

**SPEECH BY Y.A.BHG TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD AT THE REAL
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1. Human beings are gregarious. It may be because they belong to the same family or to the same race or ethnic group or to being from the same area.
2. Because they live together, conflicts between them would be common.
3. Usually they are unable to solve conflicts without the aid of someone they respect or they fear. Even if they chose to fight and settle their problem, they would still need someone to lead the contesting parties.
4. As a result they would accept the person they respect or fear as their leader.
5. The reasons for their fear or respect are many. It may be because of the physical capacity of the leader to enforce his decision.
6. It may be because of the age of the leader. It may be because of the vaunted wisdom because of the age of the leader which enable him to find a fair solution to the conflict.
7. What makes a person a leader? More importantly...
8. What makes a person a good leader?
9. It is possible to identify the assets that make a good leader. But we can learn much more easily from studying the leaders in history, especially the successful leaders. We need also to study the leaders who fail in order to avoid what contributed to their failures.
10. From the study it is possible to understand the qualities of a good leader, to emulate their behaviour and their deeds and to become a leader.
11. As a Muslim the best example to study is the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad s.a.w. He was able to change the character of the ignorant feuding Arab tribes and mould them into a single nation which successfully followed his teachings and were able to preach them to the world. Muhammad s.a.w. was able to create and spread one of the greatest civilisations in the world, a civilisation that lasted more than 1,400 years.
12. How did he do it? Firstly it was his strong belief in the goodness of the thing he was doing.
13. Despite early disappointment he persisted.
14. He rejected violence until it was forced on him.
15. At Hudaibiyah he was prepared to be humble in order to settle a problem.

16. In victory he was magnanimous, sparing the lives of his enemies and preserving the cities he conquered.
17. He did not abuse his position or his authority. He was fair and just to his supporters as much as to his enemies.
18. He rejected nepotism, refusing to name any of his relatives as the successor.
19. He was very modest, insisting that he was only a man like everybody else and that he was merely a messenger bringing the message of Allah.
20. If we study him, his life and his achievements we will know quite a lot of the character and qualities of a leader.
21. Today we see the Muslims leaderless and in a constant state of turmoil. Muslims appear unable to administer their own countries and to make what we call progress. And we are tempted to blame the teachings of the Prophet, to blame the religion of Islam.
22. But of course it is not the teachings of the Prophet which have brought these results. It is in fact the rejection of his teachings.
23. When he taught through the Quran that life is precious and a Muslim should not kill, many Muslims kill even fellow Muslims. The Muslim killers claim that their victims are not practicing the teachings of Islam, but in fact they are the ones who, by taking someone's life or killing themselves are not following the teachings.
24. The early Muslims were learned not only in their religion but also in science, mathematics, astronomy etc. They were learned because the Quran told them to read - Iqra'. To read means to acquire information and knowledge. If the information and knowledge is in another language, they studied that language so as to be able to read and acquire the desired information and knowledge. They could not have mastered the sciences and mathematics of the Greeks if they did not learn the Greek language. They could not translate the works of the Greeks into Arabic unless they were prepared to learn Greek. Obviously you cannot translate from another language if you only know your own language.
25. The ignorant Arabs after their conversion to Islam became the most learned and skillful people in the world. But later they rejected the learning of anything other than the religion of Islam and they began to regress. Their civilisation crumbled. They were not able to defend themselves and at one period every Muslim country was under European rule.
26. So it was not the teachings of Islam which led to the present situation in the Muslim countries. It is in fact the rejection or the deliberate misinterpretation of the teachings of the Prophet as in the Al-Quran and the verified traditions which have landed the Muslims where they are today.
27. Despite the present situation of the Muslims it is still valid and useful to study the life of the Prophet and his teachings, true teachings in order to understand leadership.
28. But throughout history there are many leaders whose successes and failures are worth studying in order to understand the qualities of leaders.

29. An example of a bad leader would be Adolph Hitler, the German Chancellor. Germany was in a state of shambles after it lost the First World War. Poverty was rampant everywhere. The German Mark was worth less than the paper on which it was printed. The German people were totally dispirited.

30. Then came Adolph Hitler. Using violence and thuggery he was able to seize the leadership of Germany, to become the Reich Chancellor. His Government was able to overcome inflation, revive the German economy, restored its finances and rebuilt basic infrastructure including roads and expressways.

31. Blinded by these successes the German people rallied behind him as their leader. They were prepared to overlook the burning of the Parliament, the Reichstag, and the killing of those opposed to him. They accepted dictatorship as a system of Government.

32. He used the people's hatred of the victors of the First World War to gain support. The Jews were his special target as this was popular with the Germans.

33. There is no doubt that Hitler was a leader, a remarkably successful leader. So, do we learn leadership from him? Clearly his egomania led him into wars with the objective of ruling the whole world. In the end he was defeated and had to commit suicide.

34. Hitler was a leader but he was not the kind of leader that should be followed or used as a model. If at all he should be studied in order to learn the characters and behaviours which will not contribute towards good leadership, the kind of things that leaders should avoid.

35. The victor in the war against Germany was the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. No doubt he exhibited some of the good characters that make a good leader. But Churchill was totally ruthless. He approved of the carpet bombing of the German City of Dresden which had no military target. In one night 200,000 people, non-combatants, the old and the disabled, children and women were killed. But Churchill was never blamed for this. He did not consider the mass killings as wrong. He never apologised as Japanese leaders were made to apologise.

36. Still Churchill was a leader with some good qualities that can be taken as examples. At the time when Britain was alone following the surrender of France and other European countries, he dared to reject peace with Hitler. He preferred to fight alone almost. His determination won him the support of his countrymen including those in the British Commonwealth. They withstood the constant bombings and rocketing of British cities and the death of a large number of their people. They rebuilt their armed forces. And finally with the help of America, Churchill led Britain to victory.

37. Churchill was a great leader but although some of his qualities are worthy of emulation much of his qualities of leadership do not provide good examples to follow.

38. In the East, Genghis Khan provides an example of leadership. He moulded the numerous Mongolian tribes into one nation; he fired them with a powerful national spirit, he built an invincible military force and very quickly he conquered nearly the whole of Asia and a big chunk of Eastern Europe. It must be remembered that the Mongols were a primitive people, divided into feuding tribes and before Genghis Khan, never had a leader to bring them together. Genghis Khan was able to mould these feuding and warring tribes into one

nation. Genghis had great leadership qualities but he used force and brutality to rid himself of the leaders who were against him. By all accounts Genghis Khan was very cruel. But then he lived during a cruel age.

39. The lesson that we can learn from him is the importance of unity. His way of achieving unity may have been acceptable in his age but today's leaders cannot take this as an acceptable route to leadership.

40. The Prophet of Islam excepted, we will never find a leader in history who was perfect. The most successful have all been tainted by qualities that we cannot accept. There is and I believe there has never been a perfect leader; a perfect model for us to emulate. But among these imperfect leaders there is one that we can promote as a leader most relevant to our needs.

41. Today we know Russia is a great power even though it lost the Cold War. But Russia used to be an undeveloped country in the days when the Europeans of Western Europe were already advanced, sophisticated and powerful. Russia was then regarded as an Eastern Developing Country and not a European Nation.

42. The people were uncouth, rough and without cultural talents. They were backward and almost illiterate. They had no great man of letters, no scientists and no mathematicians. They resembled the poor developing countries of today.

43. Then they had a Czar called Peter. He was as usual cruel and intolerant of opposition. But he kept the country united and dragged its people screaming to accept modernisation ala Western Europe. He forced them to acquire the knowledge and skills of the Western Europeans. He developed Russia so that there was no difference between it and the developed countries of the time.

44. The coarse illiterate Russians were gradually transformed into a cultured people able to compete in all fields with the Western Europeans. Soon Russia became a great power. Its scientists and engineers were second to none. They were producing the best military aircrafts and other weapons.

45. Finally they became the first nation to put a satellite in orbit, followed quickly by launching the first manned spacecraft.

46. All these were made possible because Czar Peter the Great decided to lead out his people from their backwardness. He not only changed the Russians during his time but the generations of Russian which followed. In other words, he was able to change his people completely and permanently. This was leadership at its best. Peter the Great was a leader we can take as a model although we have to reject his cruel ways.

47. We have heard of the rise and fall of great nations. Almost invariably the rise was due to good leadership. When the leaders were incompetent, the countries would fall. The people may be the same, the background and the wealth and resources may be the same, but when leaders are incompetent or just plain bad, then great nations, even great empires can fall.

48. Good leadership is obviously very important. We cannot always identify the good leaders early enough so that we choose the right one. The German people who chose Hitler did not know what kind of leader he would turn out to be. On the other hand leaders

who turned out to be good had great difficulty in winning the support of people initially. Even the Prophet of Islam was stoned by the people of Taif when he started preaching the religion of Islam. An attempt was even made to kill him. But he triumphed eventually.

49. When we discuss leadership it may be because we aspire to become a leader or it may be because we want to make a right choice when we appoint a leader.

50. No matter how we try to show the qualities and characters of a good leader, it will still not guarantee that we will not make mistakes. And similarly, no matter how much we learn about the qualities which make a good leader, it is still possible for us to choose the wrong one.

51. Nevertheless we need to look at certain characters and qualities in a leader. If we wish to become a leader we must cultivate these character and qualities and if we want to choose a leader we must also look for the same.

52. The good leader may not be humble, but at least he should not be boastful.

53. He should be prepared to accept responsibilities but should not be too pushy and insistent on taking the lead.

54. He should not seek to blame others for failures but to admit his own culpability. He should not point fingers or seek scapegoats.

55. He should be modest and not seek praise and glory.

56. He should know how to handle his followers as much as his superiors. He must be sensitive to the sensitivities of others.

57. He should be willing to do what he expects others to do. He should uphold the slogan of leadership by example.

58. He should be learned and more intelligent at least by comparison to the people he leads.

59. Above all, a leader must have ideas, ideas on the direction he leads, ideas on the things that he and his followers must do or achieve, ideas on the improvement of their well-being and their surroundings. And equally importantly he must know how to make his ideas become realities.

60. There are of course many other qualities that a leader should have. Much of these depend on the situation and the kind of people he leads. To a certain extent he must be aware of the needs and desires of his people, to evaluate them, to direct them in the proper direction and to plan and execute together with his followers the objectives successfully.

61. Even if you know all the qualities which makes a person a leader, it does not mean that anyone can acquire all these qualities and become a leader.

62. There are perhaps a thousand people in Malaysia with the aforementioned qualities but they are never going to make it. It is simply because the circumstances were not

propitious for them. On the other hand there may be people with poor leadership qualities but they may become leaders because leadership appears to be thrust upon them.

63. Anyone wanting to be a leader can try to acquire the right qualities but he may not succeed. How he handles his failure would demonstrate whether he really has the qualities. We see far too many aspiring leaders who resort to unethical ways and even violence in order to become a leader. Such people should be rejected outright.

64. Clearly it is not easy to become a leader or even to choose a leader. Lack still plays an important role. But simply because we may make mistakes does not mean we should not try for identifying what makes a good leader.
