

**WE BECOME WHAT WE VALUE / VALUE WHAT WE BECOME  
THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY  
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What we do, our current behaviour and what we become over time is a function of thought processes at various levels of consciousness and commitment. These processes manifest as opinions, interests, attitudes or values.

Opinions as unproven beliefs, or judgements, or views held as probable, influence our behaviour at some level.

Interests manifesting as a curiosity or concerns about something also sure do predispose us one way or another.

Attitudes as a way of thinking or tendency to behave impact more on what we do than opinions and interests.

Values or a value system sit at a much deeper level than opinions, interests and attitudes.

Opinions, interests and attitudes predispose. Values direct, that is, proscribe and prescribe at a deeper level. Values or a value-system serve as anchor, compass and even define our sense of mission and destiny.

If you hold strongly the view that society is a jungle open for adventure and exploitation, you will live by the principle of survival of the fittest, and trample over the weak and incapable. If you are a Eurocentric South African you will use as your sounding board and guide so-called Western values. If you mean to be a true democrat you will live by the tenets of consultation, persuasion, accommodation and cooperation and shun coercion and domination.

If nation building is at the core of your leadership value- system you will strive to bridge the schisms and cleavages wrought by religious, tribal social, Ideological, economic and political divisions that characterise much of Africa's political economies today. If you profoundly believe in ethics and morality as fundamental values you will understand that there is no distinction between private and public morality, no distinction between private and public behaviour, that even our innermost thoughts are acts of leadership. You will understand that each waking moment for each one of us, is an act of leadership. You will understand that even your most private actions and thoughts are therefore based on principles of morality instead of expediency.

I am, however, supposed to reflect briefly on THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP IN ACHIEVING SUSTAIN ABILITY, a theme to which I now turn my attention.

Earth scientists tell us that the world could end tomorrow as a result of any number of mathematically probable scenarios: a huge asteroid impact or supervolcanic eruption, gamma ray bursts from a collision of stars, an escaped man-made virus, a nuclear holocaust. The destruction of our habitat by external catastrophe or human activities looms large on

our TV screens and in dialogues between experts. Yet world leadership seems paralysed, like the proverbial rabbit caught in the headlights. Sudden disaster may indeed strike us unawares from out of the depths of space - something we can do little to avoid, although we are working on it - but nuclear warfare, laboratory viruses, and global warming are definitely our responsibility and we must seek to control them. Climatic catastrophe is perhaps the most probable fate awaiting us unless we do something about it.

The possibilities of natural or man-made calamity seem overwhelming, though for most of us these nightmares are remote from our everyday lives. Far closer to home are the threats posed by war, disease, poverty, crime, starvation, pollution and much else that turns life on this planet into a harsh struggle for survival for billions of human beings. One of the burning issues of our time is international migration. This involves thousands daily in the crossing of borders, often illegally and at risk of being caught, deported, beaten up or even killed at the fences. The reaction to migrant communities is frequently xenophobic, as locals turn on the foreign invaders whom they accuse of stealing jobs and bringing criminal elements into their communities. Migration happens because people want a better life for themselves, and so long as there are severe economic imbalances in the world economy the push-pull factors will cause millions more to take the chance of crossing over. Asteroids are the least of their worries.

### ENTROPY

When we read up on the subject of leadership in the future, we come across three divisions in the literature:

Our future leadership - that is, the calibre, aims and development of the people who will take us into the future;

The future of leadership as a political, business and social practice - that is, the future role that leaders will occupy in organisations, and for that matter, across organisations and boundaries of all kinds; and

The theory of leadership as it relates to the first two - that is, how our ideas about what leadership will translate into the critical appraisal of leadership performance.

There is much to say about all three and it cannot be my goal here to review major positions in any detail: that would need a book in itself. Rather, I take my lead from the Dean of Harvard Business School, Professor Nitin Nohria who told a seminar in Mumbai that unlike the previous "American century" the current century has no dominant nation, This makes leadership global in every respect. Without an imperial power or two to control world affairs, every organisation, country and region may attempt to set its own course - with knock-on consequences for all the others. Nohria added that business leaders in particular needed an understanding of developments in all parts of the world. They would have to play a part in solving some of humanity's major problems, such as poverty, inequity, and environmental degradation. This viewpoint gives us our bearings with respect to the three questions above.

The people we need to lead us will have a global outlook. They require the knowledge and expertise to make wise and humane decisions affecting the wellbeing of humanity. This

is going to take intense focus by training institutions and mentors on the development of new local, national, regional and global leadership.

Leadership is not a given position but a process within the intricate, unfolding social and ecological realities surrounding us. The power to transform our world is a product of leadership-followership trust. This comes from within and cannot be imposed from the top. Leadership cannot be anything but interactive and responsive in a global setting where billions of human agents compete and co-operate.

How we view our leaders - and learn to control their performance - will depend on our grasp of the key responsibilities of global citizenship. Protecting human dignity, ensuring social justice and equity, insisting on a decent quality of life for all, demanding freedom of expression and access to information - all come down to one thing: good governance, which is moral leadership in practice.

The biggest danger facing modern leadership is that it could ossify around roles and routines that have little to do with solving the world's problems. One of the diseases of political systems - democracies, in particular - is that leaders who lack the courage to tackle hard problems will try to make it appear that they are doing something when in fact nothing is changing. This is a sign of entropy: the running-down of the system. It is especially dangerous for democracies where the constant buzz of parliamentary proceedings and media coverage give the impression that the public sphere is alive and well, when quite the contrary is the case. Effectively, techniques of smoke and mirrors undermine the power of the vote, Leaders cease to lead and followers to follow: democracy is reduced to token voting.

### EARTH

Global leadership needs to see itself in the mirror of global citizenship in order to become responsive to stakeholder demands. We are all stakeholders in a common - and depleting - pool of global assets. That we have a common interest in survival with a decent quality of life should go without saying, in reality the people of advanced nations tend to score themselves higher on the human scale than those in emergent or underdeveloped societies. We are all equal, goes the saying, but some are more equal than others, or at least they think they are. The millionaire stockbroker in Wall Street gives little or no thought to how his financial speculations may impact on the world's poorest. Our common humanness is simply overlooked in the race for advantage. The antidote to this denial of human fellowship has to be found in greater communication across economic, cultural and territorial barriers. By getting to know each other better we get to share the sense of being equally involved in the project of human development: the quest that marks our progress as a species. We can maximise stakeholder strengths and benefits while minimising weaknesses by networking - across the street, the city, the state and the world. Networking, in the sense I use it, draws on caring relationships to make national and global citizenship real.

In 2006, Sir Nicholas Stern, former chief economist at the World Bank warned that an investment of about 1% per year of global GDP over the next 50 years would be needed to stabilise greenhouse gases. By 2003 he was taking a bleaker view following the limited practical impact of the report. After visiting dozens of governments around the world to persuade them of the need to cut emissions and the low cost of doing so, he said his report

should have taken a much stronger view on the drastic changes that would come about if greenhouse gas emissions were not abated.

We know all this: it is nothing new. But neither is it baseless alarmism. The evidence is there and the problems will not go away if we ignore them. Sustainability must be the watchword. We need a world that is networked around open and honest communication about the crises that we face. Only by recognising that our problems are global in scope and common to all can we overcome them. There is no question that solutions serving only the elites or advanced nations will fail. It is no good carrying on as if there are two species of humans on the planet: the ins and the outs, the rich and the poor, those deserving of full human status and those who are overlooked and sidelined.

It seems odd to say it, but we need to humanise our world. Humans have proved very destructive to the planet so far, but once again our better nature is the touchstone. We need to rewire the spirit of humanism with a new attitude to the self and its role in the community. Community consciousness, in the planetary sense, should be understood as an ecological principle linking us to the environment that is the habitat of all living species. We have only recently begun to grasp how fragile is our hold on life in a biosphere that is equivalent to a skin thinner than that on an apple.

Balancing people, planet and prosperity imperatives is the cardinal challenge facing humanity. We dare not fail.