



BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH

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A Study Report on

Governance Lessons from Ancient and Contemporary Times *Insights from Life Stories of Women Leaders*



September 2022

National Center for Corporate Governance
Banasthali Vidyapith

Supported by

NFCG National Foundation for
Corporate Governance

Research Guidance

OMRISE International Research Group

Copy Setting, Design and Editing Services

Sanjay Printing House, Newai

Governance Lessons from Ancient and Contemporary Times

Insights from Life Stories of Women Leaders

Published in September 2022

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BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH

Preface

The leadership of any organization or society determines the quality of overall governance. In the contemporary times we witness a growing dissatisfaction with leadership at various levels resulting from poor levels of governance. In such testing times, it becomes pertinent to share best practices of governance and stories of leaders who have contributed significantly towards the development of any organization or society. With respect to women leaders, it is generally found that people are not aware of their great contribution. There are numerous cases where women have led from front and have contributed to the development of society or bringing good governance. There are stories from ancient times as well as contemporary times.

In this backdrop, I feel that this research report would be very interesting and useful contribution to the domain of governance. The National Center for Corporate Governance (NCCG) - Banasthali Vidyapith supported by National Foundation for Corporate Governance (NFCG), has conducted this study on Governance Lessons from Ancient and Contemporary Times: Insights from Life Stories of Women Leaders. This study report covers inputs from indigenous knowledge experts, historians, academicians and practitioners on matters related to women leaders and governance. I believe the output of this study will be beneficial in highlighting the role of many women who have remained unsung in terms of their contribution to governance. This report would inspire many young women from Bharat to utilize their potential for development of organizations and society, leading to development of our nation.

Our university would like to express gratitude to the National Foundation for Corporate Governance (NFCG) for entrusting NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith to carry out the unique project. The support of OMRISE Research Group in completion of this project is indispensable. Thanks are also due to everyone who contributed to ensure the successful completion of the project.

Prof. Harsh Purohit
Dean, Faculty of Management
Dean, Faculty of Law
Banasthali Vidyapith

Executive Summary

The intertwined relationship between leadership and good governance is a matter of continuous research that would always bring new insights. The importance of the role of leadership in good governance has gained much attention and significant work has been done on the same. The need is to share best practices of governance and stories of leaders who have contributed significantly towards the development of any organization or society.

In public discourse, surprisingly there is a high level of unawareness of the contributions of women leaders. However, not only in the contemporary era, but in ancient times there have been numerous instances wherein women have been leading on the front ensuring good governance and contributing to the development of the society. This study identifies the stories of women leaders from ancient times as well as contemporary times appreciating their success in achieving good governance. This study found that in ancient times society emphasized on women's education and mechanism were in place to nurture their leadership qualities.

The key points that were analyzed from 20 stories of women leaders include – Assertiveness, confidence, communication skills, self-belief; compassion, humility, emotional intelligence, simplicity, dignified approach, people centric, team player; Learnability, determination, consistency, dedication, conviction, undeterred, resistance, thought clarity; efficiency, productivity, proactive, enterprising, quick decision making, short meetings, skill set utilization, team management; indigenous knowledge, ancient wisdom, nishkam karm yog, lok-sangrah; integrity, transparency, self-respect; mentoring, nurturing future leaders, up-skilling, building diverse workforce, leading by example, succession planning, motivation; overcoming hurdles, complex problem solving, conflict resolution, managing in-fighting; visionary, quest for good governance, sustainable development, social responsibility, social development; resilience, robust; spiritual inclination; intellectual abilities, interdisciplinary knowledge, holistic personality, balancing responsibilities. The research team believes that lessons from these stories will bring the opportunity of further improvements for contemporary times as well. The infinite untapped potential of women leaders can bring wonders in sustainable development, participatory approach, negotiations, and other benefits to society at large.

About

NFCG *National Foundation for Corporate Governance*

In 2003, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) led a unique PPP model to set up the National Foundation for Corporate Governance in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry, the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. Subsequently, the Institute of Cost Accountants of India, National Stock Exchange and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs also joined with an objective to promote good Corporate Governance practices both at the level of individual corporates and Industry as a whole.

NFCG endeavors to create a business environment that promotes voluntary adoption of good corporate governance practices.

Vision ●



Be the Key Facilitator and Reference Point for highest standards of Corporate Governance in India.

Mision ●



- ▶ To foster a culture of good corporate governance
- ▶ To create a framework of best practices, structure, processes and ethics
- ▶ To reduce the existing gap between Corporate Governance framework & actual compliance by corporates
- ▶ To facilitate effective participation of different stakeholders
- ▶ To catalyse capacity building in emerging areas of corporate governance

NFCG OBJECTIVES



Four Pronged Strategy

- ▶ Influencing policy through advocacy
- ▶ Empower through Education, Research & Resource hubs
- ▶ Enhancing the connect: membership and international collaborations and partnership
- ▶ Build on funding, branding and social media

NFCG Governing Structure



Governing Council



Board of Trustees

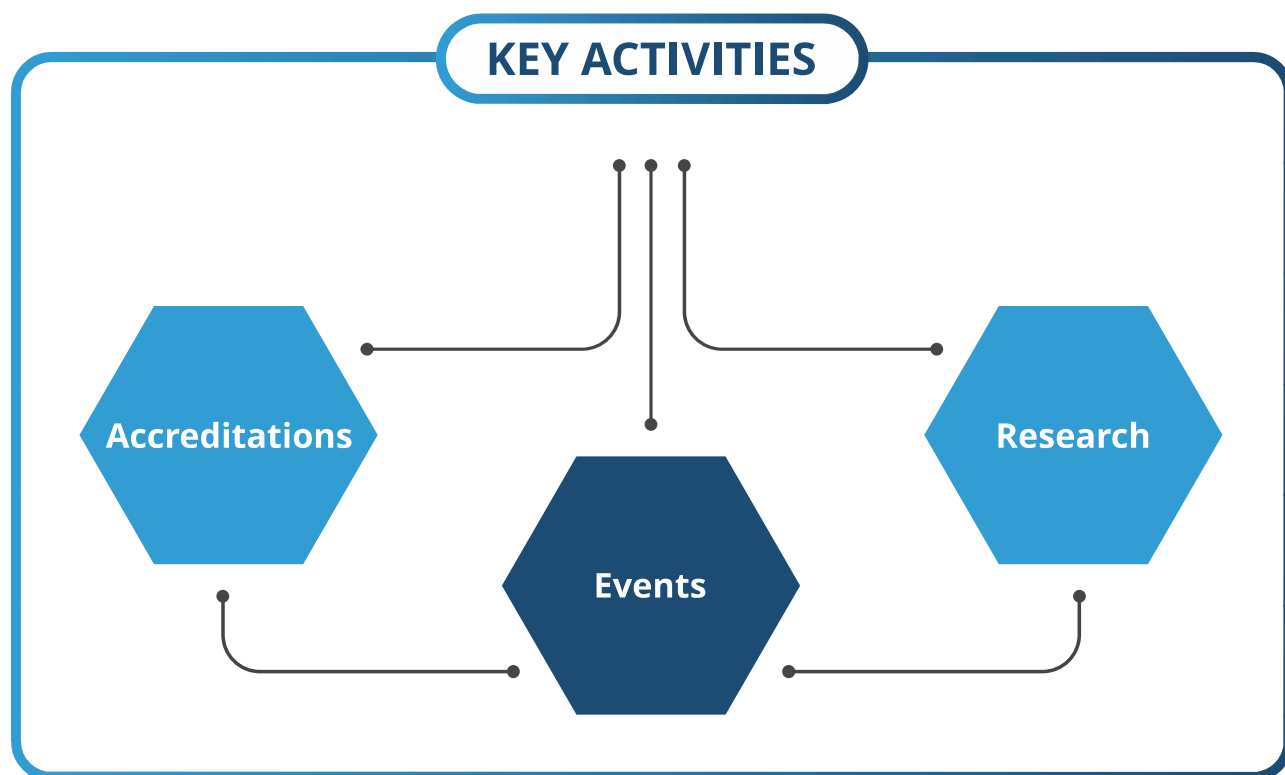


Executive Directorate

Governing Council: Works at the apex level for policy making and giving strategic direction. It is Chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.

Board of Trustees: Deals with the implementation of policies and programmes and laying down the procedure for the smooth functioning. It is led by the Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Executive Directorate: The Executive Directorate provides the internal support to NFCG activities and implements the decisions of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director is the Chief Executive Officer of NFCG. The Executive Director also functions as the Secretary of the Council and of the Board and is supported by full time dedicated professional secretariat.



Accreditations ●

With 47 Institutions accredited as National Centre for Corporate Governance, NFCG provides a unique platform that synergies the work of Industry, Professional Institutions, Government and Regulators (like SEBI, IRDAI, IBA, etc.) towards better governance of the Corporates in India.

About Banasthali Vidyapith

Banasthali Vidyapith is the world's largest residential university for women's education nurturing women for leadership roles in all walks of life since 1935. The 'Banasthali story' has no parallel across the globe. Today it has 15000 girl students on its 850-acre campus situated amidst rural settings in Tonk District of Rajasthan and offering programmes from nursery up to doctoral level to prepare enlightened citizens with strong value-base.

Banasthali's educational ideology is based on the concept of five- fold education comprising of physical, practical, aesthetic, intellectual and, above all, moral aspects to develop an integrated and balanced personality of the students besides the requisite professional training. Banasthali Vidyapith has been conceptualized to materialize the ethos of nation-building and Indian Culture. Banasthali's whole architecture stands upon the twin foundation pillars of Nationalism and Indian Culture. Since its inception, Banasthali Vidyapith has had a clear perspective about its educational efforts and has possessed a vivid picture of the form and pattern of educational programme to be adopted.

Enjoying the best of accolades, Banasthali Vidyapith has featured prominently in the national and international ratings and rankings like Times Higher Education - World University Rankings, QS – Asia, BRICS, NIRF, India Today etc. and re-accredited at the highest possible A++ Grade by the NAAC, GoI. It was also declared as 'University of the Year' by the FICCI in 2015.

Acknowledgement

This is to acknowledge here that the research study on Governance Lessons from Ancient and Contemporary Times: Insights from Life Stories of Women Leaders has been conducted by National Center for Corporate Governance, Banasthali Vidyapith, as part of a grant by the **National Foundation of Corporate Governance (NFCG)** under the policy for Financial Grant for Research Work under Aegis of NFCG (2021-22) dated 29th December 2021.

We are thankful to NFCG for extending the research grant for the study. This research study was conducted by the Research team led by Prof. Harsh Purohit (P.I), supported by Dr. Ankur Joshi and Dr. Richa Chauhan (Co-P.I). Special thanks to CS Amitava Banerjee for his crucial inputs as an industry expert.

The research team members are grateful to Prof. Sharda Nandram, Dr. Aparna Sharma, Ms. Rita Chatuvedi, and Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal for sparing their time to share their experiences. Banasthali Vidyapith expresses gratitude towards Dr. Kapil Sharma for compilation of story of Smt. Ratan Shastri. Thanks are due to Dr. Priyanka Dutt for support in translation of key scriptures and suggesting leadership implications.

We extend sincere thanks to all the members who contributed in developing this report - Dr. Ravisha Chutani, Ms. Pallavi Joshi, Ms. Aarti Ross and Ms. Richa Sharma. We also thank our office staff for taking care of administrative aspects related to the research work. The project work during this year could have not been possible without continuous and relentless support from the university's office staff, technical support, library staff, and accounts section.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The concept of good governance cuts across all aspects of the society and is fundamental to its smooth, efficient, and effective functioning. Leadership plays an important role in ensuring good governance. In this backdrop another crucial component is women leadership and its role in good governance. It is generally believed that contemporary era is putting unprecedented efforts in promoting women leadership. However, in Bharatiya culture, women have been playing a far more significant role in leadership, governance, and decision-making. They have been holding major positions of responsibilities and have been provided with opportunities to receive education and attain high standards in terms of intellectual learning and spiritual experiences. Women are considered to the part of the “Shakti” meaning “Strength & Power”. In history of Bharat there are stories of many women who have displayed exemplary leadership qualities even in extremely challenging situations. Women like Rani Durgawati, Rani Lakshmibai, Rani Rudrama Devi, Rajmata Jijabai, Rani Chennamma etc., had strong determination and were a ray of hope for their followers in their era. Despite numerous challenges, they pursued their goals with full strength and vigour. They made remarkable contributions towards the welfare of the society and the family.

In a series of unfortunate events (invasions and colonial factors) unfolding in our society the cultural practices witnessed various aberrations and the society went into a deep state of slumber. For this, leaders made efforts to rebuild the society. As a result, Bharatiya society again started to realize its own strengths. In contemporary times as well, women are contributing to all fields and helping the society scale heights with their abilities. Through this Bharat is poised to lead the world in the new era.

In this backdrop, it is pertinent that research is carried on such aspects and focus can be to draw the ideas of leadership and governance from the stories of ancient and contemporary women leaders. It is no surprise that contributions of many women from

Bharat in ancient as well as contemporary time is significant, thus such studies would contribute to further improvement.

The stories of ancient women leaders work as an eyeopener and as an account as well which can help the people to draw the lessons of governance and leadership. Those strategies and tactics can be implemented in today's scenario. There were several women leaders who faced many obstacles during their journey to success. They always learnt a lesson from every challenge and tackled the next challenge with double zeal and strength. Every person in this world gets inspired from someone and takes lessons from their thoughts, ideas, personality etc. The present generation can take lessons from the life of the ancient women leaders and can implement their ideas, thoughts, and strategies in the governance process.

The idea of considering women's leadership being a new phenomenon is due to lack of holistic approach of scholars who discard the ideas and examples from ancient literature and experiences of Bharatiya civilization.

Today, there is a global trend in the direction of promoting gender equality and empowering women in diverse spheres where government took many initiatives to support and empower the women such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, UJJAWALA, Working Women Hostel, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Nari Shakti Puraskar, Mahila Shakti Kendra etc. These economic and social policies created an environment for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential. In some countries, women played a great role in transitioning the whole scenario.

In Bharat, women played a vital role in promoting the sustainable development of business. They have supported and contributed to the economy of the country by doing jobs in different sectors. They have made a massive impact on the development of the country through their work. The participation of women can be seen as the rebirth in national life. They have a huge impact on the well-being of national life and the community. They are the family's souls in households and nation's souls when they play

the role of a leader. There are several examples of women leaders of contemporary times such as Kiran Bedi, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Arundhati Bhattacharya, Sushma Swaraj etc, who came up with great leadership qualities and helped in shaping the nation.

Despite such great contributions, women face various challenges which hinders their growth and active engagement in governance – all due to aberrations from ancient culture of this land. The negative social thoughts are pulling women back and harming the society as well. Somewhere there is disconnect between ancient approach of our culture and current practices. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to prioritize in understanding the right approach based on Bharatiya culture and wisdom to implement the initiatives of nurturing women leaders.

In this study, the governance lessons from the ancient and the contemporary women leaders are drawn. The success stories of early women leaders in business and government, who had to pave their own way without models and theories, can inspire the present generation. The research broadly covered topics related to governance, women leaders, and indigenous wisdom. Given the nature of research, a mixed research approach was adopted. To study the governance lessons from stories of women leaders from ancient times, qualitative and indigenous research methodology was adopted. For contemporary leaders survey research method was adopted in which document analysis was done and interviews were conducted. Based on the findings from both phases final conclusions were drawn.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The participation and role of women in governance can yield exemplary results. Women are set to bring about new perspectives due to their life experiences different from men. Women are more likely to ensure ethics and fairness by reaching into the grassroots, inclined to practice and promote forgiveness and acceptance, disposing forgiveness and acceptance, and believing in strengthening partnerships (Powley & Anderlini 2003). Yen (2014) observes that the communication style of women embraces format, beauty, sophistication, collaboration and ethics which makes them supportive and collaborative leaders. The benefit of women leadership in ensuring good governance stems out from the ability of women to cooperate and communicate effectively and practicing more flexibility along with process orientation. The synergy and harmony created by women assist in establishing good governance. The role of women leadership in ensuring good governance helps in achieving productivity and sustainable growth in heterogeneous environments.

Strøm, D'Espallier & Mersland (2014) believes that with women representation on board, governance and performance improves. The orientation of women towards supporting and maintaining relationships facilitates the learning climate and also the performance improves as women are better advisors. Oduol (2011) mentions that women are generally considered to be less corrupt and are more consultative which helps in establishing good governance. More than one representation of women on board makes the board discussions warm and more open. Women stand generally high in terms of accountability and the discussions get more transparent. It is women who more closely monitor the implementation of strategies. Since women have different experiential backgrounds and communicate more effectively, they can bring different perspectives to decision making. With the presence of women on board the board behavior becomes more civilized and focus on attention to detail improves. Women always get on with the task in hand, focus on innovation and customer and employee satisfaction enhances (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh 2009).

The board of directors diversity is one of the quality that has attracted huge interest. For instance, the female representation increased significantly in the boardroom from 16.9% to 25% in Fortune 100 firms (Deloitte, 2019). The empirical evidence depicts that woman may lead differently than men (Kirsch, 2018). From an investor's viewpoint, one of the factors that affects firms future performance is the presence of female directors and their board independence. Due to the inclusion of female directors on board, investors react positively and believe that as a result they will gain positive returns (Adams, 2015). Furthermore, women are known to enhance participative decision-making, be more ethically responsible (Bart & McQueen, 2013), and to be more collaborative, and which could reduce board conflicts (Nielsen & Huse, 2010). Additionally, they are known to be more responsible, independent, and diligent in supervising and controlling the audit function of firm's (Li & Li, 2020), ensuring firms quality of financial statements (Compernelle, 2018), more security-oriented (Martin-Ugedo et al., 2018), and more concerned but less power-oriented (Adams & Funk, 2012). These practices make firms less associated with fraudulent practices (Gao et al., 2017).

Jamali, Safieddine & Daouk (2007) brings up the point that representation of women brings in varied experiences. They drive new skills, abilities, fresh perspectives and greater sensitivity. Unlike men counterparts, women are concerned with a deep understanding of operations and processes, pay more focus on investing time and energy and are more compliance driven which help in ensuring good governance. With the gender diversity in boards with the presence of women, there gets more attention and addresses on issues such as ethics, conflicting interests and more openness in discussions. Women help the board sensitise towards the interests of stakeholders more often than men. The representation of women on board influences positively. The higher representation of women on boards facilitate thorough and comprehensive deliberations, more exhaustive evaluations, active oversight of proposed strategic actions etc. The difference in way of interaction creates room for more comprehensive discussions and less groupthink and making the decision-making process more contentious (Chen, Crossland & Huang 2016).

Women participation on boards of emerging market firms has a positive impact on its accounting performance as women's excellence in collaborative work and in establishing relationships is considered to be of high value for the group work that characterizes board's activity (Dargnies 2012). Also, when compared to their male counterparts, women tend to hold management accountable for performance more firmly and also excels in monitoring activities (Triana, Miller & Trzebiatowski 2014).

Women bring new ideas and different perspectives given their varied experiences. The more diverse board with women representation results in less absenteeism and a greater number of meetings. The effectiveness increases as a result of greater participation in decision making and tough monitoring (Adams & Ferreira 2009). Different behaviour and characteristics possessed by women contributes to improving the board's operations. Women are more involved than men in monitoring and excelled in establishing relationships, hence contributing to good governance (Abdullah, Ismail & Nachum 2016).

Gender diversity on board with women representation has a positive impact on corporate governance. Women generally have a broader perspective facilitating reduced information bias which enhances decision making leading to better performance. They are less overconfident than the male counterparts and are cautious in decision making and more likely to apply ethical standards in decision making. The impact results in more attendance at board meetings. The actual representation (not just token) of women indicates increased quality of corporate disclosure and governance practices, more involvement in improving quality of financial reporting by voluntary disclosures of annual reports. Females are less manipulative, more active in monitoring and more focused towards control and supervision. Female counterparts score high in trustworthiness and interpersonal skills, they are more process oriented and embrace participative communication style thereby improving efficiency (Al-Jaifi 2020).

Several studies have shed light on the role of gender diversity and females' presence on the board is a corporate governance mechanism. Gender diversity on the board delivers

valuable advice and new perspectives to the top managers (Anderson et al., 2011), resulting in improving firm performance (García-Meca et al., 2015) and better decision making related to resolving problems (Daily et al., 2003). Female directors' presence on board enhances firms' legitimacy and enhances decision making (Hillman et al., 2007 & Milliken and Martins, 1996), and reduces information asymmetry (Gul et al., 2011). Another benefit of having more female directors on board is that women are more likely to apply ethical standards in their decision making (Pan & Sparks, 2012; Ambrose & Schminke, 1999). Furthermore, women on board are considered to be more risk-averse than men and to be less overconfident, thereby implying caution in their decision making (Dowling & Aribi, 2013; Barber & Odean, 2001). Females' existence on the board is perceived as the quality of firm's governance practices and corporate disclosure and to maintain their firm's reputation, women are more likely to be involved in improving the quality of financial reporting (Brammer, Millington & Pavelin, 2009). Gordini and Rancati (2017) revealed that women's higher proportion on boards increased the market value of firm (Tobin's Q).

Rationale for the research

The ancient history of our country is full of stories of exemplary women leaders who played a prominent role in business or governance. Unfortunately, in the absence of awareness of these stories many misconceptions about women's leadership prevail. At the same time society remains deprived of this crucial understanding that as per Bharatiya culture women have an important role to play in ensuring good governance in society at various levels. The review of extant literature suggests the neglect of this topic of research. This has serious implications for our country because the vacuum created gets filled by stories and narratives from other culture and context and does not contribute much to development at grassroots. In this backdrop, the present study has potential to make unique contributions in domain of women leadership and governance.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Research Objective

To study the stories of women leaders from ancient times and contemporary era to draw governance lessons.

As mentioned in introduction section, given the nature of research a mixed research approach was adopted. To study the governance lessons from stories of women leaders from ancient times, qualitative and indigenous research methodology was adopted. For this, in the first level scriptures and historical documents were studied. After this, interviews of people who are expert of ancient knowledge were conducted. For contemporary leaders survey research method was adopted in which interviews were. Also, the document analysis was done based on the stories of leaders available in literature in the books, articles, and authentic sources like government archives.

To arrive at a conclusion which is based on holistic perspective, synthesis of findings from both phases was done.

Research Design

A holistic framework based on contemporary and indigenous approach was adopted for conducting this research (refer figure 1).



Figure 1: Research Design

Sampling Details and Data Collection

The study was based on both, the primary and as well as secondary sources. Primary sources: Interviews of the experts in the domain of ancient knowledge about women leaders and Governance were done to gain insights. At the same time, historians with an indigenous worldview were also interviewed. For stories of contemporary leaders, women leaders who have made a mark were interviewed. Indigenous Sources: The scriptures like Ramayan and Puraan and literature from other sources were studied to identify stories of unheard women leaders from ancient times.

A framework was developed in consultation with experts for documenting the stories of ancient and contemporary women leaders (Annexure 1 and Annexure 2).

Data Analysis

The data collected has been analysed through document analysis, content analysis and thematic analysis. For data collected through scriptures and ancient knowledge experts, the indigenous research approach to data analysis was adopted. The indigenous data requires a blend of contemporary and indigenous research analysis techniques. Finally, synthesis of ideas was done to suggest recommendations for improving governance through promotion of women leadership.

Reliability and Validity

At the end, expert consultations were done to ensure reliability and validity. Based on the inputs from experts, necessary modifications were done to enhance the robustness of the model.

Chapter 4 Life Stories of leaders, Analysis and Findings

4.1 Life stories of women leaders from ancient times

Rani Durgavati

Rani Durgavati was born on 5th October 1524 in the family of Gurjar Chandela's Rajput ruler Keerat Pal Singh at the fort of Kalanjar in Banda, Uttar Pradesh. She lost her mother at a young age; therefore, she was raised with great care by Shalivahan. In 1542, Durgavati married Dalpat Singh and in 1545 A.D., she gave birth to a son named Vir Narayan.



Rani had acquired proficiency in martial arts, horse riding, archery, and fencing in her childhood from her father. She was a master at aiming with both arrows and guns. After the death of her husband, she took the reign of the Gond kingdom into her hands. While being extremely busy with governance responsibilities, she also looked after the education of her son.

In 1562, Akbar's subedar Abdul Majid Khan was moving towards the Gondwana. Mughals asked Rani Durgavati to surrender herself, but she refused and courageously replied that instead she would choose death. Her army's spirits were also high after defeating the huge army of Asaf Khan. Thus, inspired by the success of her army she refused to submit to Mughals. The case with Asaf Khan is an prominent aspect in life story of Rani Durgavati. He thought that being a woman, Rani Durgavati will not be hurdle for him in taking control of the kingdom. But Rani led army in a fierce battle and within no time, the

legs of the Mughal army were uprooted. Asaf Khan had to return defeated. He attacked Mandla several times in twelve years but every time he had to face defeat.

Rani Durgavati appeared like an incarnation of Maa Durga. She was leading her army in a manner that encouraged by them to fight with full enthusiasm. Asaf Khan was defeated at that time and Akbar sent a huge army to fight against her. Vir Narayan also fought bravely with Asaf Khan, but due to so continuous wars, the strength of the army strength was reduced. When Vir Narayan got injured and fell down from the horse, Mother Durgavati burst on the enemies like hungry lioness. Even after being injured, she was fighting with the lightning velocity. An arrow got stuck in her eyes, and after continuing to fight for some time, she started to lose her strength. However, she had pledged not to surrender herself in front of the Mughals. Therefore, she took out the dagger from her waist pierced herself. This was end to the life of a great daughter of Bharat.

Her story is not limited to bravery and valour on the battlefield. She built many lakes in her kingdom and did a lot for the welfare of her people. She also contributed in the field of education by inviting scholars and extending her patronage to them. For example, she provided space of about 108 villages and invited the Vitthalnath of Vallabh Community to setup centres of learning on Advait Principles. Rani Durgavati was also known for kind-hearted approach towards the citizens and treated everyone equally.

The learning from life story of Rani Durgavati:

- As a youth, even if people don't have experience, through the motivation to work for the development of society or nation, one can create wonders.
- Self-belief and confidence are essential to overcome difficult situations. If the youth can overcome self-hatred and have firm belief in own capabilities, Bharat can progress at a much higher rate.
- For a leader, central idea is to lead from the front. The story of Rani Durgavati is an exemplar to this fact and there is no alternative to it.

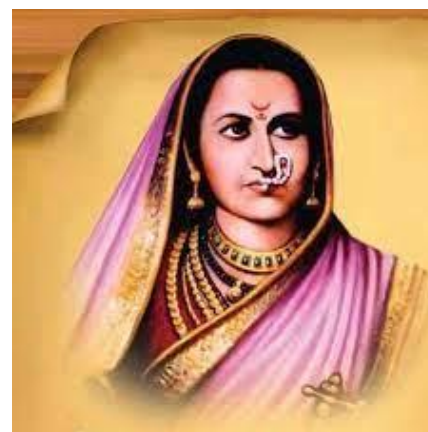
- Amidst all dynamism, she took time for creating learning opportunities for the society by inviting experts of indigenous knowledge. This is an important aspect to learn regarding social responsibility of a leader – that even being busy to the core, focusing on responsibility towards social aspects is inseparable.

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Rajmata Jijabai

Jijabai was born in the year 1598 A.D., in Sindkhed territory of Vidarbha, Maharashtra. Her father Lakhuji Jadhavrao was an eminent Maratha Sardar, while her mother was Malasa Bai. She was the only daughter of Lakhuji and was married to Shahaji Bhonsle. They had eight children, of whom six were daughters and two were sons, Shivaji being one of them born in 1630 A.D.



First major incident of her life was when the relations of her families from father's and husband's side got strained. The dissent became violent and Lakhuji lost his son Dattaji while Shahji lost his brother Sambhaji. This rivalry continued for long. The second tragic incident in life of Jijabai was when Nizam Shah killed her father and brothers, and due to which her mother and sisters-in-law committed sati. Her whole family was dilapidated in one stroke. This was a severe blow for her. She told Shahaji to establish an independent kingdom i.e. work towards "Swaraj Sthapana". After this, Shahaji left the Nizamshahi and make strides in this direction. However, he could not achieve the goal of "Swaraj Sthapana".

After the failure of her husband, Jijabai decided to fulfil her dream of Swaraj through Shivaji and she accordingly educated him. They both went to Pune which was plundered by Khawas Khan. She took charge and restored everything there. When she came to know that people are under the superstition that the state can't flourish then she decided to plough the field with the gold plough and asked Shivaji to do it. When Shivaji started ploughing the field, other farmers also got inspired and started to plough their fields. This act of Jijabai and Shivaji was successful in removing the curse of Pune. Jijabai was an ideal mother who instilled values of patriotism and love for the Dharm in Shivaji. To make him patriotic and ethical, she used to tell the stories of great and brave personalities such as Shri Krishn, Sri Ram, Hanuman ji etc. She refined him and made him an ideal ruler by

sowing the seeds of devotion to Dharm and Nation. The stories of Ramayan and Mahabharat motivated her, as well as Shivaji, when she narrated those stories to him. Jijabai was always guided by her confidence and faith in the blessings of Bhagwati Bhavani and Mahadev. She firmly believed that with the grace of Bhagwan, all efforts bring success to the doorstep. She renovated the Kasaba Ganpati Temple. She took the pledge to establish the “Hindavi Swaraj” and was very happy with its successful launch through Shivaji. Various demolished temples were rebuilt with Jijabai’s orders. Saints started coming and Katha- Kirtan- Pravachan started happening as before. Nearby villagers started coming to Jijabai to narrate their sufferings. She listened to them carefully and used to give them proper solutions. She used to listen to the mutual disputes in open court and helped to resolve it. The dream of Jijabai was fulfilled when the slogan of Hindavi Swaraj was floating not only in India but also in the whole world.

The learning which can be drawn from life of Maharani Jijabai are:

- The ideas from scriptures like Ramayan and Puran can help in defining the purpose of the life. At the same time, it can serve as a motivation to even turn the tides into favour.
- The life of Jijabai also throws light on importance of succession planning. Nurturing future leaders on the path of dharm, ethics and values is essential.
- Interdisciplinary knowledge and faith in Bhagwan, when both are coupled the person can bring transformation in the society.
- Remaining focused, determined, and consistent along with a personality which is the embodiment of virtue and self-respect defines a leader.

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Rani Rudrama Devi

Rani Rudrama Devi was born to Ganapatidev who was the founder of Kakatiya Dynasty. She was married to Chalukya prince Virabhadra. Ganapatidev raised her like a son and even held a ceremony named 'Putrika' to officially designate her as a son. She used to wear the attire like a boy. Since childhood she received the training of martial arts and kingly skills. She had to face high levels of resistance and at every stage she had to prove her mettle. Under the able guidance of her Guru Shivadevayya, Rani Rudrama went through tough training of horse riding, sword fighting, and other arts of warfare. Under his keen supervision and training, Rudrama mastered the art of leading the army, planning and execution of strategies to overpower the enemies and opponents. He taught her about administration, politics, and the rules of war. Jayappa was her maternal uncle who taught her the art of dance and made her a fine artist. Konkanabhattu, another teacher who acquainted her with music and literature.



One of the most challenging situations was when she lost her husband at a young age. She faced an extremely tough time, as she took care of her ailing father and moaned about the death of her husband. She did not neglect her duties even in state of such a deep sorrow. She channelized all her strength and discharged her duties as a ruler. She faced another challenge after the coronation was that her nomination and succession was not getting approved. Some nobles who were not ready to accept a female ruler took up arms against her. But with the help of some powerful supporters and citizens, Rudrama was able to effectively tackle them. Kalinga King Narsimha-I previously suffered defeat at the hands of Ganapatideva, tried to take advantage of the chaotic condition in Kakatiya Kingdom, but her able commanders defeated him.

Yadava ruler Mahadeva invaded the Kakatiya kingdom and took control of Warangal, the capital of the kingdom. Then, Rani Rudrama put up a very stiff resistance by leading her army and fought for fifteen days. She destroyed three lakhs of cavalry and chased Mahadev up to the walls of fort of Devagiri. She never stepped back in leading her army and going to the battlefield. Rani Rudrama Devi was one of the greatest rulers of Andhra-
 desh, who established her supremacy in the southern region. Also, she was the only ruler of Kakatiya Dynasty who had taken control of parts of Yadava Kingdom.

Rudrama preferred the decentralized type of administration, with the limited enforcement and interference. The administrative officers like Mandalikas, and all constituents of the kingdom seem to have no clash with each other. All activities were taken up for the welfare of people such as charities, construction of temples, lakes, tanks, choultries for free feeding without caste and creed discrimination, and hospitals for health care. Several measures were taken for the welfare of devadasis. Rani Rudrama used to give interviews to the visitors and foreigners and diligently heard reports of the secret services to take corrective measures. She further fortified the fort for the security concern with the three rampart walls. 'Vidya Mandapa', was an educational institution of that period. She encouraged the construction of temples and built a Ranga Mandapam at Swayambhu Temple. She regulated the temples with humaneness.

Rani Rudrama was very much inspired by the works of her father, Ganapatideva. She carried forward his legacy by promoting the works in literature, art, and architecture. She gave patronage to art and architecture and encouraged religious activities. Sanskrit occupied an important place during the Kakatiya period. She extensively contributed to the advancement of Sanskrit Literature and continued the legacy of her father by establishing Sanskrit college to provide education and a Shaiva mutt for propagation of religion. Temples became the nucleus of villages and served place for elevating the spirit of masses.

The learning that can be drawn from the life of Rani Rudrama Devi are:

- Any position of responsibility requires that person utilizes the skills and capacities that are developed over the time and the commitment towards the goals makes the difference.
- To manage the crisis effectively - overcoming hurdles from internal objections and external factors both are essential.
- A leader should focus on sustainable development ensuring that business flourish.
- Managing in-fighting and keeping the focus of members of organization on task is an essential task of a leader.

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Kittur Ki Rani Chennamma

Rani Chennamma was born in 1778, in Kakati (a small village in Karnataka). She was the daughter of Dhulappagouda Desai, who was a powerful figure in the northern part of Karnataka. She married King Mallasarja, the ruler of Kittur (a place in Karnataka) with whom she had a son named Shivabasavaraj Sarja. As a part of their family tradition, she was trained in archery, horse riding and sword fighting from a young age. Being a friend, philosopher and guide to her husband, she assisted him in the administration of the state and significantly played a great role in the political affairs of the region.



Rani was anxious regarding the succession issue of the kingdom as her son decided to adopt a boy to succeed him due to his health issues. She had suspicion on the agents of East India Company for their malicious acts to take over the kingdom under the Doctrine of Lapse policy. In that crucial time, she appealed important leaders to show undivided loyalty and give support to the state in the hour of crisis. Her intense appeal evoked an unconstrained response from almost everyone. Unfortunately, when all the channels of dialogue were closed, she finally made up her mind to face the crisis boldly.

One night, she was motivated by her husband in a dream. He appealed to her that the time has come to play a valiant role to save the freedom and honour of Kittur. He encouraged her to lead the army against the British following which she took an oath to obey his orders and lead the battle against the foreign invaders. Fighting against the huge British army was tough, but she always took the challenge and defeated them many times with courage, determination, and valour of her soldiers. She infused patriotism and loyalty among her people to the extent that they were ready to lay down their lives for their mother-land. She remained in close touch with the army and military and used to reward

brave soldiers with gifts. Rani Chennamma being a true epitome of following the Bhartiya tradition and values, protected the captive women and children of British officers. Under her rule, Kittur started flourishing again, became prosperous and strong. She was able to win over the Britishers many times with her strategies, tactics, and leadership skills.

Along with political skills, Rani Chennamma had a lot of love for literature and art as well. She patronized and encouraged the poets, artists, and scholars. She built almost 1000 temples and monasteries. She loved people and would get freely mixed with them.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Rani Chennamma:

- Being a woman of indomitable courage and patriotism, she loved her land so much that she was ready to sacrifice anything to preserve its freedom. Thus, a leader in any organization needs to be ready for putting all efforts for achieving outcomes.
- She had the intellectual abilities to manage crisis whether political or military. A leader needs to remain equipped with the skills to tackle all types of challenges.
- She used to preside over the meetings with great dignity and took quick decisions in the kingdom's best interest. This is an important learning for leaders as administrative hurdles, inefficient meetings and delay in decision making are detrimental to the growth of organizations.
- She had great qualities of leadership such as indomitable courage, statesmanship, presence of mind in any emergency, deep knowledge of military strategies and keen political acumen. This highlights the need for holistic development of personality of a leader.

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Rani Abbakka Chowta

Rani Abbakka was the Tuluva queen of Ullal and was married to Banga Lakshmappa Arasa, king of Banga principality in Mangalore. She is one of the India's earliest freedom fighters who resisted against the Portuguese for four decades. She was an extraordinary child and showed signs of being a visionary since a very early stage. Her father and uncle Tirumala Raya taught her the skills of military science and warfare, mainly sword fighting and archery. Nobody could match her in warfare and military science. She had an all-round personality. For her bravery, she came to be known as Abhaya Rani (The fearless queen).



The first attack of Portuguese took place in south Kanara coast in 1525, she led her troops with immense courage and intelligence. The Mangalore port was destroyed. Rani became alert with the incident and started preparing to protect her kingdom. In 1555, another incident took place when rani refused to pay tributes to the Portuguese. To avenge that insult, Admiral Don Alvaro da Silveira was sent by the Portuguese to fight against the Queen. She fought bravely and was able to push back the enemy repeatedly with her battle tactics and diplomatic strategies. After this, the Portuguese attacked them repeatedly, but the queen escaped and counter-attacked their army with her 200 soldiers. She killed General Peixoto and 70 soldiers.

Her married life was not a pleasant one, as her husband caused troubles in her personal life. The marriage was short lived as she returned to Ullal. Her husband longed for the revenge and got involved in a treachery too. He colluded with the Portuguese and revealed the secrets to the Portuguese. Rani lost the war. The brave daughter of the Bharat Mata did not give up. She revolted in the prison and died fighting.

She was a caring woman who worked late into the night to dispense justice to her people. She constructed the Dam at Malali. Rani Abbakka built a Shiv temple at Ullal, near city of Mangalore. She was the last known person to have the Agni-vana (fire-arrow) in her fight against the Portuguese. Ullal was a flourishing state under her leadership.

The learning that can be drawn from life story Rani Abbakka Chowta:

- She confronted, fought, and repeatedly defeated the Portuguese with her great warfare strategies. A leader needs to be robust enough to put in multiple efforts to achieve the goals.
- She was a great leader and an eminent personality who led her troops every time to defeat the enemies. The leader's consistency is essential to remain on top position.
- She managed the crisis by ferociously attacking the Portuguese army. Their frontal attacks didn't work on her. The challenges are bound to come and it's the resistance and robustness that plays an important role in success of any organization.

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Rani Lakshmi Bai

Rani Lakshmi Bai was born on 19 November 1835 as Manikarnika Tambe in a Marathi Karhade Brahmin family at Varanasi. Her father, Moropant Tambe, was a worker in Peshwa's court. Her mother, Bhagirathi Sapre, passed away when she was just four years old. Home was her first school, where she learnt many aspects of leading a fruitful life.



In 1842, she was married to the king of Jhansi Gangadhar Rao Newalkar. After the marriage, her name Manikarnika was changed to Lakshmi Bai. Her sparkling nature became very alluring to everyone. She used to practice weapons, play fencing, ride horse, and even play games on wars and strategy. In this manner, she could grasp components of governance and functioning of the kingdom. Everyone was highly impressed by her agility, acumen, and courage.

She gave birth to a son Damodar Rao but because of medical conditions, he died after four months of his birth. Later, Gangadhar Rao adopted his cousin's son Anand Rao and named him Damodar Rao. After the death of her husband Gangadhar Rao Newalkar in November 1853, the British East India Company, under Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, applied the Doctrine of Lapse, dismissing Damodar Rao's case to the privileged position of the throne and annexing the state to its territories. The entire obligation to save Jhansi was onto the shoulder of Rani Lakshmi Bai.

The first war of independence which was being planned meticulously during early 1850s, saw its first spark on 10th May 1857 in Meerut. Lakshmi Bai was administering Jhansi alone and she started driving her soldiers quickly and effectively to suppress the clashes. She assumed control over the soldiers and coordinated an arrangement to begin the conflict from Bundelkhand. Rani Lakshmi Bai led Haldi Kumkum ceremony with all ladies

of Jhansi to give affirmation to her subjects, and to persuade them that the British are cowards and not to fear them.

Rani chose to fight against the army as she opposed to give up against the Britishers. Along with her army, she fought against the Britishers for almost fourteen days. She embraced her child Damodar Rao on her back and killed numerous British troops with her sword. She enrolled troops, cast cannon, and initiated assembling of different weapons. She also personally trained her women military unit in military skills for the war. By March 1858, she was sure of her military strength. The biggest motivation for her was not letting her state Jhansi fall into the hands of the Britishers. Along with Taty Tope and troops, Rani captured the fort of Gwalior. Afterwards, she proceeded to Morar, Gwalior to combat the British. Rani Lakshmi Bai was martyred while combating in Gwalior on 17th June 1858.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Rani Lakshmi Bai:

- She fought the war, shoulder to shoulder with her troops. A leader needs to work along with employees towards organization's goals.
- She skilled her army involving male and female alike with the art of warship. A leader's focus on skill development of employees pays on the long run, especially in times of crisis.
- She chose to fight against the Britishers so that she could save her kingdom from them even after the death of her son and husband. Emotional balance of a leader is very crucial for organization's success.
- She was an example of self-respect, pride, and dignity that she did not even allow the Britishers to touch her body after her death. The leader's ability to not get swayed away inspires employees to remain firm on ground even in testing times.

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Durgawati Devi

Durgawati Devi also known as Durga Bhabhi was born on 7th October 1907 in a Gujrati Brahmin family in Prayagraj. Her father Pandit Bankey Bihari was a court official at the Prayagraj collectorate, and her grandfather Pandit Shivashankar was a landlord. She was the only child of her parents. She was married to Bhagwati Chandra Vohra, when she was 11 years old. In 1935, she gave birth to a son named Sachinanda. She had first



studied only up to class fifth but later completed her schooling. She is known as Durga Bhabhi because her husband Bhagwati Chandra Vohra was a member of HSRA (Hindustan Socialist Republic Association) therefore, HSRA members called her Bhabhi.

She helped Bhagat Singh to successfully escape to Kolkata after the death of John P. Saunders. During the escape, she portrayed herself as Bhagat Singh's wife. She also helped him with the money given by her husband. She was well known for procuring weapons for the HSRA. The pistol with which Chandrashekar Azad shot himself was given by Durga Bhabhi to him.

Durgawati Devi was an active participant in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. She initiated the funeral procession of well-known freedom fighter Jatin Das, who sacrificed his life after protesting for 63 days of hunger strike in Lahore jail. She had an in-depth and practical knowledge of making bombs which helped during freedom movement. She and her husband helped Vimal Prasad Jain to run a bomb manufacturing factory 'Himalayan Toilets'. In 1929, Durgawati Devi attempted to kill Lord Hailey soon after Bhagat Singh went to jail. She and her husband tried to free Bhagat Singh from the Lahore Jail but during the testing of the bomb her husband Bhagwati Chandra Vohra died. Unfortunately, the plan could not come to fruition. Appetency for Bhartiya Independence was her whole motivation. Her fearless attitude helped the revolutionaries and HSRA to achieve their motives to an extent. She was arrested and got three years of imprisonment.

After her release from the Lahore jail, she resumed her secondary school education. In 1935, she opened a school for underprivileged children in Lucknow. In 1936, she started teaching at Pyare Lal Girls School, Ghaziabad. In 1938, she joined as the President of the Congress Party. She is also known as 'The Agni of India' and sometimes as Iron Lady for her struggle against the Britishers. She perpetuated the Bhartiya culture of total surrender towards a particular aim. She sacrificed all her wealth for the sake of Bharat's Independence.

The learning that can be taken drawn from life story of Durga Wati Devi:

- Her revolution against the Britishers for injustice towards Indians shows her surge for good governance. A leader needs to work for better governance at every stage.
- She continued teaching students even after being jailed many times and that too for prolonged years. A leader needs to be socially responsible also drive the culture of responsibility within the organization.
- In a lot of crises when the British government was hunting for Bhagat Singh, she was able to take him to Kolkata disguising herself as Bhagat Singh's wife. This shows that with better management and planning, even most of complex and challenging situations could be handled.

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Lakshmi Sahgal

Lakshmi Swaminathan was born on 24th October 1914 in a Brahmin family in Madras to S. Swaminathan and A.V. Ammukutty. Her father was a lawyer who practiced criminal law in Madras high court. Her mother was a social worker and a freedom fighter. She was the elder sister of Mrinalini Sarabhai who was an Indian Classical dancer, Choreographer, and the founder of Darpana Academy of Performing Arts. After her first marriage failed, she re-married Prem Sahgal in March 1947 in Lahore, who was an officer in British Indian Army, and later he served in Indian National Army, which was led by Subhas Chandra Bose. The Sahgals had two daughters, Subhashini and Anisa Puri.



Since her childhood Lakshmi was a very compassionate and kind-hearted person. She used to play with children of all communities. After completing the high school in Madras at Queen Mary's College, she further decided to study medical science and got an MBBS degree from Madras Medical College in 1938. After a year, she received her diploma in Gynaecology and Obstetrics. Later, she worked as a doctor in the Government Kasturba Gandhi Hospital, in erstwhile Madras.

After the failure of her marriage with Pilot P.K.N. Rao, she left for Singapore in 1940, and after three years she met Subhash Chandra Bose, which redirected her life. In Singapore, Lakshmi remembered that there were a lot of patriot Indians like K. P. Kesava Menon, S. C. Guha, N. Raghavan, and others, who were part of a Council of Action. In 1942, during surrender of Singapore by the British to the Japanese, Lakshmi aided wounded prisoners of battle, many of whom have been inquisitive about forming an Indian independence military.

Lakshmi, to this point, had been on the edges of the INA, heard that Bose became eager to induct women into the organization. She requested a meeting with him, and it emerged

from a 5-hour interview that a women's regiment of INA will be formed, and it will be named Rani of Jhansi regiment. There was a high-quality reaction from women to sign up for the all-women brigade. Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan became Captain Lakshmi. By 22 October 1943, 156 girls and women from among the Bharatiya groups in Singapore and Malaya from an extensive variety of ethnic, social, and language backgrounds had joined the regiment, which turned into part of Bose's plan to liberate Bharat from British domination.

After India got independence, Sahgal continued her medical practice in Kanpur. She worked among the displaced (refugees) people of post-partition India. During the Bangladesh battle of 1971, she headed out to Calcutta and worked in the border areas of Bongaon for around six weeks, giving medical assistance to the migrants and refugees. Later, she turned into one of the founding participants of all India democratic Women's Association in 1981 and led many of its campaigns and activities. In 1984, she went to Bhopal with a medical group after the gas tragedy. Her obligation to mainstream values despite affliction was shown on various events. Till the end of her life, Captain Lakshmi remained actively engaged in civil society and continued her work as a doctor.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Lakshmi Sahgal:

- The keenness to learn and skill oneself is a must-have trait for any person who aspires to be a leader.
- The conviction of a person to accomplish certain task comes very handy when it is being envisioned. The clarity of thought about the vision, mission and objectives makes the difference.

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Velu Nachiyar

Velu Nachiyar was born in 1730 in Ramanathapuram to Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy and Rani Sakandimuthal. She was the only child of her parents. In 1746, she was married to Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar who was the prince of Shivganga. She was a thoroughly trained in horse riding, archery, Silambam (fighting with stick) and in combative techniques like Valari, using war weapons and martial arts. She was a scholar and had control over many languages, including English, French and Urdu.



In 1780, Hyder Ali with 80,000 soldiers went after the Nawab of Arcot who was supported a few British troops. With the Nawab and British engaged in battle with Hyder Ali, Velu Nachiyar considered this to be an ideal chance to strike against the British. Seizing this as an opportunity the queen and her soldiers walked towards Sivaganga, around 100 kms from Dindigul. At the point when her husband Muthuvaduganathaperiya was martyred in the combat, she got away with her daughter and lived under the security of Palayakaarar Kopaala Naayakkar at Virupachi, close to Dindigul for around eight years.

In 1780, she encountered the British army and with this she turned into the India's first queen to battle for freedom against the Britishers. She came to realize about the ammunition store of the Britishers. With this information, the courageous queen, referred to by Tamils as Veeramangai, (brave women), planned a suicidal attack into the ammunition store. A military commandant and a faithful devotee of the queen, Kuyili, approached to complete the mission. Kuyili soaked herself with ghee and afterward set herself fire prior to hopping into ordnance and exploding it, and thereby obtaining a victory for her queen.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Velu Nachiyar:

- She was so determined to wrest her kingdom back and invested the energy when she remained in Dindigul in arranging and assembling allies for attack. The strategic approach followed by a leader plays a crucial role in development of the organization as well as taking on the competition.
- She also built a women army 'Udaiyaal' and prepared them for fighting in the war. With the assistance of women armed force and clever plan, she was able to get Victory on her kingdom. A leader's focus on bringing in diverse work-force pays of multi-fold.

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Ahilyabai Holkar

Ahilyabai was born in a Marathi Family on May 31, 1725, in the village Chondi Maharashtra. Her father, Mankoji Shinde was a scion of a respectable Dhangar family and served as the Patil. Her mother was Sushila Shinde. Ahilyabai got married to Khanderao Holkar in 1733 and gave birth to a son Male Rao and a daughter Muktabai.



Ahilyabai didn't belong to a royal family. Malhar Rao Holkar, an acclaimed nobleman in the Malwa region spotted eight-year-old Ahilyabai at a temple service taking care of the hungry and poor, while on his way route to Pune. Tremendously moved by the little girl's thoughtful gesture and strength of character, he chose to ask her hand in marriage for his child Khanderao Holkar.

During her childhood, Ahilya's father taught her to read and write. All through her married life, she was ably guided by her mother-in-law Gautama Bai. She trained Ahilya in administration, accounts, politics, etc., and later in 1759, she gave her Khasgi wealth to Ahilya. In 1754, after her husband's death Ahilya Bai wanted to perform the Sati. It was her father-in-law who directed her to work for the kingdom instead of performing Sati. She chose to control over the administration of her kingdom and the lives of her people.

Followed by the demise of Male Rao Holkar, attempts were made to usurp her kingdom. Raghunathrao, uncle of Peshwa Madhavrao, set up his military at the banks of Shipra to attack the Holkar space of Indore. On becoming aware of the camp of Raghunathrao's through her spies, Ahilyabai promptly dispatched letters to compatriots of her late father-in-law, Mahadji Scindia, and Damaji Rao Gaekwad, requesting help and she collected the Holkar's armed force with the assistance of Tukoji. The Bhonsales of Nagpur sent their armed forces to help her and Peshwa Madhavrao approved Ahilyabai to make a hostile move against Raghunathrao. Ahilyabai herself went to the front line with her female

guardians to confront Raghunathrao. Seeing Ahilyabai's boldness, Raghunathrao was terrified and withdrew himself back.

There are numerous stories which signify her care and concern towards people in the kingdom. She assisted widows in withholding their husband's wealth and property. She permitted that a widow could adopt a child. Ahilyabai is also credited with the calm and composed resolution of conflict with tribals within her boundaries.

Ahilyabai is well known for building various forts and streets in Malwa, sponsoring festivals, and served as a patron in several Hindu temples. Her magnanimity is reflected in the development of various temples, ghats, wells, tanks, and rest-houses extending across the country. From Somnath in the west to the Kashi Vishwanath in the east, Holkar devoted her life to remodelling and renovating temples which were attacked and plundered by Muslim invaders.

Her kingdom's capital, Maheshwar, was a mixture of music and culture and she is known to have opened ways to stalwarts like the Marathi writer Moropant, Shahir Anantaphandi, and Sanskrit researcher, Khushali Slam. The capital was additionally known for its artists, stone carvers, and craftsmen who were paid liberally for their work. Ahilya bai likewise settled a textile industry in the city so that people can have a source of income not only for just a few years, but forever. And, today, there are 1,500-1,700 looms in Maheshwar serving the art of making "Maheshwari Sarees".

During her rule, Malwa was not even once attacked when around the entire of Central India was confronting a fight for control. Malwa stayed with stability and peace under her rule. She was consistently accessible to any individual who required her assistance. Amongst Ahilyabai's achievements was the improvement of Indore from a little town to a well-off and wonderful city.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Ahilyabai Holkar:

- She continued to govern Malwa in a most authentic manner based on high levels of integrity fuelled by her spiritual inclinations. In the contemporary era, the spiritual dimensions of a leader are also being considered important. This is the domain where Bharatiya ideas are poised to play very prominent role.
- She also established a textile industry so that people can generate income by doing work not for only a few seasons but forever. The visionary approach of a leader and ability to build an eco-system is something that contributes to development of organization for long.

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4.2 Stories of Contemporary Women Leaders

Prof. Dr. Sharda S. Nandram

Professor, Nyenrode Business University, The Netherlands

Professor, Hindu Spirituality and Society, Vrije University The Netherlands

Prof. Sharda Nandram, born in Suriname, has been a Dutch resident since 1985. Her family originally hailed from Rajasthan, India. Prof. Nandram is full professor at Nyenrode Business University within the center for Entrepreneurship, Governance and Stewardship. She is also a full professor of Hindu spirituality and



society at the Faculty of Religion and Theology of the Vrije University Amsterdam. She holds a position as adjunct professor at the Banasthali University, world's biggest residential university for women. She is also a non-executive director of Buurtzorg Edugreen Neighborhood Care India. Sharda is a member of the steering committee of the European SPES (Spirituality Economics Society) Institute and co-founder of Praan Group.

She has studied at the University of Amsterdam, where she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in both Psychology and Economics. She received her PhD in Social Sciences from the Vrije University Amsterdam. Sharda has published more than 75 articles in academic and professional journals, and she has written about 30 book chapters, 21 books, about 45 reviewed papers, and 45 research reports. She is mentioned in more than 75 newspaper articles and magazines.

Sharda has more than three decades of research, consulting and entrepreneurial experience in the healthcare, banking and insurance, government, education, and sports sectors. She is the founder of the concept of "Integrating Simplification" and the co-founder of the concept of "Integrative Intelligence". She is well travelled with diverse cross-cultural experience gained through education, consulting, research and teaching engagements across Europe, South America, North America, Asia, South Africa, and

Australia. In addition to her professional commitments, she enjoys taking care of her family—her Dutch husband and her two children.

Interview with Prof. Sharda Nandram

The National Center for Corporate Governance, Banasthali Vidyapith is grateful to Prof. Nandram for sharing her deep insights about leadership and governance.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What are a few ideas/strategies that played an important role in shaping up your career?

Prof. Sharda Nandram: I have been always curious as a person to know why people behave the way they do. This may have to do with the fact that I have been brought up in Suriname a country with several types of people from different backgrounds. I moved to the Netherlands when I was 19 years old and started my higher education with psychology at the University of Amsterdam. Then later, while I did my PhD at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam with the department of social psychology and there I also got myself enrolled in another masters program (part-time in the evening) which I also completed. This one was in economics.

I cannot say that I had a fixed goal in mind about my career but that my career has been shaped by the circumstances that I was experiencing and the wonderful people who were around me. But whatever I start to dive into, I would always do it sincerely which means that I am trying to put my full 100% into it. If things did not work out the way they worked out I would not regret because I knew I had given my 100%.

My professional context has been always a place to explore and experiment with ideas to help organisations, people in organisations and entrepreneurs. The idea that my research would make an impact in the real context was an important inspiring factor to walk an extra mile. It never felt like an extra mile because upon putting full commitment into it, these tasks do not feel like work and the split between work and life fades away. The life becomes work and work becomes life.

Family life has always been an important anchor source of inspiration, love and support that's also a playground of developing myself next to my professional context. I have three brothers and five sisters. These family ties have always been strong and supportive. Looking back at my roots, I always felt very privileged that I have got so many opportunities to grow holistically. My maternal and paternal grandparents have traveled half the planet from India to Suriname in challenging circumstances. Yet they had lived a very harmonious life while embracing several challenges in life gracefully. I have seen how my parents have practiced the ethos quite similar to the yogic yamas and niyamas. I think they have seen it in the behaviors of their parents. Therefore, I have noticed how important it is to understand one's root. If I were to summarize what I have learned from them in one line, that would be: *be at home wherever I am*.

I am trying to see how all tasks which I do teach me some lessons for my own development as a human being. It can be something in my professional context or at home or in a social context.

Since I have been educated in more than one discipline, lived in more countries with people of diverse backgrounds and in my research and teaching, I have worked in multidisciplinary teams within social science, I have noticed that things are very relative and that trying to find a universal way of understanding things is often not what gives me fulfilment. Therefore, I became more interested in nuances, subtle aspects in people's way of looking at the world and the meaning they give and the way they try to solve problems.

I have worked a lot with entrepreneurs whom I often find very humble, openminded and hard working in their search for solutions to problems. I have noticed that they have a strong sense of achievement motivation and ownership. I have respect for that entrepreneurial mindset and drive and think that my way of working is also very often entrepreneurial. The combination of interest in nuances and achievement motivation has

been practiced by me in combining insights from psychology and economics. Later, this got form in introducing the theme of spirituality into my thinking and research. Currently in my roles as full professor at two universities I find it fulfilling and meaningful to explore the theme of spirituality and see how it can become a fundamental base for management studies.

In deepening my knowledge on spirituality, I have learned a lot by traveling to India. For example, during my stays in ashramas and my visits to Banasthali Vidyapith. I have been also exploring several spiritual practices from different faiths and schools of thought and by reading scriptures and books on spirituality.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What were 2-3 major challenges that you faced and how did you overcome them to reach a leadership position?

Prof. Sharda Nandram: It is often expected that one becomes like others as that gives a better chance for achieving harmony. However, it may lead to living a kind of schizophrenic life: you are another person at home and another person at work. I try to not ignore my own authentic views about the world, about others and myself. It sometimes requires a lot of more effort or even feelings of discrimination as there is not always place for one's authenticity. I think this is a continuous challenge in life if you immigrate to another country so at times you need to be integrative, reconcile and try to connect still with others while keeping your own Self 'alive'.

Another challenge is that not in all contexts women are heard and given chances to excel which can be frustrating. I always see myself first as a human being and then attach other identities if it is helpful to position myself somewhere. My experience is that if you try to connect spiritually to others which means acknowledging that there is an unknown in life which governs us whether we like it or not then it becomes easier to connect to others. Acknowledging that there is something that we label as rational and other things which are not rational but experienceable and that both have an impact on the way we think.

This balancing act has brought me more ease in my professional life. Then the fact that I am a woman is not the leading factor but what matters more is how I look at the world and what I am contributing to them through research, consultancy and teaching.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What linkages do you see between leadership and good governance?

Prof. Sharda Nandram: Leadership for me is in the first place: leading myself and that goes with responsibility which we call dharma. Following my dharma in the different contexts make me realize that one should have some basics which work as an anchor in life. Good governance is a consequence of self-leadership and not a toolbox with tips and regulations. It is a logical consequence of following one's dharma and at the same time contextualizing one's own role again and again while keeping the own anchor as guide. To me, the idea of swadharma as mentioned in Bhagwad Gita provides strong support to perform the duties and responsibilities. Further, I feel that the swadharma translates to swaraaj which can be related to autonomy in today's context, but that autonomy is along with accountability and responsibility highlighted in swadharma. Thus, leadership and good governance have a strong linkage when if a leader follows his swadharma, would be eligible for swaraaj which in-turn leads to su-raaj (good governance).

The learning that be drawn from the experiences of Prof. Sharda Nandram:

- Remaining curious to learn new ideas helps an individual to grow leadership capabilities.
- If a person connects spiritually to others which means acknowledging that there is an unknown in life which governs us whether we like it or not, then it becomes easier to connect to others.

Dr. Aparna Sharma

An HR Practitioner, Board Member, Academician, Best Selling Author and a Motivational Speaker, Dr. Aparna is a leader whose life story and experiences are a must read for every person. Her journey from being a small-town girl to a corporate leader offers a lot of learning at personal as well as professional front. National Center for Corporate Governance (NCCG), Banasthali Vidyapith is grateful to her for sharing her experiences and kind consent to cover her story in this report.



After completing her post-graduation in Personnel Management & Industrial Relations (PM & IR) from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, Aparna made her foray into the corporate world through NOCIL and moved into different roles in the HR function in organisations like Monsanto, Novartis, UCB, Deutsche Bank, Lafarge & Greaves Cotton. In her diverse roles, Aparna has successfully been a learning partner, mentor and coach to leaders, leadership teams and organisations to build competencies, learning abilities and nimbleness for achieving purposeful performance.

She has been awarded Doctorate in Human Resources from California Public University, U.S.A. Her research is very contemporary & on an interesting topic of “Future of Work & Workplace-2025”. An IOD Fellow, Dr. Aparna is currently an Independent Director on the Boards of Baroda BNP Paribas Asset Management India Pvt. Ltd., Hexagon Nutrition Ltd., & Athaang Jammu Udhampur Highway Ltd. She has also served on the Board of T.S Alloys Ltd. (100% subsidiary of Tata Steel), Rajratan Global Wire Ltd. & SMILE Microfinance Ltd. as an Independent Director. With over 26 years of experience in HR across different verticals, she is currently contributing as a Board Mentor with various boards & as an advisor to various corporates in areas such as Strategic Leadership, Planning, Organization Behaviour & Strategy for Board Room Effectiveness,

Organization Culture & Development, Leadership Relationships, Temperamental Traits & Derailment Factors within Boards etc.

She has been felicitated with “Bharat Gaurav Puraskar by KTK Foundation (2022)”, “Excellent Woman HR Professional of the Year-2021” by GISR Foundation, “Excellence in Human Resources” award by The Million Pixel (March 8,2021) , “Most Influential Women in Academics 2020” award by Education Ninja & Academy of Management Professionals , “Best Employee Experience Personality of the Year 2020 ”, “Indian HR Champion of the Year-2019”, “Indian Business Woman of the Year 2019” award by MORPEHUS Enterprises, “ILDC-AMP Woman Excellence Award 2019 for Learning & Development”, “Best HR Trainer” by ICBM-AMP Academic Excellence Awards 2018, “Woman Achiever Award 2018” by Indian Women Convention (IWC), “MTC Global Outstanding Corporate Award for Excellence in Human Resources” during the 6th Annual Global Convention –SANKALP 2016, “Women Achievers Award” by World HRD Congress & Institute of Public Enterprise in 2013, “HR Super Achiever Award” by Star News at the 20th World HRD Congress 2012 amongst many others.

Dr. Aparna has won of many accolades like ‘Women Leadership Award’ for BFSI (Banking, Financial Services & Insurance) Awards by Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad, ‘Achiever of Excellence Award’ by Bombay Management Association (BMA) & Indian Society for Training & Development (ISTD, Mumbai), she is regularly featured as one of the top women HR Leaders in the country & quoted as a Thought Leader in HR. Under her leadership at Lafarge, many in-company Global Awards such as ‘Digilearn Championship Trophy’ & ‘WAVE’ (Women Adding Value & Excellence) have been received besides external recognitions like CLO (Chief Learning Officer’s) Award consecutively for 3 years.

Beyond her corporate role as an HR Leader, Dr. Aparna also dons the hat of HR contributor through her associations with Indian Society of Training & Development (ISTD), All India Management Association (AIMA), National Institute of Personnel

Management (NIPM), National HRD Network, and Sumedhas, where she actively participates in disseminating her acquired knowledge and build the HR fraternity by creating future leaders. She was the Honorary Treasurer of National HRD Network, Mumbai Chapter (2012-2015) and a member of the Executive Committee. She was also elected as member of the National Executive Board of NHRDN for the period 2013-2015.

Dr. Aparna is a celebrated author of 2 bestselling books - “Reality Bytes-The Role of HR in Today’s World”, (English & Hindi) Foreworded by Dr. T.V Rao & “Between U & Me”, Foreworded by Padma Bhushan PadmaShree Dr. Devi Shetty. To know more about Dr. Aparna Sharma, visit: - www.aparnasharma.in

Excerpts of Interview with Dr. Aparna Sharma

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What are a few ideas/strategies that played an important role in shaping up your career?

Dr. Aparna Sharma: Mine is a long story. Let me share the essence of the story. I was always someone who was very determined despite a lot of discrimination for being a girl child. I don’t know from where the Determination, Courage, Grit came since very early age. I guess, it's because of my parents, especially my mother. I left no stone unturned to support my own education, every time I came across resource crunch. It was very clear to me due to certain role models in my family that I definitely need to invest in education.

Often, I had no access to information in terms of what was happening in the outside world. Unlike today, more than 25 years ago, we didn’t have access to the internet. So, I made the best use of whatever I could lay hands on in terms of newspapers, magazines etc. I was very determined & very keen on my career path to be a Civil Servant. But in hindsight, I feel that whatever happens, happens for the best. What dawned on me very early was that I needed to be financially independent. I cannot be in a situation where I have to depend on the family to support my education. Hence, I chose the path of Management and of course it was very competitive to get into the TATA Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. In those days, in 1994, there were ten thousand applicants for 30 seats. You

can imagine how competitive it must have been? I left no stone unturned to get there and the focus was not whether I wanted to do MBA or study Human Resources, the focus was I needed to be financially independent. So, anything that got me a job or got me on my feet- is what I was striving hard for. Eventually, I started to enjoy what I was doing- Masters in Human Resources.

In terms of strategy, if you look at the early part of my education and getting into a professional course, I would say its Courage, Determination, Grit, Never Give-up attitude. These themes are very consistent with my personality even today. The kind of field that I chose in management (Personnel Management & Industrial Relations) and the kind of organizations I worked with especially in the manufacturing sector, are very male-dominated.

First of all, you should have sound knowledge, be competent & be assertive. My experience has been that women have to prove themselves harder and have to prove every day and maybe several times a day. The foundation is competence, sound knowledge of your subject and expertise. Also, not getting disheartened by having to prove yourself. Rome wasn't built in a day and similarly any change in the thought process and in the ecosystem that you work in doesn't happen overnight. I was persistent with the organizations and the people that I worked with despite various challenges that came in my way. It's been a very fulfilling journey.

Just to give an example, when I joined the Infrastructure Sector and especially in Building materials, a lot of people turned around and said, "Oh, it's not a glamorous industry, what are you doing there? You have to wear Boots and Jumpsuits - it's a very masculine thing, Have you decided to wear pants?". I remarked, "Why not?"

What I am trying to bring out here is that people have this impression that women can only do certain roles, are suitable for certain industries and probably they like to play safe. I have defied all these stereotypes not only in my professional life but also in my personal

life. I would say, instead of trying to fight the opinion leaders, I worked hard to win them over. There was no point in trying to fight since it's basically very unproductive and tremendous loss of energy. It has to be like "Arjun ki Aankh" on your target- you have to be very focused in terms of what you want to achieve, why waste energy. If the goal is to be part of that system, invest your energy trying to do your best and not get disheartened by what people are trying to tell you. So, over a period you will win them over on your side.

Another strategy is not to be bitter and live & work with a feeling of injustice. I don't believe in self-pity. You have to get real about things and then decide what you need to do. If I come to the more recent part of my career, this is something that I have reflected on. When people meet me and tell me - you have so many avatars - an HR Practitioner, Board Member, Academician, Best Selling Author, Motivational Speaker, Trainer... I feel good about all these facets of my persona. Frankly speaking, nobody in my family has ever written a book and I don't know how I ended up writing three books. It's surely not genetic. I wanted to write as I enjoy reading and writing.

The way I have assessed my own self, I have evolved as a professional from being Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO); I have graduated to being on the other side of the table as an Independent Director on Corporate Boards. Of course, the corporate experience is so rich & deep that helped it has in this evolution. I didn't even realize when evolution the occurred. As a CHRO, I was presenting to the Board. I used to go to Board meetings, present People Strategy, answer questions, stand with the CEO, & sometimes come out with a red face. Now, being on the other side of the table, I understand how it feels & what it takes. It's been a truly very interesting and an evolutionary process.

Apart from Courage, Determination and Grit, the most important thing is 'Staying Power'. In spite of how many times you fall down, get up and get going again. No matter how you feel, dress up and show up. If you are feeling lousy, don't let other people know about it. It should not reflect either in your body language or in the communication. So, each day is a new day, that's how I look at it. Failure is the stepping-stone to Success.

I didn't have long term goals. I don't look at the quantum, what I look at is every organization that I am associated with, am I able to add value and be able to make a difference to the strategy, business, people and to the organization at large? I think that is true evaluation and my own self-assessment. I have developed great professional friendships which have transformed into personal friendships due to the common value systems.

Another strategy has been to make 48 hours out of 24 hours. There is no shortcut to hard work. When people say smart work, it's also good but sometimes smart work lacks depth. So, there has to be a combination of hard work and smart work. Depth is very important in your subject and expertise. You have to maximize everything in terms of time, resources, energy, and invest in places where you really think you can add value. A very long answer to a very short question.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What were 2-3 major challenges that you faced and how did you overcome them to reach a leadership position?

Dr. Aparna Sharma: Facing rejection at TISS during Campus Placements because the company had come to hire 2 people, interviewed 7 of us and then rejected all of us by saying that we have a policy of not hiring girls. I angered my Head of Department and many other people when I asked them why they even came to our campus since we had majority of girls in our batch. What followed to my utter surprise was that I created history by being the first lady on the shop floor. A career which started with rejection, turned around due to demonstrating courage, being assertive & speaking up. It was a tough time when you could see your dream almost come crashing down. This instance shows that you got to ask for what you think is due to you and is your right. Of course, the manner you ask or communicate is very important. You don't have to fight with anybody. You can ask assertively, and people get the message.

Second instance I recall was around 2014-15 when I was the only lady on the Executive Committee which had lots of people from different Nationalities. Few were Indians and the rest from other nationalities. This is about Diversity and Inclusion (D&I); it's such a joke made out to be in a lot of organizations. I was making a presentation to the Executive Committee on our D&I status & initiatives in India. A fellow colleague stood up and started speaking in Hindi. He told me about the mathematics of how to move data from one grade to another grade to meet the target percentage. Everyone else in the room who were not Indians didn't understand what was going on, but they thought it was a heated conversation with that gentleman. He was very senior to me in every aspect, age, experience & even grade in the company. I was the only lady and youngest person in the Executive Committee. He asked me to do some jugglery in the slides- this way and that way and your target will be achieved. He further asked me to sit down as your presentation is complete now. Nobody understood what was going on there. A lot of people think it was very insulting, but I don't think so because either he was showing off his mathematical skills or how he can silence a woman. When we go to China, Europe etc, we say that they speak in their own language but when we have foreigners in India, we also do the same thing. I think this is absolutely not being diverse. Many more things happened in that room that day but not a single gentleman in the room stood up and supported me. So, oftentimes being a woman is like carrying the cross like Jesus Christ. Of course, Jesus Christ is God, but we are mere mortals. You must have the courage & strength to carry the cross with lots of confidence and you have to pray to sail through.

That gentleman after that day could never look into my eyes & have a direct conversation. Because he said a few things about women which is how he may be treating women at home too. And then he repeats the exact things in the office as well. So, all this starts at home. This is about upbringing, social conditioning, etc. If you've grown up looking at things in your own house, then you do that at the workplace too.

For me, that conversation was professional. I did not take it personally at all. Whenever he passed by my office, he just looked away. Co-incidentally after 3-4 years of this incident I bumped into him at Mumbai airport, both taking early morning flights to different cities. I was behind him in the queue, half asleep. He completed all the check-in formalities, and I was moving towards the check-in desk. As he turned around to take his handbag, he saw me standing there. I smiled and wished him good morning. He was not able to react - whether to smile or not. He said to me that he wanted to speak to me after I complete the check-in. He stood on the side waiting for me. Both of us didn't work for that organization anymore & like I said the incident happened was a matter of past. He apologized to me for his behaviour. I asked him about what and he said you didn't mind that day and you didn't even complain about me, but since that day I have not been at peace. I think I was rude and wrong. I was finding it so difficult to live with this. I just wanted to say sorry for the way I behaved, and I think you acted very gracefully.

There was nothing in my heart, but he was carrying the cross for 7-8 years. It's like the story of a woman and monks who were trying to cross the river. The woman's child was on the other side of the river. She was trying to cross but was not able to, so she asked for help from the monks. So, one monk held her hand and helped her wade through the river to the other side. After reaching the other side of the river, one monk from among them remarked that we are monks & are supposed to stay away from women. Then why did the monk hold the woman's hand. The monk replied that I left the woman at that river, but you are still carrying her with you. What I am trying to share through this story is that even after the meeting was over & the senior had left the organization, this incident had stayed with him & he was disturbed. He was carrying the guilt all these years. He felt lighter & liberated only after he said sorry to me. So, you don't need to do moral policing that this thing is right, or this thing is wrong. I think over some time people understand.

The Third incidence is very recent. Like I said I have had the privilege of being the youngest lady amongst most senior men. On one of the Boards, all my colleagues were very senior, almost close to the age of superannuation. I was a new kid on the block. The

meeting was in another city for which I had to take an early morning flight to be there on time. I had dressed up formally in traditional Indian attire "salwar-kameez". It was a very good meeting – excellent discussion. After the meeting was over, the Company Secretary took me aside and said to me, "Madam, wear a Saree in the next meeting". I was so amused. He said if you wear a saree you will look more mature & you will be taken seriously.

My point is that people's perceptions and stereotypes are very prevalent. Sometimes it's not about competence but I believe that competence is the foundation. All things being equal, you are there because of competence but even after that, there are frills you have to be careful of. If you are in a certain position, you have to carry yourself in a certain way, you have to behave in a certain way, people like to see you in a certain way. Why I am sharing this is because nobody will tell a man to wear a suit, this is an unconscious bias that is deep-rooted. I am very practical about these things, and I decide according to time & occasion. Preparation, your subject knowledge should be the focus because if you are not prepared, whatever you wear, it is worth nothing. You should know what you have to speak and where.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What linkages do you see between Women Leadership and Governance?

Dr. Aparna Sharma: In my opinion, Leadership is not about gender. People say women are 50 percent of the population, hence they need to have representation and they are the ones who make the financial decisions, especially in the West etc. They need to have a seat at the table. There are a lot of things that come naturally to women e.g., empathy, understanding, trying to put oneself into others' shoes, and trying to look at both short term as well as long term simultaneously. They are good at planning and multitasking. They can be bold. There is enough research on this. They are distinct from men. Why create divide that Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. What do we want to prove? Frankly, there is no point to prove. Biologically, we are made differently. There are

certain different traits, let's acknowledge those in both genders. I don't think that women can contribute to governance better than men.

In my mind there is a direct link between good governance, leadership, and economic prosperity. There is research around that as well. For me, men-women don't matter, to me leadership is instrumental in enhancing the lives of people and thereby realizing the goal of governance. Here, leadership is about influencing others to achieve organizational objectives. Good Governance provides us a framework about the do's and don'ts so that we are not in violation whether it is fundamental to the organization, the people in the organization, or the products in order to maximize profit. There should not be a violation of anything in order to maximize profit. If this is under check and that is the job of a leader, good governance comes naturally in my view.

We know about the Yin and Yang, even Men have Feminine traits and Women have Masculine traits. These are complementary in nature. This is the way we have been created. Besides the biological and physiological differences, which traits do we bring into focus and use more often, that becomes our dominant personality style. If a man is more empathetic, soft, and tries to understand, people will say you are behaving like a woman and vice-versa. This is about mindset and stereotypes. Even men can be more empathetic, more understanding, and multitask if they choose to because they have it in them. It is just a question of choice and whether they want to bring it into focus. If this happens, it will be a good sign of leadership and good governance.

The leadership lessons that can be drawn from the life story of Dr. Aparna Sharma:

- Being a good mentor and coach for people. Helping them overcome the hurdles and achieving performance.
- A leader's sphere of influence is large hence the experience and knowledge of diverse fields helps in dealing with different situations and people. On being a reputed position is not the end of development process. Continuous desire to learn and develop competencies makes the life rolling.

- Communication (verbal and non-verbal) is an important tool for a leader. Assertive communication with confidence in body language is more important than offensive communication.
- Apart from bringing authority, leadership also possess challenges as well. A strong leader is one who faces every situation with determination and courage with never say die attitude. Even faced by failure, one who does not lose hope will stand again stronger.

Ms. Rita Chaturvedi

An Executive Director at Morgan Stanley, Ms. Rita has over 20 years of experience in Financial Services and has handled with multiple responsibilities in Technology deployment and Strategy. National Center for Corporate Governance (NCCG), Banasthali Vidyapith is grateful to her for sharing her experiences and kind consent to cover her story in this report.



In her career Ms. Rita has worked with prominent organizations like Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, Thomson Reuters, Deutsche Bank, and GE Capital. She has extensive experience in building and leading large, global, diverse teams and organizations. In this discussion with the NCCG, Banasthali she shares her views and ideas related to leadership and governance. Any person who wishes to build a career and scale to leadership position and contribute to the development of society would find her story very inspiring.

Excerpts of interview with Ms. Rita Chaturvedi

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What are a few ideas/strategies that played an important role in shaping up your career?

Ms. Rita Chaturvedi: The ideas and strategies keep changing with time as we grow in our career. For instance, when I started my career, I was able to get into a company like GE Capital in Delhi. In the beginning it was just about trying, not giving-up and being confident in the education that you have got, the skills you have and whatever you learnt in the University. Once I got the job, my thinking was to work hard then everything would fall in place. But I realized that it is necessary to work hard but also, we have to make sure to provide visibility to others. Corporates are really big and there are thousands of people. Nobody has the time to really look at the accomplishments of an individual. What you are doing in your small little world, sitting on your seat and doing work, that does not

get you to the next level. So, building relationships, corporate networking within the organization and outside it as well is essential.

An important lesson that I learnt very early in my career through feedback from my manager was that being assertive is very important. If you are tentative when you are saying something and confidence is not visible, people will not take you seriously. It's important to be assertive, but at the same time it is imperative to note that being assertive and being aggressive are two different things. Being assertive means being confident in the viewpoint that you are putting across and being able to back it up when needed. It is really important to grow in the corporate world. Next is to make sure to have mentors and sponsors. When it's time for promotion, there should be a person who can sponsor you and speak for you. We have to nurture the relationships and cultivate them when it's time.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What were 2-3 major challenges that you faced and how did you overcome them to reach a leadership position?

Ms. Rita Chaturvedi: Again, challenges will also change with time. Initially, one of the biggest challenges for me was my language skills. Coming from a background where English was not the primary language, it was slightly difficult to converse with people in Delhi. This language barrier was something that I had to overcome. Fortunately, I was in an environment where I learnt very quickly. There were conscious efforts from my side to master the language, but it took a while for me to be conversational in that language where I just could share my thoughts in English without translating them from Hindi to English every time. So that was a big challenge. If you keep at it, you can overcome it. Nothing is impossible.

Another challenge is, once you get into the corporate you have to deal with people with different cultures, people from all over the world (India, Russia, African countries, Middle-East, Europe etc.). How do you understand the nuances when dealing with people of different cultures? In some cultures, it may be okay to talk about something and in some other cultures, it may not be okay to talk about something. For example, with a Middle-

Eastern person, it will not be okay if you talk about their family in the first meeting. So, understanding those nuances is important. It is helpful to learn a little bit about the people, their background and their religion when you are dealing with them. Understanding the environment and different backgrounds the people are coming from, it always helps because no matter how much education you got, whatever your experiences are, nothing prepares you for the global workplace that you are in these days. Thus, it is important to be aware, to learn about other cultures, countries etc.

Apart from these personal challenges, when we talk about the corporate world, there is a lot of competition. Once you get into a job, maybe one or two promotions will come quickly and then you get stuck in a place for a very long time. Not everyone get seniority position as such so easily. There are a couple of things: one is that which is a little bit contrary to the culture we grow-up in India is to ask. Don't assume that your manager knows that you want a promotion and even not hesitate in discussing your salary. Especially women, they are very hesitant in talking about their salary. Talk about the expected rise and also give the reason to raise your pay. You have to make your aspirations clear to the manager. So that's very important.

The next thing I have talked about before: mentorship and sponsorship. These two things are very important these days in the corporate world. When you are stuck with the problem or challenge, don't know which way to go, mentorship plays a great role here. These mentors are basically advisors. A person can go to them and talk about the problem, the mentor will give the advice. I can share an example. Before I became Executive Director, the whole management changed, not just my manager but people above him as well. People were leaving for some other role and new people were in. Then I went to my mentor and asked him whether I should look for something else. She said "no, just stick to it and go to your manager and say I know you are facing some challenges because a lot of people are leaving the team, so I want to help you. Tell me where you need help, just raise your hand". I followed her advice and soon I became a very trusted team member for my manager because he knew that he could rely on me and I was loyal

& in those difficult times when everyone was jumping the ship, I stuck it out and worked with him to stabilize the team and what we were doing. So, we can see that's how the mentors help. They can see the bigger picture as they have more experience. Mentors are able to advise in testing times or dilemma situation. Next is about the Sponsors. This is basically a person who is your advocate. When you are going through the promotion process or even without promotion like there is a big opportunity in the organization. Management is sitting and discussing who should be given this new opportunity to. The sponsor is the person who should be putting up your name. We have to build that relationship over a period of time. If you are having mentors and sponsors, they will help you in overcoming the challenges of getting stuck in a place, not knowing what to do next.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What linkages do you see between leadership and good governance?

Ms. Rita Chaturvedi: Governance can be for a process, can be for a particular function, can be for a division, can be for a complete IT organization, business side, or for a firm. The connection between leadership and governance in my mind is that - a leader is a person who is able to think about different things that will fail and not work for the organization. In terms of risk and how you manage the risk etc. I'll give you an example. In my current role it's largely about managing the risk, especially IT risk. Before we make any changes to software, my job is basically to make sure that change it is not going to break anything in the production environment which our clients are using. When we do that, there are different people who have different roles in the organization. Like the developers are basically keen on making their software functional into the production environment as soon as possible, testers are testing and trying to complete as quickly as possible based on the project timeline etc., but my team's role is to govern the process of making changes in software, make sure that we are following that process.

Currently what we are onto is - governance. Somebody created the process, somebody put the controls on the places and now that's where the leadership comes into frame.

Someone is the leader in the organization who is able to see where the organization that we are is at risk from software changes. For example, if there are high risk systems, the governance is where the leaders are able to foresee what we are doing and how it can impact an organization and how to mitigate that risk on a very continuous basis. It should not be on a case-by-case basis. You put down a solid process in place, build controls in that process and that helps to govern the risk mitigation for a long time till you figure that process is not working anymore, we need to change it. These leaders can be male or female. In general, women have as much ability as men, basically being in the governance position and helping the companies to manage their risk in whichever field they happen to be in. I don't have any data to say that women are better in governance than men but I'm seeing women as much as I'm seeing men in governance roles, and they are doing really well with risk identification and mitigation. Women can be in corporate governance as much as men can be and we have seen examples of women doing very well in that space. There are studies that say women are better with details or women are more detail oriented and that's why they are better project managers and so on. However, I think that when it comes to corporate governance you cannot say that women are better or men are better. It all depends on your education, background, thinking and acumen.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: You have mentioned very key points about the governance largely which were about the risk mitigation, point of being proactive especially in times of high levels of scrutiny. There are thousands of eyes who continuously watch the leaders and their decisions, the company's decisions are very carefully watched and one or the other minor issue can change the future of the company, so being very cautious about the things and very proactive is important.

Ms. Rita Chaturvedi: True. I also want to add one thing that while we know that these types of roles are gender agnostic, women are equally good at these roles. We don't see as many women in leadership positions especially in the boardrooms and that is where the change is needed and some more leadership is needed, where we consciously see and get more diversity at table for these positions. If we look at some statistics, how many

women boards have? It is a very low percentage. If we see Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 companies, the percentages are very low. So when we talk about corporate governance and governance in general, it just has to make sure that we are bringing more women leaders in these positions and that is we see the true diversity of thoughts and actions.

The learning that can be drawn from the life story of Ms. Rita Chaturvedi:

- A leader is one who inspires people to fulfill goals and aims. For progressing change is very essential. Hence, a leader must be proactive in initiating and adapting changes with time.
- Challenges are an inescapable part of every sphere, but how one deals with those challenges is more important. Firm determination on the part of a leader can help him/her overcome challenges and focus on productivity.
- Continuous progress requires the desirability to develop and grow further having been clear about one's aspirations.
- Assertive and aggressive are two different things. Use of assertion holds for one but aggression wont.
- A good leader is one who is very humble in receiving advise from others, especially mentors. Being open to advise and improvements helps in nurturing good relationships.
- A leader is not complete without the team. The ability and sensitivity to deal with diverse team members from different cultures, requires patience and resilience in understanding the principles of others.

Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal

A well-known HR professional, a Writer, and one of the leading management thinkers in India. National Center for Corporate Governance (NCCG), Banasthali Vidyapith is grateful to her for sharing her experiences and kind consent to cover her story in this report.



Dr. Saagarika is the Director on the Board for METRO Cash and Carry India. She has been listed as one of the 50 Most Influential HR Leaders in Asia and was covered by Business Today as one of the 30 Most powerful Women in Indian Business. She has been conferred with various accolades in India, Asia and USA like Most Powerful HR Professionals of India, 2010, Pride of HR Profession Award in Recognition for Outstanding Leadership promoting Diversity and Selfless contribution to Human Resources Development 2010 and Woman Super Achiever Award. She is a diversity expert, an international speaker, trainer and a practitioner with an impressive HR track record spanning more than two decade across a spectrum of industry sectors that include Telecom, Financial services, Aviation, Media & Entertainment and Retail. She also serves as a non-executive board member to Geodesic and is frequently invited to write as well to share her learning at national and international academic institutions and professional forums like SHRM, World HR Congress. She is an alumna of Banasthali Vidyapith, Stanford University and Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies.

Excerpts of Interview with Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: - What are a few ideas/strategies that played important role in shaping up your career?

Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal: Well, there is no shortcut to a career, I think there is a lot of hard work, sincerity, and honesty that plays an important role. I think one cannot be half-learned and expect a job. If a person intends to become CEO of a company, he/she needs to be super-skilled and be aware of what qualification and qualities are required for the industry or sector. After this, the person has to try and build career gradually, because

that qualification and attitude cannot be built in a day. It is a progression that requires acquiring skills, certifications, and knowledge.

In my life personal values were very defined at a very early stage. I knew what is right and what is wrong and therefore I could shape my career around those values. I knew where I want to reach, and where I don't want to compete.

Secondly, making a skill inventory in order to rank myself is something that has help me a lot. I was always my own competition. I wanted to rank myself in terms of where I wanted to reach and what do I need to get to get there in terms of education, knowledge, networking, and grooming myself.

The third thing that got me where I wanted to reach was evaluating different positions. I have never switched a job without putting my mind to it. I have not left a job because it was monotonous. So I have always thought that dynamic options are very much needed while it is very important, but I have always made sure that the jobs I have been trying to do are different in terms of the experience they offer. I have considered that I have always been a part of a large group and have taken advantage of an internal mobility. I could experience how work is done at various levels, and functions. Thus, I have not only bracketed myself to the HR profession. I understood business as much as any sales or marketing or operation person would understand. Of course, this required me to push my limits. When I started my own consulting business, I created a company and product design by largely exploiting my own skills. In a nutshell, I have not done something which is I don't understand. So keeping to the core, a portfolio of career means that you get different jobs, different sources of revenue and you take advantage of your own multiple skills and I think that is very important for a lot of people.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: - What were 2-3 major challenges that you faced and how did you overcome them to reach a leadership position?

Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal: I call it ABC problem. The first 'A' is the lack of a mentor. Women generally lack support even at a lower level. Society around and especially in our time it was much more, and it is never going to change. Society finds it difficult to accept that women can be financially independent, they can do things without men sponsoring it and when you reach the higher-level women are referred as that she is the first women board member. Why don't we talk about men like that? She is a women achiever and I hate that. So, we really want that quota and at our times now I see a lot of women around me who do well, and they are sponsoring women and things are much different. In our time also there were women who did well. This becomes very difficult for women belonging to small towns or villages.

The 'B' I say is balancing responsibilities. The number of sacrifices all of us even men and women make in order to pursue our careers is really vast. Most of the career people who have kids and spouses that depend on them; there are many societal pressures, and peer pressures; and in this scenario the role of woman is largely seen as that of a caregiver. There is a constant dilemma that demands a balance between career and family. This becomes more difficult if you don't have a supporting spouse or household. I think one of the most important decisions that women have to make in their life is whether to avoid early marriage or marry a person who accepts and supports their career. I think for me it has been like a seesaw. I feel, balancing responsibilities is one of the challenges that all of us face, now even the men.

Last, 'C' is for confidence; I think I have always faced a lack of confidence to make major decisions. This is toxic and perilous because we end up operating in a place of fear instead of confidence. Am I making the right decision and fulfilling responsibility? Is my child going to suffer? Is my marriage going to suffer? And so on. As a result, I have felt that I have been a little slower in it. Research suggests that most of us prepare and prepare, so we need to be absolutely certain before making decisions and I have also been like that, so I have always been thinking on every step and probably that also make you less desirable for positions. There are people who would decide based on the factor

that - 'she will come with her bag', 'she will need to go early', and 'even if she comes on time, she will not stay late in office'. One misses out on that all in a professional life.

So, to sum it up the challenges faced by me have been nothing different from many other women and even some men too face in their career advancement. Career disparity between men and women is not the only reason why one does not do well. Many times, it is also women's personal choice, everyone makes a personal choice too.

Team NCCG, Banasthali Vidyapith: What linkages do you see between leadership and governance?

Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal: I feel good governance is gender neutral. It is not necessary that women will be following good governance and men would not. A leader is a leader who is no different from an ordinary person. The only thing that separates them from the rest of fact that the added responsibility of that organization. In every sphere of life, whether it's a small classroom, start-up, a multi-national corporation or a large country, I think one person has to take charge to lead everybody. Leadership is very vital because, it gives direction to people to stay focused on the task and keep the team motivated.

I think the leadership fundamentally requires honesty, because unless the leader is honest, he/she will not be able to lead the team with patience, teamwork, decisiveness, and empathy. These days, we talk about of various leadership styles, but one thing that stands out is ability of a leader to be closer to his ground. Governance is a responsibility. The above-mentioned leadership qualities are vital to maintaining good oil machinery with every part coordinating with the other. If the coordination doesn't happen, organization will fail. I think that why it is important that leadership, good governance, and development go hand in hand. A good leader always brings in good governance. As we talked about patience, governance is not a job for the faint-hearted, because as a leader of a large group there is always an opposition, even to the right things. One will always have to stop and listen to the concerns and different perspectives yet take the right decision. Leader has to reduce the biases and make sure what is right for the organization. Another important task is to educate people because leaders always set an example for the

people, by what they do, and what they say. Through this they can inspire people to take reasonable and judicious steps in the right direction. Thus, a leader needs to train the corporation to have good governance, which doesn't come in a day.

I talked about empathy; governance means that you are connected to people. A strong leader needs to be empathetic to listen, to see, and to understand the world through the lenses of people. Further, based on these observations, leader should take the right decisions keeping in mind good governance. Of course, governance will come with a good team, and it is teamwork. Governance is not solely a leadership job, it is a team job, unless you have a good tempting member, unless you have developed a good team, it is very difficult to say that we have good governance. So, the leader has good governance and if the rest of the team doesn't follow it, it will mean nothing.

Thus, leadership, teamwork and good governance are connected. It is essential to work with groups and it is very crucial to have good coordination with your team any communication and effectively achieve the common goal. I believe that leadership is a bridge to make all this possible. But, as I began with honesty, I feel above all it is integrity that matters most. Governance is a high responsibility involving very high stakes and dishonesty is highly unacceptable at this level.

Thus, integrity, honesty, and sticking to core values, ethics of the corporation/country, and keeping the moral compass very high, sends a positive message in the company. By setting such an example, the leader will be able to set a right example. And all of this is gender neutral in terms of leadership. At this stage in my life, I really don't generalize with respect to gender We are moving on gender neutrality; hence I feel that we have to reach that position where one is not judged based on gender.

The learning that can be drawn from experiences of Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal

- Person with integrity and values would be successful in the life and contribute to the good governance in the organizations and society.
- Role of a good mentor in life is very essential to overcome challenges. At the same time, balancing the responsibilities and remaining confident can help a person build good career and lead a good life.

Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

Sumitra Mahajan was born on 12 April 1943 in a Chitpavan Brahmin family to Usha Devi and Purushottam Neelkanth Sathe in Chiplun, Ratnagiri district Maharashtra. At the age of 22, she got married to Jayant Mahajan on 29 January 1965, who was a lawyer, and settled in Indore. She gave birth to two sons named Mandar and Milind. People of Indore and Malwa region affectionately called her 'Tai' (elder sister).



She completed her schooling in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra and later did graduation in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). Later, she pursued M.A. in Psychology and also post-graduation degree in LLB from Indore University which is presently known as Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya. Since childhood, she wanted to accomplish something beneficial for society and the country. This was one reason why she went into politics. At the point when she began her political journey, she got a great deal of appreciation from the public because of her humble nature.

She served or the cause of development in Indore and Malwa region in various capacities (Mayor, Member of Parliament etc.) In 1989, she was challenged in the Lok Sabha elections interestingly and won a seat for herself. From 1989-2019, she served the Indore constituency of Madhya Pradesh and has served as a Union Minister from 2002-2004 in the Ministry of Human Resources, Communications and Petroleum. Prior she has also functioned as a member of the 'Panel of Chairman' in the Lok Sabha. Later from 2014-19 she served as Lok-Sabha Speaker was admired throughout the country for calm and composure.

Her political life, wherein she was active member of Bharatiya Janta Party, has been very successful in various aspects, but the Politics was not the first option for her. Therefore, she entered it late. Due to the wrongs done during the during the emergency imposed by

the then congress government, she was unable to see herself just as a fence sitter. She willingly volunteered to deal with the families of leaders who had been thrown into jail, by accelerating to their homes with bundles of food. It was Sumitra's father, who imbued in her the idea of governmental issues being in a national service as an RSS Sangh Pracharak. She fought an election from the Indore constituency against senior Congress leader and ex-chief minister of Madhya Pradesh Prakash Chandra Sethi and defeated him. From the Indore seat, she won consecutively for eight times and is the first woman who has won eight times from a same seat consecutively

Sumitra Mahajan has been known for setting high levels of compassion and care, but not without discipline. In August 2015, she suspended 25 Members of Parliament on the ground of upsetting the house. She did not have any desire to restrict her job to playing headmistress. She ensured to discuss about members about development of their constituency. She also emphasizes on need for strong foundations of ethos and culture in life of every individual.

She has recognized Ahilyabai Holkar (the eighteenth-century social reformer) as her motivational figure all through her life and has written a book on Ahilyabai Holkar's life journey 'Matoshree', which was uncovered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2017. One of our research team members was fortunate enough to meet her and learn more about life of Ahilya Bai Holkar.

She worships Hindu deities and believes in Hindu customs and dharm. Despite her busy political life, she never forgets to fulfil her duties in the family life. Even today, she begins her day by offering water to Surya Narayan and Maa Tulasi.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Sumitra Mahajan:

- Remaining humble and down to earth even after reaching on top is one characteristic which is rarely found in leaders. However, such leaders play an exceptional role in development of society.
- Taking inspiration from ancient wisdom and great leaders of this nation always proves beneficial. The leaders of contemporary times should consider this aspect.

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Smt. Sushma Swaraj

Sushma Swaraj was born on 14th February 1952 in a brahmin family to Hardev Sharma and Laxmi Devi in the Ambala, Haryana. Her father was a member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and her mother was a homemaker. Her parents were from Dharampura area of Lahore, Pakistan and immigrated to India after the partition. She had two siblings one sister and a brother, named Vandana Sharma and Dr. Gulshan Sharma respectively. On 13 July 1975, she married Swaraj Kaushal who is a lawyer, politician and had served as a governor of Mizoram state. She left this world on 6 August 2019.



Since childhood, she was enamoured with participating in school debates and contests. She was very affectionate, caring, and always ready to help. She studied at Sanatan Dharma College in Ambala Cantonment and did Bachelor of Arts with majors in Sanskrit and Political Science. Afterwards, she studied law at Punjab University, Chandigarh. During a state-level rivalry competition held by the Language Department of Haryana, she received the best Hindi Speaker grant for three consecutive years. In 1970's, she started off her career in politics as a student leader.

At the age of 25, she became the youngest Cabinet Minister of Haryana. In 1977, as a member of the Janata Party, she campaigned for office for the first time and was chosen for a seat in the legislative assembly of Haryana state. In 1990, she was chosen for the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of parliament). She effectively challenged a seat in the Lok Sabha six years after the fact and momentarily was a cabinet minister (Data and Broadcasting) in the 13-days government under leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (May-June 1996). In 1998, she became the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi and assumed the office, but her tenure ended in just 52 days. She had contributed as Union Health Minister as well as Information and Broadcasting Minister too. She had held several administrative positions and in May 2014, she was appointed as the Minister of External

Affairs. She took care of numerous sensitive issues with Pakistan, including the matter related to Kulbhushan Jadhav. She raised to make a difference to the International Court of Justice to get a stay. She was handled difficult situation of the 70-day Doklam standoff with China. In the implementation of the foreign policy, she played an important role and won many hearts for her compassionate behaviour. She helped many people in trouble by making her twitter account a help hotline who expected to speed up their questions. Her benevolence and friendliness went even similar to far-off nationals, most remarkably Pakistanis who required medical visas.

The learning that can be drawn from life story of Sushma Swaraj are:

- The compassionate behaviour displayed by her towards problems and concerns of common person is an essential trait for any leader. Her approach is a perfect example where leader can get idea about treading this path.
- Many women and even men find it difficult to take care of family while fulfilling family responsibilities. The approach to take care of both responsibilities can be very useful for many leaders. She was a formidable leader with her ability to command the political sphere and she never back down from a challenge. The leader can learn to remain firm and determined in testing times.
- She had the foresight and competence to create a social presence and reach millions with her empathetic and compassionate behaviour.

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Smt. Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat

Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat was born in 1930. She is one of the founders of Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad. Initially she did not have any knowledge about running a venture but her hard work and courage made it possible for her to do so. On 15 March 1959, she along with her six friends Parvatiben Ramdas Thodani, Banuben. N. Tanna, Ujamben Narandas Kundalia, Jayaben V. Vithalani, Chutadben Amish Gawadem and Laguben Amritlal



Gokani met on a terrace at Girgaum, Maharashtra. In total they had INR 80 with them which they borrowed from a business insider named Chhanganlal Karamshi Parekh and started the journey of making papads. They made 4 packets of papad and sold it to a businessman. The response was fascinating and with time their group size increased to 25 women

During the first year, there was no production of papads for nearly four months because the rains prevented women in drying papads on the rooftop, the traditional way. Next year, they arranged cots and stove to overcome the challenge. Also, their first attempt to expand the branch in Mumbai failed and later it expanded as a co-operative with branches in Mumbai and throughout the country. In 1962, they renamed the group as 'Lijjat Papad'.

Chhaganlal Parekh (also known as Chhagan Bapa) was the guide and influencer of Jaswantiben. He advised her and other members not to compromise on quality and to ensure the standard of papads. He emphasized on maintaining proper accounts.

Along with the other six sisters, she did a lot for the welfare of the society too by providing scholarships to the children, increasing the availability of healthcare facilities, cooperating in building houses and promoting their own banks. One of the most appreciable works undertaken by them was the rehabilitation in Chincholi (earthquake affected village) and

built 40 houses for rehabilitation of people of Bhujpur in Kutch District. They started giving Chhagan Bapa Smriti Scholarships to the daughters of the member-sisters.

She founded the Lijjat Papad on the ideology of Gandhi Ji, the concept of trusteeship, Sarvodaya or collective ownership, mutual affection & concern, and devotion. Under trusteeship, the assets belong to the society and the business was to be nothing but a refined form of service to the society. Believing in the ideals of Gandhiji of not replacing the human work with machines and to ensure that the people do not lose employment, the company till date do not use machines and roll the papads using hands despite producing over 4.5 billion papads each year. She believed in the principle of self-reliance and did not accept any contributions or donations. Before beginning their daily activities, member sisters used to recite an all-religion prayer across all branches of Lijjat papad.

Jaswantiben and her team of women not just created the brilliant brand and the business, but they also created employment for women. She has been honoured with the Padma Shri Award. She transformed a small home business into a large cottage industry with her leadership skills. Today Lijjat Papad employs around 42000 women and has more than 60 branches across India and abroad. They have diversified in their product range and the papads along with other added product range are sold in India as well as exported to USA, England, Thailand, Netherlands, Singapore, etc as well.

The learning that can be drawn from the life story of Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat:

- Ensuring transparency in financial matters with all members, following principles in financial accounting, regular and timely payments without credits and equal sharing of profits and losses highlights the humbleness and humility of the leader and strengthens the relationship with the followers.
- Enhancing productivity and efficiency at the workplace is an important component of leadership. Every work is considered equal, and sisters are free to choose their activity. No sister is asked to leave. This helps to enhance productivity and efficiency at the workplace. It shows the concern of leaders towards the subordinates in ensuring them proper means of living.

- She was a great leader who believed in equality among sister members irrespective of their social and financial position. She undertook various efforts in promoting literacy and computer education among members and their families giving employees the chance to develop themselves professionally and personally.
- Following the footsteps of a considerate and responsible leader she introduced new models for community development and poverty reduction and followed unique business development strategies which benefited the women across the world in improving their financial conditions.

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Smt. Arundhati Bhattacharya

Arundhati Bhattacharya was born in a Bengali family on 18 March 1956 in Kolkata, West Bengal. She is the daughter of Prodyut Kumar Mukherjee and Kalyani Mukherjee. Her father worked at Bokaro Steel Plant and mother was a Homeopathic consultant. In 1983, she married Pritimoy Bhattacharya who is a Director at Techno India Group and a former professor at IIT-Kharagpur. She has one daughter named Sukrita Bhattacharya working in the field of HR.



She completed her schooling from St. Xavier's School in Bokaro, Jharkhand. Further, she studied English Literature in Kolkata at Lady Brabourne College and she graduated from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. After completion of higher studies, she appeared in the entrance exam of State Bank of India and was successful. At the age of 22 years, in September 1977, she joined the State Bank of India as a Probationary Officer at Kolkata's main branch.

During her 36-year banking career at State Bank of India, she has served many departments and held top positions in the bank. Later in 2013, she became the CEO of SBI Capital and became the first women chairperson of the State Bank of India. She faced many challenges during her long career in SBI. It was difficult for her to balance her personal and professional life.

In 2006, when she joined SBI Lucknow branch, she was facing difficulties in managing her work and personal life, so she decided to quit the job. But eventually she dropped the idea to quit and tackled every challenge with positivity and humour. She grabbed more and more opportunities despite various challenges in her personal and professional life. During her tenure in 2016 as SBI Chief, she faced the most challenging times when various things came in quick succession such as merger with associate banks, GST, demonetisation. She was able to tackle the situation with the help of her success mantra

that a person should be action-oriented not thought-oriented. Thinking and analysing are important but at times quick decisions need to be taken.

When she took charge of State Bank of India as the Chief, she faced many challenges due to the piling of bad loans. The mid-corporates and the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) together accounted for nearly 70 percent of the total gross NPAs of the bank, and that was a cause for her worry. She was expected to improve the deteriorating asset quality of the bank and therefore introduced various policies to improve the condition of the bank.

She steered various radical changes such as a new appraisal system involving budgets and targets, digital initiatives such as Digital-only branch and mobile applications for the customers. She announced free vaccination for cervical cancer to all female employees of the bank.

She also introduced various pro-women policies including flexible work timings for women so that women employees can manage their work and home simultaneously, transfer policy that included temporary deputation and two years of sabbatical leave policy. She has set up the mobile and financial platforms as she aims to rebuild the SBI and make its future ready by initiating investment banking in viewing the project in its entirety- equity, debt, and other combinations. She was actively involved in restructuring Suzlon Energy. By launching SBI Buddy, Bhattacharya hoped that it will bring the young customers into the bank and put major efforts on digitalisation. She wanted SBI to remind people that when it's a question of money, trust and security are supreme. She launched SBI GRAM SEVA program as a CSR activity with an aim of adopting and developing the villages through Gram Panchayat across India. It was for the holistic development of villages and created a SBI Foundation for the CSR activities. She issued a cheque for Rs. 4,98,500/- to BK Ishitaben (Chief Executive of Divya Nagari Slum Service Project) run by Rajyoga Education and Research Foundation, Ahmedabad, to assist them in their noble educational activity.

She had a great influence of her mother and her aunt in her life, who taught her to help herself and not expect anybody to hold her hand. Her husband and her daughter supported her even when her career demanded shift to several locations.

Under her leadership, the State Bank of India transformed from a normal public sector bank to a customer friendly bank and the NPAs were improved. She laid a strong foundation for the bank which would go a long way in helping it to compete with other banks and private sector banks as well. In 2016, Forbes ranked her the fifth most powerful women in finance and 25th among the world's 100 most powerful women.

The learning that can be drawn from the life story of Arundhati Bhattacharya:

- In her time at SBI, she tried to root-out the NPAs, worked to digitize the two-centuries old bank envisioning the future digital world and merged SBI's five associate banks reaping the benefits of a more powerful merged unit. She worked with authenticity because she thinks that being authentic means being productive.
- She repositioned the HR by performance improvement measures, efficient resource planning and motivated workforce, she revamped the career development system and introduced flexible working system for women so that they can work efficiently ensuring their work-life balance and more participation.
- Being an effective leader, she is a good communicator, crisis manager and resilient towards unforeseen situations. She started the process to develop specialized skills and leadership and introduced the culture of perform or perish.

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Ms. Hardika Shah

Hardika Shah was born in Mumbai in a middle-class Gujarati family. Her father is visually disabled and a professor of Political science at the University of Bombay. Her mother was a small entrepreneur.



She completed B.A. in Computer Science from Knox College in Illinois, USA. Later she joined Accenture after completing an MBA from a joint program between Columbia Business School and UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. She also worked as a pro-bono mentor at Santa Clara and Stanford University, the top social entrepreneurship programs. Later, she returned to India and set up Kinara Capital. Prior to building Kinara Capital, she worked as a management consultant for nearly two decades executing complex projects for global companies across Europe, Asia-Pacific and USA.

During Pandemic, the Kinara Capital's loan disbursement dipped by almost 15%. But she steered the company by her agility and innovation and managed to recover all in six to eight months. Her customers during the pandemic started requesting her to make payments digitally and she made a digital shift.

She figured out that only 3% of the world's equity capital is going to women founders, then she made a wise decision of having most women in her management team. She launched the HerVikas programme for women entrepreneurs and has disbursed \$15 million in HerVikas loans. Her workforce consists of 16% women and the company is trying to hire individuals with disabilities and the people of queer community for head office and call centres. She has made a positive change in the lives of thousands of small business entrepreneurs. Apart from the challenges faced as a young entrepreneur, she continues to fight against sexism in the male-dominating finance & banking sector.

She saw her mother struggling to raise capital for her small business and she took inspiration from this situation. The importance of education and hard work was always stressed upon her. The problems faced by women entrepreneurs like higher borrowing cost, longer wait times for loan disbursement as compared to their male counterparts etc, inspired her to move Bengaluru and set up Kinara Capital.

Under her vision and leadership, Kinara Capital is now internationally recognised for its innovations. It's ranked among 'Top 500 High-Growth Companies in Asia Pacific' by Financial Times for three consecutive years (2020, 2021 and 2022). It has also received the prestigious 'Bank of Year-Asia' global award by IFC. It has created 2,50,000+ jobs supporting in local economies while driving financial inclusion in a decade and to over \$100 million in incremental income generation for small business entrepreneurs. It has 125 branches in 100+ cities in India with headquarter in Bangalore.

The learning that can be drawn from the life story of Hardika Shah:

- Transparent and fair practices help the society. For instance, she issued the Fair Practices Code of Kinara Capital with the objectives to ensure transparent and fair transactions with all the customers.
- The heart and the soul of an organization is made up of its people. She invested in creating value for her employees and developing a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and equal-opportunity work environment.
- She is a resilient leader who was ready for the setbacks due to pandemic. With the high rate of vaccination, her team was mentally and physically ready for it.
- To bridge the gaps for women entrepreneurs, she set up the organization and launched HerVikas programme. She also improved the livelihoods of local economy by sustaining jobs and generating employment for first time wage earners.

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Smt. Ratan Shastri

Compiled by Dr. Kapil Sharma, DAVV, Indore

Born in the middle-class family of a schoolmaster, Ratanji was brought up in an atmosphere of affection and discipline that was conducive to the development of a prosperous personality. Being married at a young age, her formal education was negligible. But education is the manifestation of the perfection inherent in human beings, from this point of view, she should be considered as blessed with education.



At the time when her husband – Pt. Hiralal Shastri resigned from the post of the distinguished secretary of the Home and Foreign Department of the erstwhile princely state of Jaipur and wanted to dedicate himself to the task of rural reconstruction in a small, remote, backward village, Ratanji also faced all the difficulties and supported him in their troubles.

Away from the city, this small village was Vanasthali, which could be reached only in bullock carts. In this village, Shastri couple trained workers of with passion and encouraged them for the development work of other villages.

It was an act of great courage by a middle-class woman in the Rajasthan of that era of 1929 to give up the trend of veils and jewellery. Setting an ideal in front of others, motivating them to act according to it was a great achievement in itself. Thus, even in those difficult days, many women activists agreed to do social work.

The work started by the Shastri couple in the village included programs for khadi and self-reliance, literacy spread, medical aid and social and political awareness. In 1929, the Shastri couple established an organization called Jeevan Kutir with the objective of training workers for rural development and spreading similar work in other parts of the country.

Shastri couple's daughter Shanta died untimely at the young age of 12. Shanta was interested in teaching young children, dreamed of opening a school and had also made 600 bricks with her own hands for this school. The parents decided to fulfill their daughter's dream.

This is the birth story of that Banasthali Vidyapith, which made Ratan ji's name reach everywhere today. The Vidyapith was established in 1935 as a national institution for education and training of women. While busy with this new program, Ratan ji also took a major part in the organization of Jaipur Satyagraha in those days.

This Vidyapith is a unique education center, where there is facility for women from nursery to postgraduate education and modern education is given to girls without harming the basic culture and tradition of India. It emphasizes on a systematic amalgamation of the spiritual values of the East and the scientific values of the West. It fosters a sense of national unity as well as international goodwill and understanding.

The Government of India honoured her with the Padma Shri in 1955 and the Padma Bhushan in 1975 for his work. In 1990, you were awarded the Jamnalal Bajaj Award. Ratan ji passed away on September 29, 1988.

The learning that can be drawn from life of Smt. Ratan Shastri:

- Resilience to work in extreme situation can help overcome even most difficult challenge that a person could face. Once that is done, a person emerges as a great leader.
- To build great institutions a leader has to lead by example and then people get inspired. This is particularly necessary in case strong motivation is required to overcome masses from cognitive blinding or lethargy.

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4.3 Analysis and Findings

Leader	Leadership Lessons	Key Leadership Traits
Rani Durgavati	As a youth, even if people don't have experience, through the motivation to work for the development of society or nation, one can create wonders. Self-belief and confidence are essential to overcome difficult situations. If the youth can overcome self-hatred and have firm belief in own capabilities, Bharat can progress at a much higher rate. For a leader, central idea is to lead from the front. The story of Rani Durgavati is an exemplar to this fact and there is no alternative to it. Amidst all dynamism, she took time for creating learning opportunities for the society by inviting experts of indigenous knowledge. This is an important aspect to learn regarding social responsibility of a leader – that even being busy to the core, focusing on responsibility towards social aspects is inseparable.	Motivation, social development, self-belief, confidence, continuous learning, indigenous knowledge
Maharani Jijabai	The ideas from scriptures like Ramayan and Puran can help in defining the purpose of the life. At the same time, it can serve as a motivation to even turn the tides into favour. The life of Jijabai also throws light on importance of succession planning. Nurturing future leaders on the path of dharm, ethics and values is essential. Interdisciplinary knowledge and faith	Indigenous knowledge, succession planning, nurturing future leaders, interdisciplinary knowledge, self-respect

	in Bhagwan, when both are coupled the person can bring transformation in the society. Remaining focused, determined, and consistent along with a personality which is the embodiment of virtue and self-respect defines a leader.	
Rani Rudrama Devi	Any position of responsibility requires that person utilizes the skills and capacities that are developed over the time and the commitment towards the goals makes the difference. To manage the crisis effectively - overcoming hurdles from internal objections and external factors both are essential. A leader should focus on sustainable development ensuring that business flourish. Managing in-fighting and keeping the focus of members of organization on task is an essential task of a leader.	Utilizing skills and capabilities, ability to overcome hurdles, emphasize on sustainable development, managing in-fighting
Rani Chennamma	A woman of indomitable courage and patriotism, who loved her land so much that she was ready to sacrifice anything to preserve its freedom. Thus, a leader in any organization needs to be ready for putting all efforts for achieving outcomes. She had the intellectual abilities to manage crisis whether political or military. A leader needs to remain equipped with the skills to tackle all types of challenges. She used to preside over the meetings with great dignity and took quick decisions in the kingdom's best interest. This is an important learning for leaders as administrative hurdles,	Dedication, intellectual abilities, quick decision making, short meetings, dignified approach, holistic personality

	inefficient meetings and delay in decision making are detrimental to the growth of organizations. She had great qualities of leadership such as indomitable courage, statesmanship, presence of mind in any emergency, deep knowledge of military strategies and keen political acumen. This highlights the need for holistic development of personality of a leader.	
Rani Abbakka Chowta	She confronted, fought, and repeatedly defeated the Portuguese with her great warfare strategies. A leader needs to be robust enough to put in multiple efforts to achieve the goals. She was a great leader and an eminent personality who led her troops every time to defeat the enemies. The leader's consistency is essential to remain on top position. She managed the crisis by ferociously attacking the Portuguese army. Their frontal attacks didn't work on her. The challenges are bound to come and it's the resistance and robustness that plays an important role in success of any organization.	Robustness, consistency, resistance
Rani Lakshmi Bai	She fought the war, shoulder to shoulder with her troops. A leader needs to work along with employees towards organization's goals. She skilled her army involving male and female alike with the art of warship. A leader's focus on skill development of employees pays on the long run, especially in times of crisis. She chose to	work along with people, upskilling, emotional intelligence, self-respect, undeterred.

	<p>fight against the Britishers so that she could save her kingdom from them even after the death of her son and husband. Emotional balance of a leader is very crucial for organization's success. She was an example of self-respect, pride, and dignity that she did not even allow the Britishers to touch her body after her death. The leader's ability to not get swayed away inspires employees to remain firm on ground even in testing times.</p>	
Durga Wati Devi	<p>Her revolution against the Britishers for injustice towards Indians shows her surge for good governance. A leader needs to work for better governance at every stage. She continued teaching students even after being jailed many times and that too for prolonged years. A leader needs to be socially responsible also drive the culture of responsibility within the organization. In a lot of crises when the British government was hunting for Bhagat Singh, she was able to take him to Kolkata disguising herself as Bhagat Singh's wife. This shows that with better management and planning, even most of complex and challenging situations could be handled.</p>	<p>Quest for good governance, social responsibility, complex problem solving</p>
Lakshmi Sahagal	<p>The keenness to learn and skill oneself is a must-have trait for any person who aspires to be a leader. The conviction of a person to accomplish certain task comes very handy</p>	<p>Keen learner, conviction, thought clarity</p>

	when it is being envisioned. The clarity of thought about the vision, mission and objectives makes the difference.	
Velu Nachiyar	She was so determined to wrest her kingdom back and invested the energy when she remained in Dindigul in arranging and assembling allies for attack. The strategic approach followed by a leader plays a crucial role in development of the organization as well as taking on the competition. She also built a women army 'Udaiyaal' and prepared them for fighting in the war. With the assistance of women armed force and clever plan, she was able to get Victory on her kingdom. A leader's focus on bringing in diverse work-force pays of multi-fold.	Determination, Building diverse work-force
Ahilyabai Holkar	She continued to govern Malwa in a most authentic manner based on high levels of integrity fuelled by her spiritual inclinations. In the contemporary era, the spiritual dimensions of a leader are also being considered important. This is the domain where Bharatiya ideas like Lok-Sangrah, Nishkam Karm et.c are poised to play very prominent role. She also established a textile industry so that people can generate income by doing work not for only a few seasons but forever. The visionary approach of a leader and ability to build a eco-system is something that contributes to development of organization for long.	Spiritual inclination, Lok-Sangrah, Nishkam Karm, sustainable development

Prof. Sharda Nandram	Remaining curious to learn to new ideas helps an individual to grow leadership capabilities. If a person connects spiritually to others which means acknowledging that there is an unknown in life which governs us whether we like it or not, then it becomes easier to connect to others.	Learnability, Spirituality
Dr. Aparna Sharma	Being a good mentor and coach for people. Helping them overcome the hurdles and achieving performance. A leader's sphere of influence is large hence the experience and knowledge of diverse fields helps in dealing with different situations and different people. On being a good or reputed position is not the end of development process. Continuous desire to learn and develop competencies makes the life rolling. Communication (verbal and non-verbal) is an important tool for a leader. Assertive communication with confidence in body language is more important than offensive communication. Apart from bringing authority leadership also possess challenges as well. A strong leader is one who faces every situation with determination and courage with never say die attitude. Even faced by failure. One who does not lose hope will stand again stronger.	Mentoring, Continuous learning, Communication, Determination
Rita Chaturvedi	A leader is one who inspires people to fulfill goals and aims. For progressing change is very essential. Hence, a leader must be proactive in initiating and adapting changes with time. Challenges are an inescapable part of every	Proactive, Productive, Assertive, Humble, Team maangement

	<p>sphere, but how one deals with those challenges is more important. Firm determination on the part of a leader can help him/her overcome challenges and focus on productivity. Continuous progress requires the desirability to develop and grow further having been clear about one's aspirations. Assertive and aggressive are two different things. Use of assertion holds for one but aggression wont. A good leader is one who is very humble in receiving advise from others, especially mentors. Being open to advise and improvements helps in nurturing good relationships. A leader is not complete without the team. The ability and sensitivity to deal with diverse team members from different cultures, requires patience and resilience in understanding the principles of others.</p>	
Dr. Saagarika Ghoshal	<p>Person with integrity and values would be successful in the life and contribute to the good governance in the organizations and society. Role of a good mentor in life is very essential to overcome challenges. At the same time, balancing the responsibilities and remaining confident can help a person build good career and lead a good life.</p>	<p>Integrity, Confidence, Balancing responsibilities</p>
Sumitra Mahajan	<p>Remaining humble and down to earth even after reaching on top is one characteristic which is rarely found in leaders. However, such leaders</p>	<p>Humble, Inspiration from ancient wisdom,</p>

	paly an exceptional role in development of society. Taking inspiration from ancient wisdom and great leaders of this nation always proves beneficial. The leaders of contemporary times should consider this aspect.	
Sushma Swaraj	The compassionate behavior displayed by her towards problems and concerns of common person is an essential trait for any leader. Her approach is a perfect example where leader can get idea about treading this path. Many women and even men find it difficult to take care of family while fulfilling family responsibilities. The approach to take care of both personal and professional responsibilities can be very useful for many leaders. She was a formidable leader with her ability to command the political sphere and she never back down from a challenge. The leader can learn to remain firm and determined in testing times. She had the foresight and competence to create a social presence and reach millions with her empathetic and compassionate behavior.	Compassionate, Balancing responsibilities, determination, visionary
Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat	Ensuring transparency in financial matters with all members, following principles in financial accounting, regular and timely payments without credits and equal sharing of profits and losses highlights the humbleness and humility of the leader and strengthens the relationship with the followers. Enhancing productivity and	Transparency, Integrity, Productivity, Social Responsibility

	<p>efficiency at the workplace is an important component of leadership. Every work is considered equal, and sisters are free to choose their activity. No sister is asked to leave. This helps to enhance productivity and efficiency at the workplace. It shows the concern of leaders towards the subordinates in ensuring them proper means of living. She was a great leader who believed in equality among sister members irrespective of their social and financial position. She undertook various efforts in promoting literacy and computer education among members and their families giving employees the chance to develop themselves professionally and personally. Following the footsteps of a considerate and responsible leader she introduced new models for community development and poverty reduction and followed unique business development strategies which benefited the women across the world in improving their financial conditions.</p>	
Arundhati Bhattacharya	<p>In her time at SBI, she tried to root-out the NPAs, worked to digitize the two-centuries old bank envisioning the future digital world and merged SBI's five associate banks reaping the benefits of a more powerful merged unit. She worked with authenticity because she thinks that being authentic means being productive. She repositioned the HR by performance</p>	<p>Productivity, Efficiency, communication skills</p>

	<p>improvement measures, efficient resource planning and motivated workforce, she revamped the career development system and introduced flexible working system for women so that they can work efficiently ensuring their work-life balance and more participation. Being an effective leader, she is a good communicator, crisis manager and resilient towards unforeseen situations. She started the process to develop specialized skills and leadership and introduced the culture of perform or perish.</p>	
Hardika Shah	<p>Transparent and fair practices help the society. For instance, she issued the Fair Practices Code of Kinara Capital with the objectives to ensure transparent and fair transactions with all the customers. The codes also facilitate customers to have a better understanding about the products and services. She thought that the heart and the soul of an organization is made up of its people (employees). She invested in creating value for her employees and developing a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and equal-opportunity work environment where everyone can thrive. She is a resilient leader who was ready for the setbacks due to pandemic. With the high rate of vaccination, her team was mentally and physically ready for it. Her workstyle is vibrant, uplifting, and easy to grasp. She projects a cheerful, transparent and</p>	<p>Transparency, People Centric, Enterprising</p>

	an open persona. To bridge the gaps for women entrepreneurs, she set up the organization and launched HerVikas programme. She also improved the livelihoods of local economy by sustaining jobs and generating employment for first time wage earners.	
Smt. Ratan Shastri	Resilience to work in extreme situation can help overcome even most difficult challenge that a person could face. Once that is done, a person emerges as a great leader. To build great institutions a leader has to lead by example and then people get inspired. This is particularly necessary in case strong motivation is required to overcome masses from cognitive blinding or lethargy.	Resilience, Leading by example, simplicity



Figure 2a: Word Cloud based on leadership traits of ancient women leaders



Figure 2b: Word Cloud based on leadership traits of contemporary women leaders

Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study contributes to addressing the gap of indigenous approach to governance and role of women leaders. It is evident, from stories of ancient and contemporary times, that increased participation of woman in leadership and governance is beneficial for the society. Also, the study identifies that in ancient times in Bharat there were many women in leadership roles, the stories of whom are not known to the masses. This is a huge gap which educational institutions need to address. The education system rarely incorporates the women in empowered role. The false narratives of history highlight women as the one being dominated, oppressed, and one who had no say in significant governance matters. The study recognises that the role of women was far enlarged as being presented in the curriculum. The women were well educated, had proper training in emotional and physical aspects, guided their husbands and in the absence of husbands looked after the affairs of kingdom with no less efficiency. Overall, there is a need to build the correct narrative about our culture and context.

The study also highlights the contribution of women leadership in sustainable development of the businesses as well as society. The approach of these leaders was holistic to a large extent. Along with securing the present for their people, they also thrived to give the coming generations a better place to live in. It also throws light on some major challenges faced by the women leaders. The policymakers can take a clue for bringing in legislative reforms in respective fields.

Recommendations for Corporate:

Leadership Traits: Leadership is an important aspect for any organization to whatever sector it belongs. It is being proved through various research that leadership based on ideas from ethos stand on a better edge in all spheres. Hence, there is a need to promote leadership based on Bhartiya ethos in conjunction with culture and context which ensures more responsible, harmonious, and sustainable leadership which promotes good governance.

Through our study we found some very important personal traits that leaders could imbibe to achieve organisation goals. Remaining focused, determined, and consistent along with a personality which is the embodiment of virtue and self-respect defines a leader. A leader should focus on sustainable development ensuring that business flourish. Managing in-fighting and keeping the focus of members of organization on task is an essential task of a leader. Thus, a leader in any organization needs to be ready for putting all efforts for achieving outcomes. Administrative hurdles, inefficient meetings and delay in decision making are detrimental to the growth of organizations. A leader needs to be robust enough to put in multiple efforts to achieve the goals. The leader's consistency is essential to remain on top position. A leader needs to work along with employees towards organization's goals. Emotional balance of a leader is very crucial for organization's success. Hence, a leader must be proactive in initiating and adapting changes with time. The conviction of a person to accomplish certain task comes very handy when it is being envisioned. The clarity of thought about the vision, mission and objectives makes the difference. Communication (verbal and non-verbal) is an important tool for a leader. Assertive communication with confidence in body language is more important than offensive communication.

A good leader is one who is very humble in receiving advise from others, especially mentors. Being open to advise and improvements helps in nurturing good relationships. A leader is not complete without the team. The ability and sensitivity to deal with diverse

team members from different cultures, requires patience and resilience in understanding the principles of others.

Ensuring transparency in financial matters with all members, following principles in financial accounting, regular and timely payments without credits and equal sharing of profits and losses highlight the humbleness and humility of the leader and strengthens the relationship with the followers.

Ethical Culture: Ethics is something which cannot be taught, it develops from conscience. Understanding of ethos helps in developing such personality which makes behaviour ethical. Through increasing use and trend of social media, the activities of leaders are continuously observed. Any activity by a reputed leader would become the news for tomorrow. It becomes essential to follow same principles in personal and professional life with understanding of right and wrong and its repercussions at the large level. Such ethical behaviour can influence others to bring positive changes in the society.

Spiritual inclination: The time when the world has started realising the negative implications of materialistic orientation, this study hits the ground by expounding the incidents of prosperity and wellbeing through the spiritual orientation of leaders. Positive development of a leader will ensure positive influence on others. The leaders compromise on nothing but best for their people but at the same time checks that they are not emotionally attached to the prosperity and being a leader is a responsible position entrusted by the people.

Work life balance: In the pursuit of achieving sustainable advantage and work-life balance there is a need to revisit Nishkaam karm yog. It is the strategy of doing the work in best possible manner without being emotionally attached to it and without getting baffled by the dualities of success and failure. Effectiveness of the work will increase if the task is undertaken with utmost zeal, confidence, and efforts without thinking of the result. Most of the women leaders discussed in the study had to fight with the enemy/invasers,

knowing that their physical strength was less, the courage was undeterred, and they fought valiantly leading the entire army. Fulfilment of duties with the intention of greatest good of all in mind can bring wonders. Many women and even men find it difficult to take care of family while fulfilling family responsibilities. The approach to take care of both responsibilities can be very useful for many leaders.

Risk management: The challenges are bound to come and it's the resistance and robustness that plays an important role in success of any organization. A leader's focus on skill development of employees pays on the long run, especially in times of crisis.

Social Responsibility: The compassionate behaviour displayed towards problems and concerns of common person is an essential trait for any leader. A leader needs to be socially responsible and also drive the culture of responsibility within the organization. Creating learning opportunities for the society by inviting experts of indigenous knowledge can be of great help. This is an important aspect to learn regarding social responsibility of a leader – that even being busy to the core, focusing on responsibility towards social aspects is inseparable. Women are increasingly entering the scene and marking their presence with greater efficiency and benefits in organizational activities. By training women in these lines, the corporates and the society can witness double delight with more positive changes. Effort should be made to bridge the gaps for women entrepreneurs, new programmes to improve the livelihoods of local economy by sustaining jobs and generating employment for first time wage earners can ensure social inclusion.

Succession planning: The life of Jijabai also throws light on importance of succession planning. Nurturing future leaders on the path of dharm, ethics and values is essential.

Recommendations for educational institutions:

One of the purposes of education is to nurture the student in becoming a good human being and a good citizen. In we consider management educational institutions they are entrusted with the responsibility to nurture next generation of entrepreneurs, leaders and managers. Stories from own country can impart valuable lessons to students. The curriculum and syllabus have the scope for redesign to highlight the glory and lessons from Bharat. Instead of representing Bhartiya leaders on the passive note who were being defeated at last by the invaders, the active side showing them resisting and fighting for their kingdom, for their people, for their self-respect has immense potential to motivate the young minds not to surrender to the wrong, have courage and resilience and finally develop a feeling of proud in own heritage.

The managerial learnings for such stories could be analysed by including such case studies in the educational curriculum. Which has the potential to highlight many aspects such as self-development, responsible and authentic leadership, collaboration, decision making, strategy, social responsibility etc. it can further facilitate in identifying such aspects from ancient times which can be of use in the contemporary times and further reinforcing what is common. The National Education Policy 2020 highlights more inclusivity and the indigenous angle to revisit the theories and models.

Recommendations for government:

To have a unique proposition and context-based studies, the Government of India can sponsor more research on ancient ideas from our vast heritage and principles, and India based organizations ensuring better reliability, relatedness, and extended validity. To showcase these strengths events can be organized to highlight the glorious heritage and learning from such great personalities in India.

Giving a boost to women empowerment and increasing their contribution such studies recognized and highlighted on the national or international fronts will spark a positive light for many women to rise and come up to the scene. India wants to be self-reliant which is represented the Aatm-Nirbhar Bharat; campaign, the contribution of women can have added advantage in generating national synergies.

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Annexure 1

Framework for Stories of Women Leaders (Ancient Times)

1. Biographical Details - like names, place of birth, parents, siblings and other family members.
2. Brief details of childhood: if possible capturing details of childhood experiences that made life long impact.
3. Education - formal and informal both.
4. Major incidents - opportunities and challenges.
5. Trigger points/situations that brought leadership positions.
6. Key decisions / roles in position as queen, prime minister or any other decision making authoritative position.
7. Unique approaches towards governance, social welfare, security, education, health, dharm etc.
8. Guiding Force / Motivation / Inspiration.
9. Ideas/views/opinions/works in relation to Bharatiya culture and ethos.
10. Outcomes of her leadership roles.
11. Learning for
 - a. Effective Leadership
 - b. Good governance
 - c. Sustainable Development
 - d. Crisis management
12. References

Annexure 2

Framework for Stories of Women Leaders (Contemporary Times)

1. Biographical Details - like names, place of birth, parents, siblings and other family members
2. Brief details of childhood: if possible capturing details of childhood experiences that made life long impact
3. Education - formal and informal both (with focus on business/technical education)
4. Major incidents - opportunities and challenges
5. Trigger points/situations that brought her to leadership positions/career progression
6. Key decisions / roles in position as manager, head, leader or any other decision making position
7. Unique approaches towards good practices of corporate governance, sustainable development, strategic benefit to organization, organization's growth, CSR, inclusive growth etc.
8. Guiding Force / Motivation / Inspiration
9. Ideas/views/opinions/works in relation to Bharatiya culture and ethos
10. Outcomes of her leadership roles
11. Learning for
 - a. Good practices of corporate governance
 - b. Better productivity at workplace
 - c. Effective Leadership
 - d. Sustainable Development
12. References

Annexure 3

Past Research/Studies by Banasthali Vidyapith in collaboration with NFCG

- i. The project entitled “Training Women for Leadership and Corporate Governance: Synthesis of Eastern and Western Practices” was sanctioned by NFCG for January 2020 to December 2020.
- ii. National Webinar supported by NFCG was organized in March 2021 on theme of Corporate Governance and Business Ethics.¹
- iii. Seminar supported by NFCG was organized in August 2018 and a study report entitled “Emerging Trends in Corporate Governance” was made based on sessions of seminar.²

¹ Full programme available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXp0OY_0r9g

² <http://cfptrw.in/emerging-trends-in-corporate-governance/>

About OMRISE Research Group



OMRISE is a research group that focuses on Organizational Management (OM), Research (R), Innovation (I) and Sustainable Entrepreneurship (SE). The group comprises of researchers, consultants, entrepreneurs, business organisations and academic institutions, all organised and nourishing each other like a Banyan Tree. The Integrative Paradigm as the key guiding principle for the research undertaken. The group actively disseminates its research through publications, consulting, online modules etc. The research and consulting domain is Organisational Theory & Practice, that includes gross as well as subtle organisational aspects viz. culture, design, structure, technology, strategy, leadership and governance to name a few. The group strongly believes in co-creation of knowledge and it guides the engagement with business and consulting organisations. The group was setup in collaboration of Buurtzorg Nederland (Netherlands), Praan Group (Netherlands), Banasthali Vidyapith (India) and recently the group has been joined by Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar.

The group has organized international conferences, research seminars and workshops to further the cause of indigenous research. The latest initiative of OM-RISE online magazine also took off very well and its unique ideas are been appreciated by readers all over the world.

Website: www.omrise.org