commonly used definitions are 'leader is someone who has followers' (Drucker, 1996), 'leadership is influence, nothing more or less' (Maxwell, 1998), 'leadership is a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task' (Chemers, 1997). In academic arena, a long standing tradition of studying the types and styles of leadership, characteristics of leaders, sources of the traits of leaders, and the causes of successes and failures is there within the scholars of management and social sciences. This paper looks into the relevant theoretical perspectives of leadership, a trajectory of a popular leader, and his success and failure. It identifies and discusses the reasons and implications of failure, and develops a set of propositions for leadership knowledge domain.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

The discourse of leadership studies and theory building are elongated, and hence, the leadership knowledge domain has been enriched with enormous theories by the scholars from different parts of the world. Sanskrit literature, Plato's *Republic*, Plutarch's *Lives,* and especially the writings of Thomas Carlyle and Francis Galton have prompted decades of research and theory building on leadership. Years of studies and observations indicate that explaining leadership is a complex aspect, and it cannot be boiled down to a single rule like equation. However, leadership theories offer numerous viewpoints but most of them do not contradict among themselves, rather they complement each other (Silva, 2015; Glynn and Raffaelli, 2010). Meuser et al. (2016) argues that majority if not all, leadership theories can coalesce around six focal leadership theories: charismatic theory, transformational theory, leadership and diversity, strategic theory, participative leadership, and trait theory. Most theories of the 20th century believe that big leaders were born with the qualities or traits, they were not made by the circumstances. However, this belief does not underpin all studies in the discourse of leadership, alternative beliefs are also there. Although there has been a long standing debate about 'born or made', most scholars agree to a point that traits of an individual do not significantly change from situation to situation (Howell, 2012).

The seminal works of Stogdill and Mann (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959) identified that some traits were common across a number of studies but overall studies suggest that individuals who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations. Subsequently, situational approach has been stabilized where it is believed that leadership is no longer characterized as an enduring individual trait. One person can be very successful in one situation as a leader but may be failed in another situation. This approach has been influencing leadership studies for decades. However, in an early leadership study at Ohio State University found that followers can show 'task oriented' behavior and 'consideration'. The 'task oriented' behavior is the extent to which a leader defines the roles of leader and followers, initiates actions, organizes followers activities, and defines how tasks are to be accomplished by the followers. The 'consideration' is the extent to which a leader exhibits concern for the welfare of the followers and the leader's ability of

developing interpersonal relationship with the followers (Aamodt, 2016). This finding denotes that followers may move with the leaders with these two factors that may have implications to the overall achievements of the leadership.

Emotion and emotional intelligence of leaders are the comparatively recent focus on leadership studies. It is generally considered that the emotion and emotional intelligence were coined in leadership studies with a PhD thesis of Wayne Payne in 1985 titled *A Study of Emotion: Developing Emotional Intelligence* (Suciu et al., 2010). However, in the later time the influential models of emotional intelligence were developed by Glossop and Mitchell (2005), Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004), and Goleman (2004). Commonly, it is believed that the concepts of emotional intelligence are the ability to identify, assess and manage both one's own emotions, and emotions of others in order to successfully achieve the goals of leadership. Glossop and Mitchell (2005, p. 10) assert, "emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth". In defining emotional intelligence, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004, p. 197) emphasis on the reasoning of emotion of oneself and others and defines emotional intelligence as "the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth". The authors argue that different people process emotional information differently with the different capacities, and emotions with same information vary among them. Goleman (2004) asserts that emotion and emotional intelligence of a leader should have self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Author argues that these characteristics of a leader are critical to achieve the goals of a leader in most circumstances.

Emotions of leaders and follower groups have overwhelming influences to the whole climate of leadership. Hence, the unassessed and uncontrolled emotions, in most cases drive leaders and followers out of their strategic frame of achieving goals. The strategy formulation also can be influenced by emotion, and consequently it may yield an unrealistic strategy. 'Heart over Head' tends to drive leaders to make impulsive, feelings-based and unbalanced decisions (Kokemuller, 2018).

3. The Tale

David Chapman (not the real name) was born well before the liberation war in a moderately well-off family located in a peripheral area of an industrial city of Bangladesh. From the boyhood, David was sharp, knowledge seeker, and extraordinarily good looking among his friends. He studied in good schools and university of the country but until his first job after completion of his MSc he did not involve himself in any mentionable leadership activities. When he completed his university education, Bangladesh became independent from the regime of Pakistan. He got job in Bangladesh Civil Service but did not continue. He joined in an international not-for-profit development organization working for social and economic development of marginalized people of this war-affected underdeveloped country.

While working in the rural area, David became emotional to see the poverty, social unawareness and inequality. He became strongly motivated to work for the development of this situation, and thought that he took the right decision about his field of work leaving the opportunity of working in government service. The foreign delegates of his organization became impressed to observe the motivation and enthusiasm about development works, honesty, leadership quality and extraordinary communication and language proficiencies of David. They started promoting him with the objective that David would be running the organization in Bangladesh and they would gradually leave the country. David profoundly played his role of running the organization and impressed many other funding organizations with his motivation, leadership quality and innovative development works. During mid-1970s, with the support of his foreign counterparts and other funding agencies he was successful to start a new organization to fight against extreme poverty, social unawareness and inequality.

Young David started working with his new organization and started collecting young volunteers from different parts of the country. Seeing the charismatic personality, power of motivation and development analysis of David, the fellow volunteers were so impressed and motivated to work in development field under the leadership of David without regular salary. The motivation and dedication of David's fellows were so strong. Instances where there that the fellows used to leave home for several days for development works without informing their family members, and used to work until the late night with unprivileged community people. David was successful to motivate his fellows like they were in a war of making a world free from poverty and social discrimination. Besides playing his profound leadership roles, David himself used to work with the unprevailed community with his fellow members.

The process of joining fellows and expansion of area coverage were going on. On the other side, David was very successful to attract donor community to support his development works. Foreign donors were so impressed to see his charismatic personality and leadership quality, excellent communication skill, in-depth development analysis and devotion to implement development programs. The impressed western donor community formed donor consortium only for funding David's organization. With the use of tremendous funding opportunity and devotion of highly motivated fellows, David expanded his development programs almost all over the country. His development philosophy and model were the subject of research and learning for many researchers and development practitioners in country and abroad. Besides all sorts of economic and social development programs suitable for the community, one of the cornerstones of David's development approach was to organize unprivileged men and women and form people's organizations to establish their rights in the society. Under the leadership of David, thousands of his fellows used to organize millions of unprivileged

men and women in the forms of primary groups and federations across the country. All the group members used to respect David and found him as an emancipating leader for freeing them from the economic and social oppressions.

Things were moving well. David became the elected Chairperson of ADAB (Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh), the apex body of development organizations of the country for consecutive three terms and became the elected President of ICSW (International Council for Social Welfare). With the financial support of impressed funding agencies David started providing financial and development supports with the name of '*Assistance to other Organizations*' to many other small and midsized development organizations of the country. With his financial support and charismatic leadership quality he became the leader of the leaders of almost all development organizations of the country. David's leadership focus started moving beyond the conventional development arena to political arena.

With all of his achievements in development arena, during the late 1990s David entered into party politics of the country. He called upon his followers all over the country to move to Dhaka. He organized an open public mobilization in Dhaka city and addressed about his political ideology to more than one million followers. With the huge mobilization and apparent support from his followers he became more confident about his political success. David started involving his fellows, followers, leaders of other development organizations and the networks that he made throughout his career to achieve his political objectives. With a very strong emotion driven move, he deployed huge physical and financial resources of his organization including the regular savings funds of his employees. Some of his senior management staffs tried to prevent David from his political journey showing the harmful consequences for him and his organization. David was not convinced. On the other hand, many of his fellows, followers and leaders of other development organizations were opportunistically supporting his political journey mostly with the objective of getting closer to David and enjoying the financial resources that David was expensing without records for his political movement. The opportunistic group became closer to David and the senior management staff who tried to prevent David became non well-wishers, even enemies to David in conspiracy games. Emotional David did not understand that or did not want to understand because of his political zeal.

With all of his resources David started helping one of the top political parties with which his political ideology matched well. During that time this political party was in opposition in the parliament. In political movements, ignoring the threats of rival ruling political party, David played extreme role against ruling party that may not be played even by any leader of the opposition party he was supporting. Because of the role that David played against the ruling party the government blocked all of his foreign funding. The opposition party was enjoying the role of David in favor of it and provided political supports to keep him up. David's desire was to enter into that party in a good position and get nomination for the next general election. Presumably, many of the existing leaders of that party did not like that David would suddenly hold a big position in the party and get nomination for general election. David, as an entrant in political arena did not understand that, and finally he was neither successful in getting the nomination for general election nor got a good party position. Instantly, emotional David opened a new political party and started campaign throughout his network across the country. In the general election of 2008only he stood from his party in three constituencies and did election even against the political party he supported earlier. In all three constituencies, David failed shamefully with unmentionable votes. A new phenomenon emerged.

The political party that David used to support won in the general election of 2008 and stood against David as he did election against the candidates of the party too. The previous ruling party had been extremely against of David as David worked against them previously. All the political parties, civil society, press and media community and general people found that David is an extremely unpopular person on the scale of votes. David became valueless to all of them. On the other side, because of the politicization involving almost whole organization, the management of his organization became dysfunctional from top to grassroots level. Angry David started blaming to his fellows worked for his election that they did not work properly and because of that he failed in the election. Organizational politics adversely increased between groups in his organization. Microfinance recovery of his organization drastically fallen down. Income from microfinance operation was the only source of income as the foreign funding was stopped previously. Financial crisis intensified severely in his organization of about 8,000 regular salaried employees. Although a substantial worth of fixed assets was there in the organization but the government agencies concerned about microfinance program funding and regulation imposed embargo against selling the fixed assets. Knowledgeable professional employees left the organization, and David became surrounded by unprofessional politically motivated opportunistic people. Angry and emotional David continued taking drastic wrong decisions in managing organization, managing employees groups and organizational politics. Employees grouping and organizational politics continued and intensified. At one point of time he was removed from his organization by large group of fellow employees. A small group was somehow managing a small scale microfinance operation only and just surviving with a few employees. David started staying at home and facing different types of legal actions from government, political activists, microfinance funding and regulatory bodies, and even from employees and grassroots stakeholders for destroying their savings funds. David and his world famous development organization fell into a black hole as collapsed stars.

4. Theoretical Propositions

The David's leadership trajectory offers some theoretical propositions for the leadership knowledge domain. Some of which agree and support to some long standing theories of the discourse of leadership, and some suggest a couple of learning points for contingency leadership practices. Based on the discourse of David's leadership following propositions could be developed.

P1:	A successful leader in one arena may not be successful in another arena. However, success in one arena may drive the leader to be over confident, and may drive to play leadership role in another arena.
P2:	Traits reside inside of a person in a tacit state. Atmosphere may bring them out and underpins to be a leader.
P3:	Emotion and strategy are negatively correlated. When un-assessed and un-controlled emotion goes up the leader may take impractical decisions and tends to be non-democratic; fellows with less emotion may go away; opportunists get closer; and the leader eventually becomes more unrealistic.
P4:	A drastic failure of a leader having un-controlled emotion and unearned material resources may drive towards taking extremely impractical decisions, and eventually may drive into a further darkness.

Table 1

5. Conclusion

Emotion is an essential characteristic of successful leaders. It is a driving force to move forward. Most successful leaders were emotional and they tried to spread out the emotions among their followers to achieve their goals. On the other hand, formulating and implementing realistic strategies are preconditions to be successful in leadership. Overwhelming emotions and realistic strategies are negatively co-related. In leadership, emotions must not override strategies. 'Heart over Head' can have detrimental effect to the outcome. In a situation where the leader does not have self-awareness and self-regulation over own emotions and the leader have power and unearned resources, the leadership is likely to end-up with adverse consequences for everyone involved.

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