Chalking out Organizational Leader Traits from Poetic Work of Iqbal

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ABSTRACT

Literature on the idea of leadership is in continuous evolution; Leadership models have evolved from autocratic to democratic ones looking at the changing dynamics of the emerging world. Leadership models which were assumed to be universal did not work effectively diversified cultures. Thus, current study has been conducted to find a more domestic and local solution of leadership which suits the dynamics of oriental culture. This study has focused on an idea of leadership forwarded by philosopher poet Dr. Allama Iqbal in his poetic work. Management science & Business studies are now using work of classical literature to develop theories that can help managers in their day-to-day tasks for formulating strategies. In current study, poetic work of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal has been used to chalk out traits of leader who can attend the management maladies in Pakistan. Poem titled Cordova Mosque which appeared in his book Gabriel wing has been used primarily to develop this model. Current study is exploratory in nature and a detailed review of literature and affinity of ideology of Iqbal's leader with Nietzsche's *Ubermensch* has also been conducted.

INTRODUCTION

World of business and management is facing challenge of complexity due to changing demands of the stakeholders, fast paced global world is demanding novel solutions from leaders to the dilemmas that are haunting the business world (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). Contemporary theories are adding more to the turmoil and scholars (Kalshovern & Taylor, 2018) have started thinking to *"look backward to move forward."* Leadership isn't only the solution to this growing complexity, but it remains as one of the key functions of management science, world is looking at business leaders to fix the environmental challenges and uncertain situations that are rising after the pandemic to the business arena (Smith & Cockburn, 2020). Prior to pandemic, work of Boddy (2013) highlighted those human beings are standing on the brink of un-sustainable future, from global warming, depleting resources, rise in the use of plastic is choking all forms of lives. Work of Boddy considers lack of conscience as a major trait that is hurling humanity to the catastrophe. More responsible and mindful leaders with better conscience may take charge of the resources of the world. Leaders obsessed with power,

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fail to see the grand scheme of things and short-sighted approach has done considerable damage to social and natural world (Furtner, Maran & Rauthmann, 2017). This calls for finding a new archetype of leadership, which is more humane, understand the indigenous systems, preserve them and take the world to more ethical end. Importantly, leadership literature has been hegemonies by Western expectation. Due to that oriental way of looking and preserving the world has not been included in the literature. Recently, leadership models from Jain and Bhagavad-Gita (Nayak, 2018) has been introduced to the text of leadership, still leadership, which is taught and practiced, has been covered with occidental way of thinking. Results are in front of us, in oriental part of the world, each resource is respected and not used as a dead object (Berman, 1981; Elkins & Morgan, 2011).

Since the leadership has been observed as an academic phenomenon, thoughts from political world, fiction writers and poets have tried to define the idea of perfect leader (Messick & Kramer, 2004) yet as Stogdill quotes "we have as many definitions of leadership as many have tried to define it." But from philosophers like Plato (Ozumba, Ofakor & Udom, 2011), from fiction work of Hesse (Mexiner, 2010), from political writings of Machiavelli (Belschak, Hartog & Hoogh, 2018), researchers incorporated diversified thoughts on effective leadership. Similarly, practitioners are adopting more local practices to give genuine solutions to the dilemmas, as Chinese corporate leaders have an understanding of Art of War by Tzu (Wang, 2017) that help them manoeuvre better in competitive world. Similarly, Malaysian leaders use the indigenous wisdom of *Budi* (Storz, 1999). It is obvious that culture of followers and leaders set expectations and values that can better help run the system (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). Thus, this raises an opportunity to bring unheard thoughts to the canvas of leadership as Harkiolakis et al. (2017) quoted to *"look backward to move forward."*

One such important voice that have been incorporated in field of physics (Sabir, 2011), religion (Javed, 2002), politics (Kausar, 2001) psychology (Umar, 2000) is of poet-philosopher Iqbal, his work had been used in diversified fields and a separate journal has been dedicated to archive research on poetic-philosophical work. Current study has been undertaken to chalk out organizational leader traits from poetic work of Iqbal in realm of business and management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the decades, various leadership models have evolved. Concept and word of leadership is as old as human existence. Having various facets which a leader covers under his style, it is difficult to define the concept of leadership. Interestingly, Rost (1993) collected more than two hundred definitions on the concept of leadership. However, Bass (2008) further directed researchers not to hunt a single definition of leadership as the effective leadership style can be

exercised as per the need of the environment. He further referred it as the situational leadership model. Yet Daft (2008) has summarized the evolution of leadership models from autocratic to democratic models. In his work, evolution of leadership is witnessed in four major epochs. According to Daft it is because of change in norms, attitude and the way society at large have changed. Four major evolutionary stages were named as Great Man leadership, Rational Management, Lateral Leadership and Learning Leadership.

Study of Hoffman et. al. reviewed the century old idea of Great man theory proposed by Thomas Carlyle (Carlyle, 1993). Summarizing the idea, leaders are born and not made. This idea was taken over by behavioural models after the Hawthorne study but great man theory is still point of interest for scholars to understand individual differences between effective and non-effective leaders. Apart from trait and behavioural theorists, transactional and transformational leaders are thoroughly researched too (Hoffman et al., 2011). Hargis et. al (2001) debate that transactional leaders follow stick and carrot method, they are highly effective in output and result oriented situations. They adopt the exchange model with their followers and are more concerned about the processes. Odumeru & Ifeanyi (2013) argue that as per McGregor theory X and theory Y, transactional leaders can be compared with theory X as they exchange rewards and punishments and manage by objectives. Thus this model is too shallow to meet the contemporary needs and it does not encompass major needs of mankind especially culture, norms, dreams etc. On the contrary, there exists transformational leadership style; Warrilow (2012) explains that such leader transforms the followers in morale and motivation. Transformational leaders are more people oriented and they transform their workforce by using charisma. Such leader also set goals which inspire the followers rather than working for tangible reward. This leadership style appeared complete however strong criticism was received that transformational leadership had its own shortcomings, which exhausted the energy of the followers, being leader centric, and enhancing narcissistic values at the work floor (Friedman, 2000). But the echoes of transcendental leadership theory was yet to be heard, Liu discusses this leadership theory in realm of spiritual leadership theory as proposed by Fry (2003). But transcendental leader looks into spiritual needs of followers, leader enhances the spiritual development of both i.e. leader and followers. By this transcendental leader evolves to a higher stage and guides the same to his followers.

However, a leadership model of paradoxical nature was presented by Greenleaf i.e. the idea of servant leadership, *"a leader who is a servant first"*. Greenleaf (1977) encountered this idea while going through the fiction novel of Herman Hesse. In the novel *Journey to the East*, personality of *Leo* inspired Greenleaf to rationalise the traits that are essential for a servant

leader. Further rigorous research was undertaken and Laub (1999) concluded that a servant leader will place interest of his workers and subordinates first than his own. Servant leadership model is especially reviewed in this part of the literature because the Greenleaf while reading a work of fiction conceived this idea.

While all such ideas of leadership are discussed, they have merits in explicating leadership styles per se, none worked fine in Pakistan. The recurring leadership flops cause this study to ask three questions. These occidental leadership styles have stalled in nearly all professional sectors in Pakistan, and have placed it at cross roads with its development. In fact, they are mainly rooted in western culture, and crossing the national boundary opens up cultural divide. Ledlow and Coppola (2010) highlighted various domestic and cultural variables which can affect the performance of leadership and leadership style chosen to run the organization effectively. Their work further add light on various leadership models which can be adopted in western, eastern, Latin and African perspectives. However, the cost of staying with the borrowed leadership thought in Pakistan has become greater than the price of moving to a leadership paradigm nurtured from its own culture. Leadership style based on western success stories are good for a world that exists on the other side of the fence, not for the world that is or that is coming in Pakistan. Leadership is not about changing the world, and, in fact, there is no world. *"There are only six billion understandings of it"*, and if it changes one individual's understanding of it, one individual's understanding of what he is capable of, one individual's understanding of how powerful an agent for change he can be in this country, It have changed the whole thing and if we can understand and redefine leadership like that, we can change everything (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2014).

Fiction, Poetry and Management Sciences

Management science is now using work of classical literature to develop theories, which can help managers in their day-to-day tasks or formulating strategies. Seminal work of Sun Tzu (Wee, Lee & Hidajat, 1991) is used in marketing to develop strategies by which companies can decide that which market to enter and when to retrieve from this market (Wee, 1995). It is interesting to mention that fiction novel titled *Nausea* of Sartre gave birth to existentialist philosophy which is now further used in psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis. Work of Albert Calmus titled *Myth of Sisyphus* is also utilized in management sciences though it is at very infant stage but they are coming up with the idea of organizational existentialism (Morin, Clegg & Bailey, 2007). Thus, various researchers are incorporating the work of literature and fiction to resolve business dilemmas, just as witnessed for the inception of Servant Leadership Model which stemmed out of a work if fiction by Hesse (Klien, 2020). Nevertheless, the most

impactful work of Muhammad Iqbal who indicated several leadership traits for the oriental culture has been left unattended. This study seeks to glean leadership attributes from Iqbal's poetry, and arranges them in a practical model that can heal the management maladies of Pakistan.

Culture and Leadership:

Pakistan is falling in oriental culture and there has been a demand of leadership model which can best fit as per the needs of Pakistan. Iqbal's poetic work has been used in philosophy and he discussed the idea of *Mard-e-Momin* which can be used to draw major traits of a leader. Pakistan being an oriental country is still using occidental leadership models however study of Bashir et. al. (2012) focussed on the cultural dimensions of Pakistan as per Hofstede (1980) cultural dimensions. Study found that Pakistan has a high-power distance, collectivist approach, high masculinity, high uncertainty avoidance and short-term planning orientation thus in need of leadership model carrying fit with the above-mentioned dimensions. However, in same context Haire, Ghiselli and Porter (1966) mentioned that it "*is like preaching Jeffersonian democracy to [those] who believe in the divine rights of kings.*" Similarly, Torrington already discussed the same issue in context of Malaysia, country where faith may play a major role for choosing leadership style (1994). Thus, leadership styles must fit with the culture of the organization where they are operating, work of Mitchell and Foa (1969) in a study from 60s has found that leaders with non-American followers were rated more effective when they had received training for norms and culture of the particular group they were leading. This promotes the idea that leadership style may be constructed which may have a fit with local values and culture.

Iqbal's leadership model and crisis of 1900s:

Poetic and philosophical work of Iqbal did not happen as an intuition but Iqbal was looking at the colonial state of sub-continent and the strong bondage of dwellers of sub-continent to their foreign masters. Iqbal was looking at the political (Sabir, 2020), academic, and moral crisis of Muslims of sub-continent (Haq, 2021) and hence his poetry is not an idealized message rather his poetic work revolves around a practical message of conducting reforms. Idea of *Mard-e-Momin* stands no different where Iqbal presents a model of leadership which can be used to bring mankind to their par and to liberate Muslims from foreign masters and even of their worldly fear and lusts thus Iqbal calls for freedom of mankind (Schimmel, 1980). As per the rest of leadership models, Iqbal's *Mard-e-Momin* was the solution to the crisis that Muslims of sub-continent were facing in those times.

Affinity Between Iqbal and Nietzsche On The Idea Of Leadership

Strong affinity can be seen in works of Nietzsche and Iqbal, Nietzsche forwarded the idea of Übermensch (superman) and considered it to be archetype for mankind (Abd Jaleel, 2021). However, Nietzsche did not encounter any such stage where Übermensch would be demanded to save the society from a tyrant rule but it only existed as a novel idea. On the other side *Mard-e-Momin* presented by Iqbal was the idea to rescue the denizens of India (Haq, 2021)**.** Nietzsche's Übermensch was based on idea of power, more precisely will to power (Frogel, 2020). It was a stern idea where Übermensch was considered as an ideal state and man is a state between Übermensch and animals. Similarly, religion, compassion and piety were considered to be weaknesses of mankind and had no role to play in his world (Jackson, 2007). As per Nietzsche, only weak people ask for morals and ethics. However, it is debated that Iqbal's work of *Mard-e-Momin* has affinity with central idea of Nietzsche but there is no close relevance as Iqbal considers faith and love as major traits which should exist in an effective leader. Anyway, authors associate Hitler as the manifestation of Nietzsche's superman (Taha, 2005) which clearly reflects the difference between Iqbal's mode of revolution, which in his work Gabriel Wing associate love, spirituality, and intuition as major tools against rationalism, and empiricism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Current study has conducted content analysis from Iqbal's poetic book titled "Gabriel Wing", specifically his magnum opus poem Cordova Mosque was chosen from his book Gabriel Wing. During content analysis of his poem Cordova Mosque, focused codes were generated in realm of leadership. Study has used secondary resource from his poetic work. Work collected by Muhammad Numan Chishti has been used as reference for the translation of work in English (Chishti, 2012). This study is inductive in nature and exploratory analysis of Iqbal's poem is conducted to draw a leadership model for business and management. Study is conducted on non-foundational ontology and interpretive episteme has been used to draw meanings out of poetic work (Cordova Mosque) of Iqbal.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

From Verse 35 to 40 of poem Cordova Mosque from his poetic book Gabriel Wing, Iqbal (1935) mention the major expectations he had from a leader. Verses has been originally written in Urdu, however standard translation from official source has been added here for discussion.

Stanza 35: "The might of the man of faith is the might of the Almighty:

Dominant, creative, resourceful, consummate."

In stanza 35 of Cordova Mosque, Iqbal forwards the major trait of leader that he should be a man of faith and he accepts himself as Man of God. *Mard-e-Momin* surrenders his will to God and exercises all the mundane powers as an agent to God. Thus, while exercising his powers he considers himself as servant to God who has powers for ephemeral time at this place.

Stanza 36: "He is terrestrial with celestial aspect; A being with the qualities of the Creator. His contented self has no demands on this world or the other."

Stanza 36 mentions that a *Mard e Momin* is indifferent to all the worldly lusts and is generous in nature, Iqbal has used a saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) "Develop traits of Allah within you" (*Ma Takhal-i-qu bi Akhlaq Allah*). Thus, *Mard e Momin* has accepted himself as agent of God who has to be guardian to the people, who are his subordinate and he also has to be generous as like Divine Resource.

Stanza 37: "His desires are modest; his aims exalted; His manner charming; his ways winsome"

Stanza 37 further adds to the generosity of the *Mard-e-Momin* that he expects less however he has mammoth plans. Nevertheless, he is not demanding a lot back from the system from his effort however; he allows larger plans to dwell in his mind.

Stanza 39: "Soft in social exposure, Tough in the line of pursuit. But whether in fray or in social gathering, Ever chaste at heart, ever clean in conduct."

Stanza 39 discusses about the personality that how *Mard-e-Momin* manifests himself in his society/organization. A *Mard-e-Momin* is soft-spoken, considerate, kind to his elders, peers, and juniors when choosing words though being soft spoken, he is not less laborious when it comes to practical plans or endeavours. Though being considerate he is assertive in his strategic plans. Further stanza 39 explains that a *Mard-e-Momin* is not conventional or not resting more on intuition or traditional knowledge but he will excel in grounds of knowledge.

Stanza 40: "He is the journey's end for reason, He is the raison d'etre of Love. An inspiration in the cosmic communion."

Stanza 40 of Cordova Mosque represents *Mard e Momin* as the destination of knowledge and benchmark of wisdom. However other part of stanza highlights that his being pragmatic in education/wisdom does not hinder him from excelling in spiritual life. Iqbal elaborates that *Mard-e-Momin* as organizational/societal leader will express spirituality and mysticism through love in his surroundings and he will become the essence among the meetings.

Aforementioned six traits are of very preliminary nature however they can further be explored in future and a proper scale can be established which can be used to measure the extent of a leader being a *Mard-e-Momin*. Theoretical model of Iqbal's *Mard-e-Momin* as organizational leader has following extracted facets.
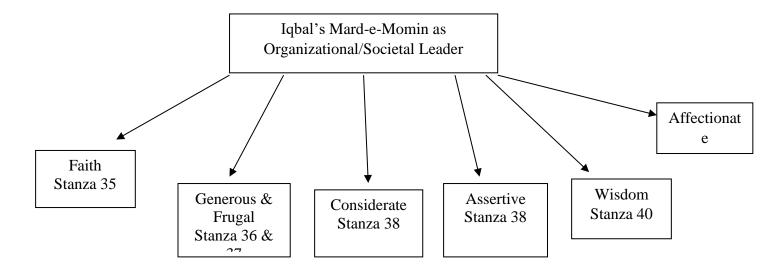

Figure 1. Facets of Mard-e-Momin extracted out of Cordova Mosque (Gabriel Wing)

Relevance of above-mentioned facets can be observed with other leadership models also. Recent model of spiritual leadership as proposed by Fry already involve the facets of wisdom and altruistic love (Fry, 2003). Greenleaf also came up with the idea of altruistic love as a trait of a leader, that was further established by Barbutto and Wheeler (2996) including wisdom, emotional healing, stewardship and persuasive mapping. However apart from having space for love and wisdom, the idea of assertiveness mentioned, meets the transactional end of the model. This assertiveness assure that objectives set earlier are also met to make the organization and society go ahead rather than just resting only on love, wisdom and generosity. Similar conception was been given by Plato that a king should follow the mean; he should not be too much loving or too cruel (Dynneson, 2008). Iqbal proposed the same view, that the leader is considerate when he is discussing and planning for the future, he is soft spoken in that frame of time. However, leader works ardently and pushes his plans assertively when it comes to implementing.

Current study is resting on transcendental leadership theory, as it incorporates essentials from trait leadership model yet intrinsically motivating followers (Fry, 2003). Having affinity with spiritual leadership style this model rests itself on transcendental leadership model in which leader evolves his/her own personality along with the transformation of the subordinates as already discussed in literature with reference to work of Fry and Liu (Fry, 2003; Liu, 2007) .

This idea has been placed in realm of theory transcendental leadership because of Iqbal's idea of personal motivation known as *Khudi* (Purbhai, 2009). However, this self actualization is quite different than what we understand in secular text, this theory demand mankind to restore its original place in eyes of Divine Almighty as Caliph of God rather than only achieving a state of nirvana or mental peace.

Thus, Iqbal's perfect man is the brightest symbol of Divine on earth, a co-creator and one who moves the incomplete universe. Iqbal considers him to have attributes that are post-human and allows him to walk away from greed and lust, also urges him to be mindful while acting in the world of resources. However, there is a limitation that only one of the poems have been chosen for the content analysis, future studies can conduct a thorough content analysis of Iqbal's poetic and philosophical work. However, in realm of business and management it's a preliminary study which can act as a door opener for inclusion of Iqbal studies for business and management science.

CONCLUSION

Poetic work of Iqbal has been used extensively in field of theology, philosophy, and politics; wisdom of Iqbal is yet to be shared with the practitioners and researchers of management sciences. Historically managers to address the dilemmas had used work of Sartre and Machiavelli. However, the growing cultural diversity is making it difficult for managers to use foreign theory for healing the local problem. Iqbal wrote when specifically, Muslims of indo-Pak were in situation of crisis, instead of an idealized work, Iqbal addressed the burning issues of that era. Similarly, leadership is a growing dilemma, which is giving birth to further maladies. Poetic work of Iqbal highlights a model, which is transcendental in nature in which leader, and followers evolve to a higher stage of actualization. However, this model does not exhaust the probability of not achieving the objectives of the organization, but it also demands assertiveness while carrying love and wisdom.

Future Research Direction

Future researchers can find the congruence of facets of *Mard-e-Momin* leadership with already established leadership models. Scales can be developed and tested for each trait so model under discussion can be a point of study of researchers rather than only a theoretical model. Once the scale has been developed then more empirical evidence can be gathered on these traits. As earlier mentioned, a detailed content analysis is also required from complete poetic and philosophical work of Iqbal.

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