

YOGIC LEADERSHIP STYLE OF SWAMI RAMDEV FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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BACKGROUND

Swami Ramdev has initiated a national movement for transformation of the self and the human body through the practise of yoga, especially over the last decade.¹ Since the last couple of years Swami Ramdev has expanded the scope of this transformation - to society at large. His movement has attracted national attention. He seems to have changed the language of mainstream politics and attracted leading academics and retired military generals². This paper examines the nature of the “Leadership Style” of Swami Ramdev.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Leadership - The exercise in language that results in the realisation of a future that was not going to happen anyway, which future contributes to fulfil the fundamental concern of the relevant partners /those impacted³

Social transformation - Changing the behaviour and language of public discourse, culture, politics, values and perhaps the very ethos of a society/social system.

Body Kinaesthetic intelligence - Control of body movements, and capacity to physically handle objects⁴. Deals with the **physical body**. Disciplines such as surgery, sports, painting, theatre, dance and music, relate to this intelligence.

Rational intelligence - Capacity for logic, abstraction, analysis, reasoning, problem solving and dealing with numbers. Also termed cognitive intelligence. Deals with the **thinking mind**. Disciplines such mathematics, statistics, and engineering relate to this intelligence.

Emotional intelligence - Ability to identify, assess and control emotions of oneself and of others one is psychologically relating to - in dyads, triads, and groups. Also called social intelligence. Deals with **feelings**. Disciplines such as teaching, management, politics, social work, counselling, etc relate to this intelligence..

Spiritual intelligence - Ability to produce personal meaning, transcendental awareness, enter and exit higher states of consciousness and engage in critical existential thinking⁵. An integrative intelligence that deals with **existential realities**. The intelligence displayed by spiritual masters, visionary leaders, corporate sages, saints and philosophers would probably be examples.

METHODS

- Collecting news from newspapers, blogs and websites identified through Google search engine, on Swami Ramdev over the last decade.
- Viewing television programs of Swami Ramdev on Aastha television channel.
- Collecting literature on leadership theories, through Google search engine.
- Identifying particular events and behaviour, which seems to exhibit “leadership behaviour” of Swami Ramdev.
- Mapping these identified “leadership behaviour” to the existing theories of leadership.
- Synthesising the results to understand the “leadership style” of Swami Ramdev.

DISCUSSION

The social impact made by Swami Ramdev, in the context of Indian society and perhaps the Indian Diaspora across the globe can be gauged by the television ratings of his yoga programs aired on *Aastha* Television⁶. The paid attendance at his travelling yoga camps (*shivirs*) and in the permanent yoga *shivirs* in Haridwar, perhaps is another indicator of social reach. These camps are meant to teach yoga- which relate to body kinaesthetics. Swami Ramdev’s kinaesthetic intelligence is perhaps the foundation stone of his leadership style.

His national movement to rebuild national character (*Rashtriya Charitra*) has been based on his transformative leadership around

*Health care management through an integrated approach combining Yoga and Ayurveda

*Educational empowerment by setting up *University of Patanjali, Patanjali Ayurved College and Gurukul*.

*New self reliant economy through indigenous entrepreneurship, which has resulted in a business with around one thousand crore Indian rupee (US \$ 200 million dollars) revenue annually, providing goods, services and employment.

Some examples of the impact of his social transformation programs against unaccounted/black money deposited in Swiss banks, and associated criminal political and bureaucratic leadership, could be -

- Anti corruption rally in Delhi on 27 February 2011, which drew around 100,000 people

- Bhrastrachar Mitao Satyagraha* from June 4th 2011 at Delhi, which was broken at midnight by police action resulting in death of an aged woman activist, and injuries to around 53 people who were a part of the mass fast.. This led to national wide protests, and eight days of fasting by Swami Ramdev at the Dehra Dun hospital where he was interned by the police.
- Joint action with anti corruption movement led by Anna Hazare through the Gandhian method of public fasting - at Delhi from 8 August to 14 August 2012 in Delhi. The mainstream national opposition party leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) publically joined the protest and accepted Swami Ramdev’s political mentorship.

Leading academics like Prof. Subramanian Swamy(former professor of Mathematical Economics at Harvard University) and Indian Army General V.K.Singh, publically joined his movement. For the first time in the history of the Indian army, a retired general took part in a public protest. This was at the protest organised by Swami Ramdev on 23 December 2012 at Delhi to protest against the criminal laxity of authorities: which led to the gang rape of a medical student on a public transport bus. An analysis of his social transformation leadership style seems to reveal the following.

Swami Ramdev’s ability to work with people, across the spectrum of class, caste, gender, language, and geography seems to reveal a high degree of empathy, caring and control of ones’ emotions and that of the others relating to him. This could perhaps be termed emotional intelligence.

Prominent intellectuals and retired senior government bureaucrats and army officers have joined his movement. Professors of engineering and medicine are willing to collaborate with his yoga experiments. This seems to reflect the “rational/logical” appeal of his thinking. This is perhaps an evidence of the existence of an amount of “rational intelligence” in his leadership style.

Swami Ramdev formally wears the saffron clothes which is the sign of the Hindu ascetic- the *sanyasi*. His many years of intense *yoga sadhana* seem, to have cultivated in him some rare form of self chosen destiny. His appeal seems to lie in his critiques of existing dominant paradigms of medicine, politics, economics, culture and social behaviour- and at the same time offering a coherent alternative. These could be perhaps evidence of critical existential thinking, transcendental awareness, and providing meaning to existing reality. His techniques of *yoga sadhana*, perhaps indicate an ability to enter and exit higher states of consciousness. These seem to indicate a degree of spiritual intelligence.

CONCLUSION

Swami Ramdev’s leadership behaviour seems to combine elements of kinaesthetic/body intelligence, rational intelligence, emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. This behaviour seems to exhibit a novel combination - and can perhaps be given a new nomenclature - **YOGIC LEADERSHIP STYLE (YLS)**. Using mathematical language, we can express this as a function, (f)

Yogic Leadership Style = f(Body/Kinaesthetic Intelligence, Rational Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

•Gathering further examples of leadership behaviour of Swami Ramdev across various situations - *yoga shivirs*, political demonstrations, negotiations with political parties and government bureaucrats, discussions with intellectuals and spiritual leaders, etc. This could be in forms which are accepted as empirical data by behavioural scientists - video recordings, process documentations, etc.

•Categorising these behaviours further in terms of exhibition of various forms of intelligence - to validate empirically the leadership construct of “YLS-Yogic Leadership Style”.

•Searching for other examples of this leadership construct - perhaps still living and those dead where publically recorded memories are still archived - like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan, etc.

•Developing a battery of psychometric tests - using both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess “*YLS-Yogic Leadership Style*”..These could be tested across various work domains (academics, military, government, corporate, political, social organisations) for leadership assessment and identification of potential leaders.

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