

**HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF WOMEN SERVANT LEADERS – A STUDY
“TO LEAD PEOPLE, WALK BEHIND THEM” LAO-TZU**

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Abstract: Lao-Tzu wrote about servant leadership in the fifth-century BC: "The highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware. The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words. When his task is accomplished and things have been completed, all the people say... 'We ourselves have achieved it!'"

Servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one to aspire to serve and serve first.

Everyday images on Leadership don't coincide with leaders being servants. Leaders influence and servants follow. A leader cannot be a servant and leader at a time but a servant leadership is unique in its perspective which is intended to be attentive to the concerns of his/her followers, empower them and further help them develop their full personal capacities. More over these leaders are ethical and lead in ways that serve the greater good of organization, community and society at large. Servant leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world. The service leadership concept is based on the philosophy of "servant leadership," a term coined by Robert K. Greenleaf to define a leader who is servant first. It is positioned as a new field of research for leadership scholars. This review deals with the historical background of servant leadership, its key characteristics and the available measurement tools. An overall conceptual model of servant leadership is presented. Further based on the concepts it correlates the characteristics of servant leadership to selected women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Antecedent Conditions, Conceptualization, Empathy, Persuasion, Servant Leadership, Stewardship

A Theoretical Review: It is argued that leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a need to serve display servant leadership. Personal characteristics and culture are positioned alongside the motivational dimension. Further, it is demonstrated by empowering and developing people, by expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, stewardship, by providing direction. A high-quality dyadic relationship, trust, fairness are expected to be the most important mediating processes to encourage self-actualization, positive job attitudes, performance, and stronger organizational focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

According to Greenleaf servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first, Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. True leadership is servant-hood, the greatest leader of all time is Jesus Christ. Servant-hood is an attitude exemplified by Christ "who, though he was in the form of God, didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant". It is the leadership style that embodies ethical behavior with Leadership style. As stated in its title, it is about how a leader acts for others. As leader acts on behalf of others it is determined that this style is based on trust between the leader and their followers. Further all servant leaders share two fundamental beliefs about people they lead and engage in five practices that put these beliefs into action. They believe that,

- People can accomplish much when inspired by a purpose beyond themselves

Five practices of Servant Leaders

Table – 1

Clarify and reinforce need for service to others	Servant leaders educate the members of their team through their words and actions. They encourage their people to set aside self-serving behaviors in favor of serving others.
Listen intently and observe closely	Servant leaders really listen to their people, they actively solicit their participation, ideas and feedback. In time, they get to know worldview of each one of their employees, and tailor their leadership approach accordingly.
Act as selfless mentors	Servants leaders know that by helping to guide the people who work for them, they will help their employees learn vital skills that will both improve their performance, and improve them as human beings.

- Every person has value and deserves civility, trust, and respect.

Demonstrate persistence	Servant leaders realize that one or two conversations may not have the desired change in an employee’s assumptions or mindset. So they are tenacious and invest whatever time it takes to educate and inspire servant leadership practices in the members of their team.
Hold themselves, others for their commitments with love	Servant leaders know that no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes including themselves. Keeping it in mind, they push for high standards of performance, service quality, alignment of values in the team;they hold themselves and their people accountable for their performance.

problem by listening first,” Greenleaf wrote. “True listening builds strength in other people.”

The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership points to Ann McGee-Cooper and Duane Trammell as contemporary experts who expand on the theme of inspiring others. The authors of “Focus on Leadership” conclude that servant leaders exhibit these five practices:

- Listening without judgment
- Being authentic, open and accountable
- Building community and showing appreciation
- Sharing power
- Developing people

Healing: The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one’s self and one’s relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact.

Empathy: is standing in the shoes of another person and attempting to see the world from that person’s point of view. Empathetic servant leaders demonstrate that they truly understand what followers are thinking and feeling. If a servant leader shows empathy, it is confirming and validating for the follower. It makes the follower feel unique.

Healing :is to heal means to make whole. Servant leaders care about the personal well-being of their followers. They support followers by helping them overcome personal problems. Greenleaf argues that the process of healing is a two-way street in helping followers become whole, servant leaders themselves are healed.

Awareness: for Greenleaf, awareness is a quality within servant leaders that makes them acutely attuned and receptive to their physical, social and political environments. It includes understanding oneself and the impact one has on others. With awareness, servant leaders are able to step aside and view themselves and their own perspectives in the greater context of the situation.

Persuasion: it is a clear and persistent communication that convinces others to change. As opposed to coercion, which utilizes positional authority to force compliance, persuasion creates change through the use of gentle non-judgmental argument. According to Greenleaf it emphasizes on persuasion over coercion is perhaps related to his denominational affiliation with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Conceptualization :refers to an individual’s ability to be a visionary for an organization, providing a clear sense of its goals and direction. This characteristic goes beyond day-to-day operational

Review of Servant leadership traits: According to Dubrin et al. (2006) Spears (1997) the ten critical characteristics are common in all the servant leaders. Each leadership style has unique attributes. For servant leadership, these elements include capability to transform an organization. According to Greenleaf Servant-leaders differ from other persons of good will and because they act on what they believe. He identified vision, influence, credibility, trust and service as important leadership qualities, along with the following 10 characteristics, which are critical to the success of a servant leader.

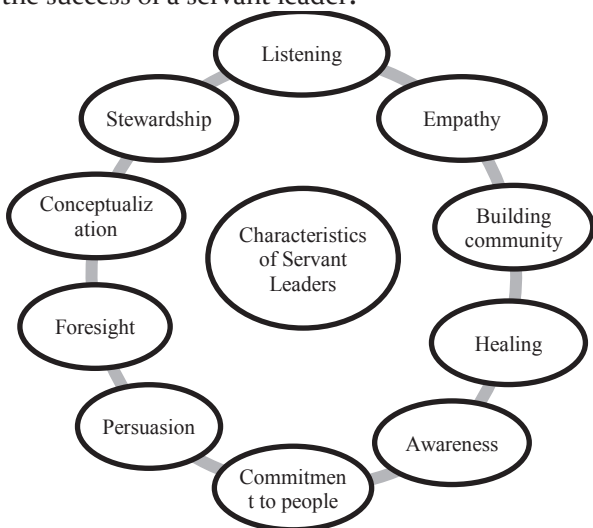


Diagram: by Author

Characteristics of servant leaders:

Listening: leads the list because it is a crucial yet frequently absent trait in natural leaders who are self-oriented rather than devoted to service. “A true natural servant automatically responds to any

thinking to focus on the big picture. Conceptualization also equips servant leaders to respond to complex organizational problems in creative ways, enabling them to deal with the intricacies of the organization in relationship to its long-term goals.

Foresight :encompasses a servant leader's ability to know the future. It is an ability to predict what is coming based on what is occurring in the present and what has happened in the past. According to Greenleaf it is an ethical dimension because he believes leaders should be held accountable for any failures to anticipate what reasonably could be foreseen and to act on that understanding.

Stewardship : is about taking responsibility for the leadership role entrusted to the leader. Servant leaders accept the responsibility to carefully manage the people and organization they have been given to lead. In addition, they hold the organization in trust for the greater good for society.

Commitment to the growth of People: Greenleaf's conceptualization of servant leadership places a premium on treating each follower as a unique person with intrinsic value that goes beyond his or her tangible contributions to the organization. Servant leaders are committed to helping each person in the organization grow personally and professionally. Commitment can take many forms, including providing followers with opportunities for career development, helping them develop new work skills, taking a personal interest in their ideas and involving them in decision making.

Building Community – servant leadership fosters the development of community. A community is a collection of individuals who have shared interests, pursuits and feel a sense of unity and relatedness. Community allows followers to identify with something greater than themselves that they value. Servant leaders build community to provide a place where people can feel safe and connected with others but are still allowed to express their own individuality.

These characteristics of servant leadership represent Greenleaf's seminal work on the servant leader. They provide a creative lens from which to view the complexities of servant leadership.

Conceptual Study of Servant Leadership Model: Conceptual research focuses on the concept or theory that explains or describes the phenomenon being studied. Here the researcher by sitting at her desk tried to correlate the characteristics and model of Servant Leadership with selected women leaders for the present study from different time periods of past who exhibited same servant leader characteristics during their services to the society. These women include Rani Rudrama Devi, Mother Theresa, Durgabhai Deshmukh and Sarojini Naiyudu

Rani RudramaDevi's servant leader: is the first women ruler in entire Andhra Pradesh. She ruled the kingdom jointly with her father as his co-regent from 1259-60 under the name of Rudradeva Maharaja. In the first two or three years of their joint rule, Rudramadevi was undoubtedly one of the greatest rulers of Andhra-desa which made her as a successful leader for 40 years which is historical achievement for women leaders. Her sex did not come on her way in discharging the duties and services of her exalted office. People still cherish her memories as servant leader to serve the people with empathy, building community, and awareness on threats from the other rulers or kings, foresight in ruling and attacking the kingdoms, stewardship and Conceptualization skills. Her gender did not come on her way in discharging the duties of her exalted office. She took an active part in governing the country and strove hard to promote the best interests of the state. In spite of the wars which frequently disturbed the country, her people remained contented and happy under her rule. She initiated several welfare programs like digging tanks for bringing many acres under cultivation, which was an inspiration for the Telangana government in restoring all the minor irrigation tanks, also introduced several welfare programs for the betterment of life of her people while effectively confronting invading male warriors during her 30 years from 1259 to 1289. Speaking to The Hindu, historian D. Suraya Kumar the historian urged the Telangana government to make Rudrama Devi the symbol of women's empowerment in Telangana. Further, Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler who paid a visit to the kingdom probably a little later, speaks highly of her administrative qualities, benign rule and greatness to look after people in her kingdom as a queen with great services to her society, state and country and so one can conclude that she is ever great servant leader.

Mother Theresa's Servant Leader: According to servant leadership theory, Mother Teresa is a perfect model of a servant leader. She was a charity worker in India and also a nun. She had a clear vision. She founded Missionaries of charity in Kolkata, India. For 45 years she was looking after the poor, sick, orphaned and dying. She was a selfless servant leader who dedicated her whole life to make others lives better. Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity had 610 missions in 123 countries which served people with HIV, leprosy and tuberculosis. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and India's highest civilian honor in 1980 for her humanitarian work. Thousands of people were inspired by her servant leader behaviors followed her footprint to contribute their life to the society with charity works. It was Mother Teresa who said "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create

many ripples.” That is the statement that joined millions of people in unity.

Durgabhai Deshmukh as a Servant Leader: she is a great visionary and multi-faceted woman, Durgabai Deshmukh was a freedom fighter, planner, administrator, educationist, feminist, social reformer and a parliamentarian. Truly, a legend among women in her lifetime she founded Andhra Mahila Sabha and several other institutions and social welfare organizations. Durgabai Deshmukh is aptly recognized as the ‘Mother of Social Service’ in India. Since very young, she was tremendously influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his ideologies. She is one of the most successful lawyers of her time. She decided never to send back any woman in need of legal aid. She established Andhra Mahila Sabha (AMS) with an aim to help women in all ways - from teaching them hygiene to making them aware of the country’s welfare. The institutions run by AMS cater to women, child care, senior citizens care, care for the disabled, health care and education. Today about 30 organizations work under the umbrella of AMS including two hospitals, an orthopedic center, two colleges, three High Schools, handicraft trainings institute for women, legal aid center for women and functional literacy projects, She worked as a President of the Blind Relief Association in Delhi and in that capacity, she set up a school, hostel and a light engineering workshop for the blind. She headed a crusade against illiteracy, ignorance, social injustice against women by establishing several institutions, in the field of Health, General Education and Nutrition etc. This shows her legacy of success as a servant leader where she is observed conceptually as a servant who is a successful leader of those days.

Sarojini Naidu as a Servant Leader : She was a true humanist, who loved people with all their joys and sorrows. She draws the conclusion about issues based on human attitude towards social problems in India. She became an important working with Gandhiji in leading and inspiring the masses in freedom movement. She played an important role in working

for regeneration of nation by improving the social life of the Indian people. She inspired million to breakdown social barriers. She expressed sincere concern for all the social existing problems of her time and lost no opportunity to point these out of those whomever actively involved in removing social evils. She was recognized as a brilliant, charming, challenging, empathetic and cooperative woman leader with her insights to understand joys and sorrows, expectations and hopes of women of all categories including woman vendors in cities and rural poor group. She insisted on social reform association fought for the improving status of women in society and she stated that women in a factor in process of national building young generation of men and women were naturally attracted to her for her ideology. During 1915, Sarojini Naidu traveled all over India and delivered speeches on welfare of youth, dignity of labor, women's emancipation and nationalism. In 1916, she took up the cause of the indigo workers of Champaran in the western district of Bihar. Sarojini Naidu also actively campaigned for the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the Khilafat issue, the Sabarmati Pact, the Satyagraha Pledge and the Civil Disobedience Movement. It is an evidence of her success as a servant leader where she is observed conceptually as a servant who is a successful leader of those days.

Conclusion from the conceptual analysis: The four women personalities clearly detail the servant leader's characters. Further these leaders have the common variables in their personality. Their conceptualization skills, emotions, encouraging, valuing and developing followers, building community, developing ethical behavior in the society, building trust and empowering them are the major highlights of their personalities which are described in the model of servant leaders. Hence one can say that the concept of servant leadership is historically evident from period of Rudrama Devi to MotherTheresa. Further it can be concluded that their life style is a model for servant leadership.

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