

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

Volume 15
Issue 1 *Winter/Spring 2022*

Article 7

January 2022

Serve to Lead: Why Serving Others is Essential to Lead?

M S. Rao
profrao11@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl>



Part of the [Business Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rao, M S. (2022) "Serve to Lead: Why Serving Others is Essential to Lead?," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22543/0733.151.1387>

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol15/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Business at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Values-Based Leadership by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

Serve to Lead: Why Serving Others is Essential to Lead?

— PROFESSOR M.S. RAO, PH.D.

Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to inculcate the attitude of service to serve others selflessly. It explains the benefits and consequences of serving others. It discusses nonprofits, volunteerism, sharing with others, caring for others, adding value to society, and making a difference in the lives of others. It illustrates the consequences of serving others with the examples of Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Nelson Mandela. It emphasizes contribution over achievement. It unveils that greatness is determined by service and outlines a nonprofit initiative, Vision 2030: One Million Global Leaders. The predominant emphasis is to serve others for a cause, not adulation, and implores the reader to be a giver, not a taker, by infusing life with passion and purpose.

Introduction

“The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.” — Leo Tolstoy

Serving others is the most important thing in the world. Unfortunately, people don't take it seriously. Instead, they often expect from others. There is the least competition in giving to others and the most competition in getting from others. But the world appreciates givers, not takers. Then why not serve others by providing purpose and meaning to life? In this regard, the author will discuss nonprofits, volunteerism, sharing with others, caring for others, adding value to society, and making a difference in the lives of others.

Benefits of Serving Others

“If you want happiness for an hour — take a nap.

 If you want happiness for a day — go fishing.

 If you want happiness for a year — inherit a fortune.

 If you want happiness for a lifetime — help someone else.”

 — Chinese Proverb

When you serve others, you are engaged creatively, constructively, and productively. You are busy doing good and great things in your life. It removes negative thoughts from your mind and replaces them with positive thoughts. You become more optimistic and confident in life. Your stress will be relieved. You will not have any mental illness because you will be occupied with volunteerism. You combat anxiety and depression. You improve your immunity and enhance longevity. You improve your mood and enhance your self-esteem. You connect with others comfortably and improve your emotional intelligence and soft skills. You get inner satisfaction and happiness that you touched the lives of others. Overall, you improve your health and happiness.

Dave Ulrich remarked, “Sometimes brilliant leaders lack interpersonal savvy. They are lollipop leaders who have a great brain, but no heart. They have not recognized that learning to work with others is a foundation for both personal happiness and professional success. They need to use their strengths to strengthen others. Research has shown that people who care about people are 60% more likely to be promoted. Economist Arthur Brooks also found that those who gave more and served more made more money not less. Those who gave to charity are 43% happier than those who do not give. Volunteering and helping others give you emotional, physical, and economic well-being.”

Hence, serve others to lead a mindful and meaningful life.

Consequences of Serving Others

“The worst day of a life led with courage is better than the best day of a life cosseted for safety.” — James Strock

When you serve others, you must be prepared to receive both bouquets and brickbats. You will be happy to note that you receive more bouquets and fewer brickbats. Of course, you consume your time, money, and energy. At times you receive criticism from others. You must be thick-skinned. In a nutshell, there are innumerable benefits of serving others and some consequences of serving others. As every coin has two sides, everything has pros and cons. When you look at the consequences of serving others, the examples of Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr strike our minds as they were assassinated. Nelson Mandela was jailed for 27 years. These leaders could not please all sectors. But they lived beyond their lifetimes and became guiding lights for others. Hence, look at the benefits, not the consequences of serving others. It is great to lead a life with principles and philosophies than to lead a life with compromises and confusions.

Don't restrain yourself from serving others by looking at the consequences of serving others. You must not see the dark. Instead, you must see the light. Look at the rising sun, not the setting sun. Look at the benefits of serving others, not the consequences of serving others.

Emphasize Contribution over Achievement

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Presently, people are more concerned about achievement than contribution. They must emphasize contribution over achievement. Currently, advertising and marketing have become the order of the day. We come across several people on social media who engage in charity for the sake of publicity to build their brands rather than to add value to others. Great leaders serve others selflessly. They contribute to creating a ripple effect.

Greatness is Determined by Service!

“Not everybody can be famous but everybody can be great because greatness is determined by service... You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

There are many ways to serve others. The real question is what makes you happy to be able to help? Identify if it is volunteering, interacting, or simply adding value to your

communities. There is magic in serving others. You generate happiness when people receive help from you. Your satisfaction comes from seeing the spark of their smiles when you help others. There is something magical about being able to give something to people to impact their lives. Here are some ways to serve others. Serve someone every day. Help the person to your next door. If you are a teacher, teach one person every day. Identify people suffering in your area and alleviate their suffering. Participate actively in nonprofits. It gives you greater satisfaction than giving money to charitable trusts. It helps you understand the dynamics of nonprofits and gives you a sense of identity and belongingness. Remember, the happiest people are the people who serve others the best.

When stray dogs barked due to lack of food in our community during the coronavirus lockdown in April 2020, I began to offer food to them. Although I had been without regular income, I decided to do something for the stray dogs in my village. I started bringing them food and offered them sustenance regularly. The barking of stray dogs had changed my mind to do something despite financial constraints.

Vision 2030[1]: One Million Global Leaders

“It is not enough to be compassionate – you must act.” –The Dalai Lama

Service is the hallmark of my core personality since childhood. When I was in college, I participated actively in the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS). I started a nonprofit initiative: *Vision 2030: One Million Global Leaders* (URL: http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one_31.html). I served in the Indian Air Force due to love for my nation and passion for the uniform. I served more than a decade and acquired several qualifications including DME, BSc, MA, PGDCLL, PGDBM, and MBA. After I left the Indian Air Force, I pursued research and earned a Ph.D. in Soft Skills in 2011. I led a painful life both in military and civil service as I was born into a poor family and encountered innumerable challenges in my personal, professional, and social endeavors. I was born into a dysfunctional family and grew up in a toxic environment. I encountered some rogue relatives and siblings who were responsible for financial challenges to me, my wife, and two sons. While serving in the Indian Air Force, I acquired knowledge on leadership as the military makes the best leaders due to the kind of tough training soldiers receive and the kind of unique challenges they encounter during both war and peacetime. Hence, I developed a passion for leadership and service. While serving in the Indian Air Force, I did not appreciate the way things were happening in India due to the unscrupulous politicians dividing society in the name of region, religion, caste, and communities. Additionally, lots of money went into the private coffers of politicians rather than reaching the poor people in India. I was disturbed by the conditions in Indian society. Corruption had become a cancer in Indian society. Hence, I thought to train leaders with a global mindset to enable them to develop the nation, promote fraternity, and work for global peace and prosperity.

I entered the teaching profession as educational institutions are the ideal places to shape students and equip them with leadership skills and abilities. Second, I focused on students. When they are teenagers, they can be molded easily as leaders the way the military recruits young cadets and grooms them as soldiers and leaders. I started receiving overwhelming support from students as they were inspired during my teaching and training programs in educational institutions.

As a leadership researcher, I dedicate a substantial amount of my research to various leadership styles and how leadership can be used for the benefit of a global society. During my research, I recognized that there was a looming leadership challenge globally due to the retirement of Baby Boomers as well as the unpreparedness of Gen Y/Millennials in leadership roles. When experienced leaders exit from service, there was an alarming leadership vacuum created worldwide as younger, inexperienced people were not ready to assume roles of leadership. Although the situation threatens global stability, I viewed it as an opportunity to contribute my best by beginning leadership development programs. I trained students as global leaders to equip them with necessary leadership skills and abilities. I have taught and trained more than 40,000 students to date. I have taken the support of social media to articulate my vision and share my articles and videos regularly (URL: <https://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com>) on my social media platforms. Since I belong to Gen X, I can serve as a link between the Baby Boomers and Gen Y to bridge this global leadership deficit. I considered my age and experience in the military and academia, and above all, my interest in leadership and passion for students an opportunity to serve students to groom them as global leaders. I do it despite financial constraints. It is the service I deem critical to my purpose in life.

Success will follow you when you shift your paradigm to service. So, serve others to achieve success in your life.

Serve to Lead

“The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you can alter, even by a millimeter, the way people look at reality, then you can change the world.” — James Baldwin

I enjoyed reading my friend, James Strock’s bestselling book, *Serve to Lead[2]: 21st Century Leaders Manual*. This book will change the way you think about leadership, life, success, and service. James Strock advises: “Reflect on your experience: Who are you serving? Write down a list. Think about those you are serving effectively, and how you might do better. In what ways are you simply serving yourself? What areas of your life, and your service, do you regard as most effective? Why? Are you serving the same people and organizations and causes as in the past? Do you intend to serve different people and organizations and causes in the future? How will you decide? How have you decided in the past?”

I rose from humble origins. I still belong to a lower-middle-class family in India. I was not blessed with an education from eminent educational institutions. I wake up at 4 AM and go to sleep at 10 PM every day. I create knowledge and share knowledge freely with the world every day. This gives me immense satisfaction. I provide free rations to a poor person in my village who serves as an Imam in a mosque. These activities give me great satisfaction and inner happiness. Before I retire each evening, I express my gratitude to God every day for the value I am able to add to the people around me within my limited resources. So, don’t blame your circumstances and lack of resources. Contribute your best within your capacities. If you don’t have money, invest your time into nonprofits or become a volunteer to serve others. Remember, the biggest gift you can give to others is your TIME. Avoid inventing excuses for not serving others. Be part of the solution, not the problem. You are blessed with one life and you must contribute your best to build a better world. Remember, we brought nothing into the world when we were born and we carry nothing from this world when we die. People remember only the good deeds we have done for others when we depart from this world. When you

understand these facts, you become passionate about serving others and leading others with commitment, compassion, and character.

Conclusion

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” – Winston Churchill

Leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela served people with passion and led their lives with purpose and meaning. They were the ideal examples of givers who added immense value to their societies and made a difference. Therefore, serve others for a cause, not for ingratiation.

If you give to the universe, the universe gives back. What goes around comes around. There is the least competition for givers. So, be a giver, not a taker. Serve others. Lead others. A life lived for others is more meaningful than the life lived for yourself. Albert Einstein rightly remarked, “Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” Therefore, add value to others’ lives. Make a difference in the lives of others. Serve to lead your life with passion and purpose. To conclude, serve others to stand out as a soft leader globally.

“I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and I saw that life is all service. I served and saw that service is a joy.” – Khalil Gibran

References

<https://www.amazon.in/Vision-2030-Million-Global-Leaders-ebook/dp/B0794WTXXY>

<https://www.amazon.com/See-Light-You-Spiritual-Mindfulness/dp/1949003132>

<https://www.amazon.com/Soft-Leadership-New-Direction/dp/1949003523>

<https://www.amazon.com/Serve-Lead-Century-Leaders-Manual/dp/1978489552>

[1] <https://www.amazon.in/Vision-2030-Million-Global-Leaders-ebook/dp/B0794WTXXY>

[2] <https://www.amazon.com/Serve-Lead-Century-Leaders-Manual/dp/1978489552>

About the Author

Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D. is the Father of “Soft Leadership” and the Founder of MSR Leadership Consultants, India. He is an International Leadership Guru with forty years of experience and the author of fifty books including the award-winning *See the Light in You* (URL: <https://www.amazon.com/See-Light-You-Spiritual-Mindfulness/dp/1949003132>). He is a C-Suite advisor and global keynote speaker. He brings a strategic eye and long-range vision given his multifaceted professional experience including military, teaching, training, research, consultancy, and philosophy. He is passionate about serving and making a difference in the lives of others. He is a regular contributor to *Entrepreneur Magazine*. He trains a new generation of leaders through leadership education and publications. His vision is to build one million students as global leaders by 2030 (URL: http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one_31.html). He has the vision to share his



knowledge freely with one billion people globally. He advocates gender equality globally (#HeForShe). He was **ranked #1 Thought Leader and Influencer in Business Strategy globally by Thinkers360** (URL: <https://www.thinkers360.com/top-50-global-thought-leaders-and-influencers-on-business-strategy-december-2020/>). He invests his time in authoring books and blogging on executive education, learning, and leadership. Most of his work is available free of charge on his four blogs including <http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com>. He is a prolific author and a dynamic, energetic, and inspirational leadership speaker.

He can be reached at msrlctr@gmail.com.