

Issue Brief

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**Inner Personality and
Military Leadership**

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Inner Personality and Military Leadership

Abstract

*This article challenges the modern military assumption that leadership is merely a transferable skill, arguing instead that 'true command, under fire, is dictated by one's **inner personality** or Sva Dharma'. While the "Outer Personality"—a mask of polished communication and appearance, inevitably collapses in the "fog of war". The author posits that the "born leader" is not a myth, but a manifestation of deep-seated, inborn traits shaped by the Law of Karma life after life.*

Drawing a sharp contrast with corporate leadership, which relies on monetary incentives and slow-moving consensus, military leadership demands an immediate, life-or-death commitment to mission and men. By synthesising western leadership traits (decisiveness, endurance) with the timeless wisdom of Chanakya's Arthashastra and the Bhagavad Gita, the article classifies inner personality as under:

- **Type C (Tamsic):** Lazy and destructive, driven by base desires.
- **Type A (Rajasic):** High-energy but ego-driven, prone to manipulation and self-promotion.
- **Type B (Sattvic):** The ideal leader—egoless, compassionate, duty-bound and self-starter

*The analysis concludes that only the 'Type B (Sattvic)' inner personality possesses the intrinsic self-sacrifice and mental equilibrium necessary to secure victory in the lethal pressures of the battlefield. The "Action Oriented" Type A may excel in peacetime through ambition, but only the "Balancing" Type B can inspire subordinates when personal safety is required to be traded for national glory. The article serves as a critical call to military authorities to prioritize the evaluation of a candidate's **inner nature** over their deceptive outer crust.*

Keywords: Military leadership, Personality, Corporate leadership, Chanakya Arthashastra

Introduction

The subject of military leadership has been widely researched world over, in a different time frame of human history, with a claim that a person can be trained, coached to be a military leader, yet there are very few success stories of men and women proving themselves to be true

leader of men in life threatening circumstances of the battlefield. The battlefield demands self-restraint, self-discipline, self-sacrifice at the cost of personal safety, in order to secure victory and glory to the outfit one is leading.

This 'self' comprises of inborn traits which forms the inner personality. Some call it a true nature. This true nature has to be in sync with the traits needed to be a true military leader. Because of this factor, there is a popular saying that leaders are born and not made. However skilful training and guidance will be needed to make them operable, without it, these will remain dormant.

Our ancient seers deduced that, the inner personality of a person just moves from one body to another— at death all our desires and aspirations seem to vanish in thin air; on rebirth distinct traits and ambitions appear from nowhere and forms the inner personality for entire life unless corrected /improved upon by one's own effort (Bhagavad Geeta chapter 15, verse 8).

Personality

Personality is the enduring pattern of thoughts and behaviour that defines an individual's way of interacting with the world. These are of two types: -

Outer Personality

It refers to the observable behaviour, mannerism, appearance and communication skills, an individual displays to the world. It is a shell or mask which might be developed or copy others. Key aspects of this personality are as under: -

- **Appearance.** Physical presentation including clothing, style and body language.
- **Communication.** The way a person speaks his tone and conversational habits.
- **Behaviour and Conduct.** How a person behaves in public, at work and his level of sociability.

This outer self is often used to manage interaction with the external environment and often deceives the superiors, peers and subordinates. Such persons are often mistaken as leaders during their assessment for promotion. They often fail when confronted with situations challenging their inner self.

Inner Personality

Lot has been written and researched by the western scholars about this inner self. Our scriptures, the most revered one- Bhagavad Gita classifies human beings as per their inborn

traits and aptitude called *Sva Dharma* (True Self) in the following three categories. (Bhagavad Geeta, verse 18).

Type A -Action Oriented (Rajasic)

- Greedy.
- He always wants to engage in self-promoting activity.
- Ambitious.
- Always lives in future.
- Likes to possess even if he does not deserve.
- Egoist.
- Manipulator for self-gains.
- Periodically falls ill as he is mentally never calm and remains stressed.
- He is happy only some times.

Type B – Balancing (Satvic)

- Works as a duty and enjoys.
- Self-starter.
- Egoless.
- Gives credit to his team for success and takes responsibility for its failure.
- Has extreme patience.
- Compassionate.
- Result- he is always happy.

Type C. Casual (Tamsic). This category has the following inborn traits which are self-explanatory

- Lazy.
- Often postpones his work.
- Likes food, drinks and taking care of his body.
- Destructive, Anarchist; finds pleasure in harming others or their interests.

- He is generally very healthy physically.
- Believes in Me, Mine and Myself.
- Result he is never happy.

Above classified inborn traits are either there or not there in an individual and neither can be inculcated or modified by any kind of training unless an individual identifies these and makes deliberate efforts to upgrade his inner personality to Type B. This distinction in inner personality will determine, what kind of a leader one will be if given a chance to lead any outfit.

These traits will not only influence the decision making and leadership style of an individual as a leader but will also result similar kind of performance from his outfit. Therefore, it is incumbent on the part of an authority to take into consideration the type of inner personality one possesses while giving him leadership assignment or promoting, rather than getting impressed by his outer deceptive personality.

Military Leadership vs Corporate Leadership

Military leadership is a mission oriented involving strict discipline and attaining success under a lethal pressure of life threatening risks whereas, corporate leadership centres around profitability, employee and resource management and adaptability in the volatile market.

While military leadership relies on command authority and team cohesion, corporate leadership requires influencing, motivating and persuading their employees with monetary incentives.

Military leadership is deeply involved with personal accountability and leadership is a daily task, whereas corporate leadership always relies on specialised roles and departments

A military leader wears two hats viz. planner and administrator whereas in the corporate world these roles are performed by separate individuals / departments.

In the military, one has to train himself to act decisively even with incomplete information in the fog of war that too with time constraints and trying battle conditions, while in the corporate world, decisions move at a slower speed, result of endless meetings and presentations. *Unfortunately, such a culture has seeped in our military also, at all levels of command.*

Military leader's primary mission is to achieve national security objectives often under orders that require force, cohesion and mission accomplishment. There is no such challenge to corporate leadership.

Exclusive Military Leadership Traits

As per western research, these traits are as under: -

Decisiveness. Making sound rapid decisions under pressure.

Courage. Acting despite fear or criticism includes both physical and moral.

Integrity. Maintain high moral principles.

Endurance. Physical and mental training.

Initiative. Taking actions without orders to win the situation.

Empathy. Understanding subordinates' needs and maintain self-awareness.

West is of the view that these traits, coupled with training can be inculcated and that there is no correlation of these with inner personality.

However, as per the Chanakya's Arth shastra, military leadership personal traits should include:

Table 1: Traits of Military Leadership Personnel

Self-Control	A leader must control negative emotions such as anger, greed, vanity and pride
Righteousness	Acting with integrity and fairness to inspire loyalty and righteousness among soldiers
Courage and Energetic	Fearlessness in the face of adversity and high energy as lazy leader creates lazy and unproductive army
Approachable and Acceptable	Leader must listen to his troops with patience to avoid confusion and vulnerability to enemy

Source: Chanakya's Arthashastra

Table 2: Military Leadership Traits as per Bhagavad Gita

Bravery	Shoor veerta
Intense Energy	Tez
Patience/ Tolerance	Dhairya
Steadfastness/ Unyielding in combat	Yudh se na bhagna
Generosity without Expecting any thing In return	Daan Dena
Selfless service /Altruism	Niswarth Bhav

Source: Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 18 verse 43

Analyses

Analyses of personal traits of leadership makes it evident that, military leadership demands selfless service, negligible ego, and self-sacrifice in all spheres of military life. While correlating these with inborn personality traits described as Type A, Type B, and Type C above, only 'Type B' imbibes the expected inborn military leadership traits.

Type C and Type A nowhere come near to qualify a military leader because both contain element of Ego and selfishness which generally leads a person to achieve personal goals rather than Organisational Goals.

Operable Military Leadership Traits

Operable traits, in a professional context, are desirable behavioural skills required to be a successful military leader. These are outward projection of one's inner personality. . These can be developed with training .as against inborn traits; Chanakya classifies these in his treatise Arth shastra as under: -

- Strategic and intellectual traits
- Strategic command philosophy

- Operational and command Traits

Strategic and Intellectual Traits

- **Sence of anticipation.** A military leader must have the ability to foresee long term challenges, anticipate enemy moves and prepare accordingly.
- **Intellectual and learned.** A Military leader must possess great intellect, memory and a desire to continuously learn and train in various arts and sciences of warfare.
- **Situational awareness.** Ability to identify the chinks in the armour of the enemy and strike at the exact moment of his weakness.
- **Master of espionage.** A leader must build a strong intelligence network and never rely solely on trust.

Strategic Command Philosophy

Perceived strength. Even if a leader is not inherently powerful, he must appear dangerous to protect himself.

Welfare centric. A leader must lead a happy team. His happiness must lie in the happiness and security of his men.

Operational and Command Traits

Decisive and timely. Making right decisions at the right time. Postponing urgent matters is seen as a major failure.

Capable team builder. Selecting, training and empowering trusted skilled commanders rather than trying to do everything alone.

Ruthless when necessary. Should be firm in punishing to maintain discipline.

Patient and Persistent. Adhering to the principle of *LAGE RAHO* mind set especially when faced with temporary failure.

Soft skills

Operable traits, called behavioural skills, are also called Soft Skills. These are personal attributes that enhances individual's interaction, career prospects and job performance. Inner personality traits will help joining the military profession but soft skills will enable one to excel in the profession (These can be imbibed by training).

Chanakya has mentioned desirability to imbibe skills such as Memory (brain power) Foresight and Awareness; it will not be out of context keeping the demands of modern warfare to add few more soft skills such as Dependability, communication skills and Team Building.

Skill is considered an Art and not a science and to perfect the art one needs dedication and a Master, who himself has perfected these in his life. It takes patience, perseverance, continuous practice and Will to imbibe. These are being discussed in the succeeding paras.

Enhancement of Brain Power

The brain is physical (hardware) and mind is (software) functional. There are two sides of the brain dealing with different faculties:

Table 3: Enhancement of Brian Power

Left Side	Right Side
Verbal Expression	Imagination
Reading and Writing	Intuition
Facts and Figures	Visualisation

Both sides are equally important. Ironically our training/ education system focuses on developing faculties of the left side, whereas faculties of right side of the brain are more important to possess to be a successful military leader.

Chronic stress and frustration will shrink the memory centre of the brain. Smoking, alcohol damage the brain too.

Table 4: Techniques to Enhance the Power

Stress	Accept the inevitable Pull both your shoulders down and bear the pressure when in stress.
Meditation	Close your eyes. Either watch your thoughts or breath.

Open right side of the brain for developing imagination and intuition.	Massage left thumb for three minutes and each finger of left Hand for one minute each. Walk along the path making fig of 8.
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Foresight

Without this trait one can never be a successful military leader. Frustration is only for those who do things habitually. This trait entails:-

- (a) Planning ahead for short, middle and long-term goals.
- (b) What all can go wrong in execution of our plan.
- (c) Prepare contingency plan to counter likely failure.

Techniques to Develop this Trait

Keep a note book and divide it with bunch of pages for daily task, weekly tasks, monthly tasks, Quarterly Tasks and yearly tasks. spend 10 minutes daily visualising these tasks and writing down. Slowly one will develop sense of foresight and anticipation.

Awareness

It is an ability to understand a subject, issues and situation according to the available facts and in correct perspective. One can be only aware if he is living in the present moment —neither in the past nor in future. One need to develop awareness of two things: -

- About Self
- About the latest development of weapons, their employment, and pattern of future warfare

About Self

Generally, we act in a state of unawareness under the spell of anger, greed, ego etc., which leads us to take wrong decisions. If we become aware as to under which of these negative thoughts, we are in at that particular moment, we can correct ourselves and be in a position to take correct course of action. Bhagavat Geeta calls it intellect “*Budhi*” or sense of discretion (Bhagavad Geeta, Chapter 3 verse 42).

Prevailing Environment

A military leader needs to continuously upgrade himself about prevailing social and political environment in the country, developments of new weapons world over, conduct of battles taking place in the various theatres of the world, tactics and strategy employed and likely future flash points in our neighbourhood and likely pattern of future warfare. Geopolitics must be a favourite subject of each military leader.

Technique

Meditate daily at least for 10 minutes, observing either your thoughts or breath. Have a Master with whom one can consult time to time to improve one's professional awareness. Today entire information of any subject is a 'click away' provided one is inquisitive

If you are Aware then You are Proactive.

Communication Skills

This art is a must for a military leader of substance as it will be required to convey plan and, methods to execute it and motivate his command to achieve the goal even under adversity. All great military leaders possessed this art and used this with proficiency to motivate their command to excel in executing the given task especially under trying conditions of the battle.

Technique

- Must know the language the troops understand. It could be their native language or Hindi.
- Always speak in the language one is comfortable with. If one is not comfortable with the language one should avoid it as he cannot express his ideas with conviction.
- Practice speaking loudly on any topic extemporaneously for three minutes daily visualising that one is speaking to the imaginable audience/ body of troops
- Gather facts statistics or past examples of military history to support your arguments rather than making a wild statement.
- Must have conviction in whatever one is speaking about. It should come from one's heart and experience rather than vague statements.

- One should not preach or ask for what one has not practiced. Contrary to this, one will be called hypocrite and will lose credibility as a leader and will become merely a figure head.

Building a Team

It is a process of working collaboratively within a group of people in order to achieve the desired goal. It also means that people will try to cooperate with each other, using their skills and providing constructive feedback despite any personal conflict.

Key to successful team building.

- All members of the team must know the mission and realise the importance of achieving it successfully.
- Must develop a strong sense of belonging in each member. It is only possible if every member knows that his due share of recognition will not be denied.
- Team must resolve internal personality conflicts and clashes.
- Leadership should be Demonstrative—seen by the men, giving them timely advice, correcting them if they are deviating in methodology and motivation to achieve the task in a given time and perfection.

Dependability

“Some total of all the skills acquired is to become dependable and worthy of trust”.

Ultimately competence gets you in the door but dependability will ensure your continuous usefulness for the organisation. This one attitude separates ‘chaff from the bran’. This behaviour cannot be demonstrated by those who possess self-centred attitude and are shy of putting that extra effort which is a thin line between success and failure. Without this attitude one will not be able to win confidence of the outfit one is part of / leading. To be dependable following must be practiced and improved upon as one advances in military profession.

For Seniors

Be professionally competent to get into the shoes of immediate senior in rank and have workable knowledge of two ranks down—the rank one is holding e.g. a battalion commander must know how to command a Brigade and employment/ deployment of a company and platoon.

That is principle of One Up and Two Down; without this, one will tend to be victim of Peter Principle 'every employee rises to his level of incompetence'.

Constantly train your team. Remember one is as good as his team; it will give confidence to your senior in your ability to accomplish the given task.

For Peers

Never be informer for your senior.

Always be helpful. If you cannot help say so.

Never be over informal. Remember 'Familiarity breeds contempt.'

Never pretend what you are not.

For Juniors

Always seek to enhance his professional capability to make him worthy of promotion.

Never reprimand /upbraid him publicly.

Case Study

To be a military leader, one has to have in born traits and aptitude for this profession which is epitome of selfless service and self-sacrifice. It cannot be termed a career. Over these inborn traits, operable traits (Soft Skills) can be built upon to make one a successful military leader. Life of Chandragupta Maurya came very close to this theory of military leadership as discussed in succeeding paras: -

Chanakya recognised Chandragupta's, inborn traits when he observed him as a young boy playing "king with his friends". He was impressed by his innate leadership, confidence and ability to command. Chanakya took him to Taxila where he trained him for 7 years on operable traits based on the principles of Arth shastra.

His training emphasised strategic, proactive and often ruthless military tactics which enabled in unifying India and establishing an empire out of nothing. Chandragupta imbibed the core traits of aspiring conqueror.

Core Military Traits Chander Gupta Imbided

Proactive and strategic warfare. Rather than relying solely on brute force, he used kuta Buddha-guerrilla tactics. He learned to attack only when the enemy was weak; exploiting internal chaos in kingdom as with Nandas.

Realism and flexibility. He adopted tactics and strategy based on ground realities. Diplomacy was adopted when he was weak. Followed 'policy of tortoise' where a king withdraws into a fort during weakness and strikes like a snake when an opportunity arrives.

Intelligence and Psychological warfare (Upajpa). Use of espionage and misinformation to sow discord among enemy ranks before engaging them in direct combat.

Conqueror mindset (Vijigishu). A king must aim for territorial expansion while maintaining internal stability. Alas we are lacking.

Decisive and Ruthless Leadership. A leader must be willing to sacrifice including personal safety to achieve victory.

These military behavioural skills allowed Chandragupta to transform from a regional leader into a powerful emperor who defeated Nandas and Greek forces.

Conclusion

There is a direct correlation between inner personality (inborn aptitudes/ traits) and operable traits (Soft skills) needed to be a military leader. The latter can be developed with training but former cannot. That is why many fail when time of reckoning comes. Military leadership is distinct from corporate leadership and culture. Unfortunately, the latter has seeped into our organisational structure, training, ethos, lifestyle and work culture.

Military leadership demands sacrifice of personal comforts, ambition and personal safety to achieve victory in the battle and war is a series of battles.

Our Law of Karma and rebirth believes that inner personality of a person after death moves from one body to another. Dr Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia investigated 3000 cases of children claiming to remember their past life proving theory of rebirth. He further concluded that emotions, memories and even physical body features can be transferred from one life to another.

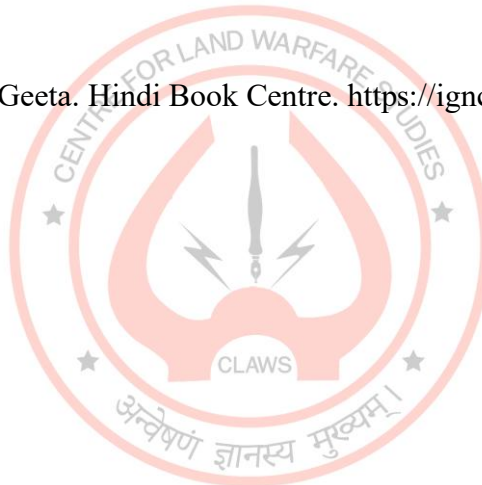
Henry Ford, the automobile pioneer wrote, **“Genius is experience, some seem to think that it is a gift or talent, but it is a fruit of long experience in many lives. Some are older souls than others and so they move”**—this statement also justifies the theory of inborn traits.

A military leader fails because he fails to become dependable by making it obvious that he will do no more than the minimum. Such leaders are burden on the Army and should be weeded out at the earliest lest they become contagious for others. **Army cannot afford to be individual and welfare centric.**

Military leadership is a profession not a career. On it depends the security of the country. It is a profession always aiming to attain victory in the battle even at the cost of personal safety. **Finally, a military leadership has to be Demonstrative, visible to one’s command and not chair bound and pen pushing type, getting bogged down in presentations and files.**

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About the Author

Major General CM Seth (Retd) was commissioned in 1963 and took part both in 1965 and 1971 Wars. An alumnus of Staff College, he held instructional appointments in infantry School, College of Combat and IMTRAT. Been Deputy Force Commander NSG, BGS and Chief of Staff of a Corps. He also commanded a division in mountains and retired from the post of ADG Territorial Army.



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