

In Search of Change Maestros

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Introduction of the Authors: Dr. Pritam Singh did his Masters in Commerce from the famous Banaras Hindu University; did his MBA from United States; and subsequently did his Ph.Ed from Banaras Hindu University.

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An overview of the book: People who change with the change may succeed, But the people who cause change may lead.

It may not be an exaggeration to say that whenever leaders have tried to execute or implement a change they had to encounter resistance to change. Nevertheless leaders like G. D. Birla. M. K. Gandhi, Gorbachev, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, J. R. D. Tata, Akio Morita have been successful in their attempts to overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacles and thereby etched their names in indelible ink on the pages of the history of this world.

The book under review culls out the lessons which can be learnt from the lives and grind of a few towering change makers. It explains how a few visionaries have moved in several orbits of excellence. Indeed these trailblazing icons have created history by snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. At the same time the book is the outcome of a rigorous empirical research. The superlative tome contains ten delectable chapters.

Review: The first chapter charts the path which some intellectual giants and eminent personalities followed to reach the zenith of leadership and become change maestros. The chapter also meticulously explains the research design which the authors have used assiduously for carrying out their painstaking research and writing the book.

Chapter two to eight have a consistent approach. Each chapter begins with a captivating, sensational and eye-opening anecdote, contains a brief profile sketch of the business, then examines the action, architecture, and the cultural landscape of the chosen business icon and his/her organization; it also contains appendices which explain the honors conferred, milestones, analysis of the questionnaire data, and the profile and persona of the business magnate.

The second chapter is devoted to Kumar Mangalam Birla who took over the reins of Aditya Birla Group Empire in 1995. The group today has operations spread over twenty-five countries; chief credit goes to the philosophy of K. M. Birla- looking within, looking around and looking beyond. The chapter offers classic insights into K. M. Birla's forays into textiles, aluminum, chemicals, cement, numerous other businesses, his benchmarks, value system and vision. A reading of the chapter brings forth the fact that abiding by the law on issues like labor, environmental pollution, rural development, and the like have been the forces which have provided impetus to the enterprise.

The third chapter is devoted to turnaround master, who goes by the name of Maleveetil Damodaran who belongs to one of the most exalted services of India - the Indian Administrative Service. The chapter provides a riveting account of the problems which had besieged two giant companies: UTI and IDBI and how M. Damodaran revitalized the ailing organizations and brought them around.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the iconic leadership and determination of Sajjan Jindal of the JSW group; the group has heavyweight businesses like JSW Energy, JSW Steel Limited, JSW Port, Jindal Praxair Oxygen Company Limited, JSoft under its umbrella. The chapter sheds light on management concepts such as performance appraisal, linking performance with reward, career planning, talent identification and management.

The fifth chapter unravels the transformational leadership of K. V. Kamath who made ICICI into a financial powerhouse through his conceptual and design skills. The chapter meticulously analyzes K. V. Kamath's telescopic vision of the emerging future, his techno-centric work-culture, contribution-centric meritocracy and his endeavors towards making ICICI into a truly agile organization.

The sixth chapter delineates the telecom giant Bharti Airtel and explores the leadership of Sunil Bharti Mittal. The business model devised by Airtel has challenged the conventional wisdom in the telecom centre. The early part of the chapter dispels the five myths which were stifling the growth of telecom industry in our country. The latter part of the chapter describes how S. B. Mittal has been able to transform Airtel into a nimble-footed organization which breeds an atmosphere which may best be described with terms like "positive disquiet", "creative dissatisfaction", and "restlessness". Bharti Foundation - the philanthropic arm of the Bharti Group has set up 236 Satya Bharti Primary Schools across the country; the Bharti School of Telecommunication Technology and Management at IIT Delhi and Bharti Centre of Communication in partnership with IIT Bombay are other such ventures.

The seventh chapter is devoted to Anil Manibhai Naik of Larsen & Toubro. A. M. Naik launched "Lakshya" and "Project Blue Chip" which have brought about a revolutionary change in the L & T group. The chapter explains how esoteric concepts of dissonance, mild anxiety and data mining and data sharing help in shaping an organization.

The eighth chapter is devoted to Biocon and the legendary action heroine Kiran Mazumdar Shaw who charged into a formerly male bastion and started a venture in Brewery. The chapter portrays the bold decisions which have been made by K. M. Shaw which have brought sweeping changes and brought them to the helm of limelight.

The ninth chapter offers a company-wise comparative picture of the organizational culture and the tenth chapter focuses on aspects which are common and unique to the change masters discussed in the book under review.

Overall impact of the book: The book also examines the philosophy, the outlook, and contributions of several luminaries such as H. P. Nanda (founder of Escorts Ltd.), Henry Ford (the founder of Ford Motor company), Joseph Wilson (founder of Xerox Corporation), Bill Gates (cofounder of Microsoft), Ren Jian Xin (founder of ChemChina), Dhirubhai Ambani (founder of the Reliance group of industries), Soichiro Honda (the founder of Honda Motor Co.), L. N. Mittal, Steve Jobs, Nelson Mandela, Franklin Roosevelt and several other such iconic tycoons. The book sounds like a who's who of the business planet. The names have a tale behind them and each contributes to understanding the progress of journey in the field of business.

The book is definitely a treasure trove of knowledge and ideal for entrepreneurs, researchers, and the champions of innovation, motivation, leadership, corporate social responsibility, strategic management and organizational development. It's the big book of values and dwells on a number of pertinent aspects such as: the leaders' obsession with contextual sensitivity, people connect, speed, creative destruction, organic and inorganic growth, the driving and restraining forces in an organization.

The book factors in the steps that the Government of India has taken to revive the flailing and shattered economy of the country. The story-telling style of the authors ensures that the contents of the book can be understood by people of all domains such as engineering, economics, law, finance, fine arts, medicines, etc. It focuses on leadership and corporate culture in the present context. A need for this book is warranted because there are very few books which focus on change makers in India.

Wallace Jacob is an M. Phil. in Management. He is presently working as a Senior Assistant Professor at Tolani Maritime Institute, Pune, where he teaches Principles of Management and Project Management. His book reviews have been published in journals published by IIM Lucknow, IIM Indore, IMI New Delhi, Bharathidasan Institute of Management Tiruchirappalli. He has also presented papers in various conferences.