
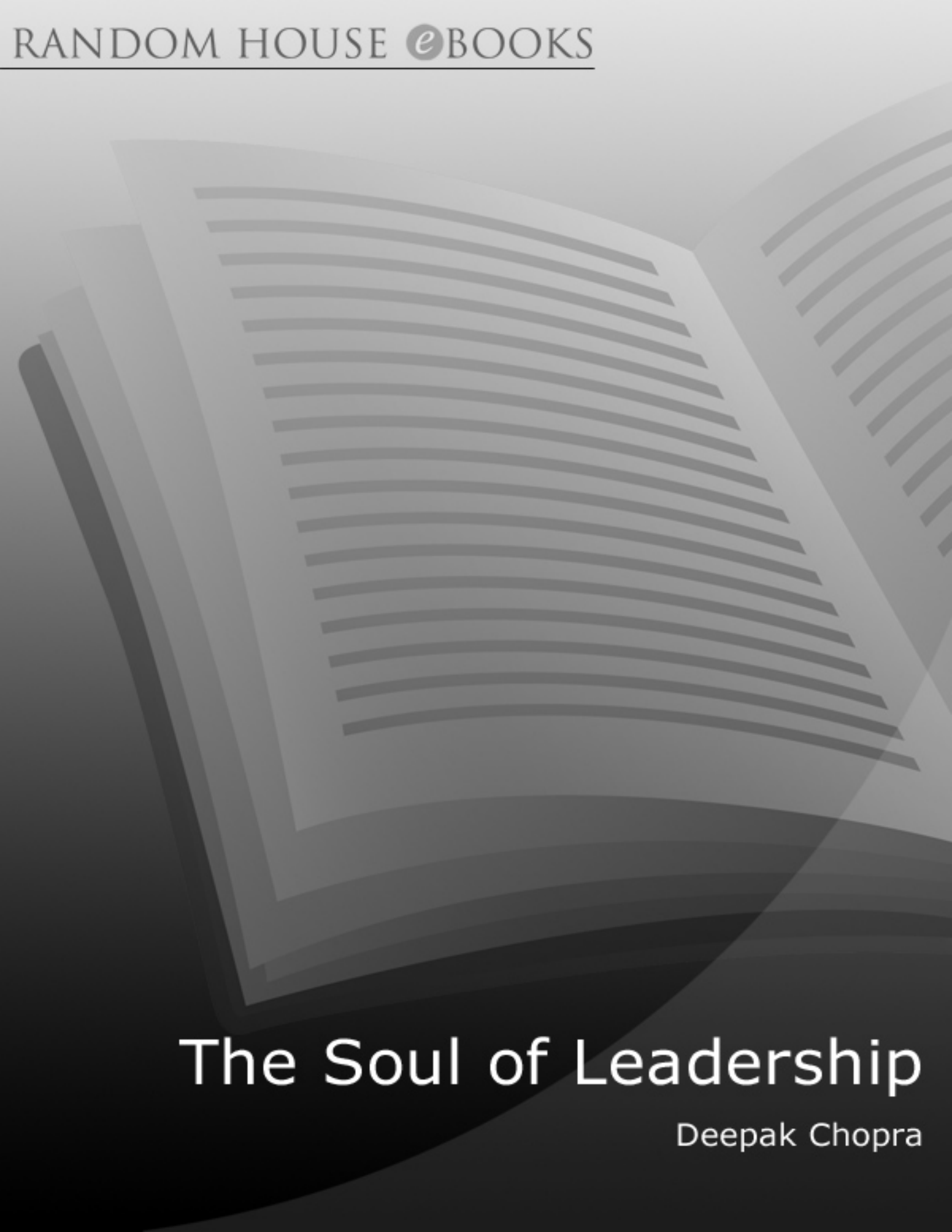


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Deepak Chopra

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INTRODUCTION

Becoming a leader is the most crucial choice one can make—it is the decision to step out of darkness into the light.

We have never needed enlightened leadership as much as we do now. Surely this refrain has been heard throughout the ages, but in the second decade of the twenty-first century, humankind poses a terrible threat to its own existence as we blindly tear great holes in the life-sustaining fabric of our environment. We can no longer turn to government, however well meaning it may be, or to anyone beyond ourselves, to provide answers for the great problems of our time. And even in turning to ourselves we must go beyond the constant clamor of ego, beyond the tools of logic and reason, to the still, calm place within us: the realm of the soul.

Here we can begin by asking the basic questions that give our lives meaning. Who am I? Why am I here? How can I tune in the soft-spoken urgings of the soul to fulfill my life's purpose and to make a difference? In answering these questions to the best of our ability, each of us must step into the role of leader, taking responsibility first for directing our own lives, and then for interacting with other people—at work, at home, and everywhere in between. As we continue to draw on the soul for direction, we will eventually find that other people are turning to us for

guidance, drawn to us by our ability to treat them with dignity and to skillfully respond to their needs from a higher place.

My aim in this book is to give everyone the skills and insights to be a leader—not just any leader but an inspired one. At the deepest level, a leader is the symbolic soul of the group. His role is to fulfill the needs of others and, when each need is met, to lead the group on to fulfill ever higher needs, lifting the group's potential at every step. The inspired leader's power base comes not from other people but from her very being, and the path she walks is guided by her own soul. Its hallmarks are creativity, intelligence, organizing power, and love.

Everyone who has a soul, which by my definition includes us all, has the potential to be an inspired leader. When you change on the inside so that you draw on the unlimited wisdom of the soul, you become a leader without needing to seek followers. As you put your vision for a better world into tangible form, they will find you. It is my fondest hope that after reading these pages, countless readers like you will discover their greatness and act upon it. Of these leaders, untold numbers may become public figures, and even more will perform a leadership role at work, at home, and in the community. Wherever you do it, there is no doubt in my mind that leading from the soul is what the time demands.

As you'll see in the pages that lie ahead, the leadership I'm talking about in this book is not leadership as we've traditionally defined it. According to that old definition, leadership belongs to the few. In a group the person selected to lead may stand out as the most popular, confident, or ruthless. By these measures, not everyone can lead. When the strong and ruthless rise on the world stage, we find ourselves led by kings and generals, autocrats and dictators, power-hungry premiers and presidents. History

traffics in myth making, which is based on personal charisma and uses spin to evoke an aura of destiny. But these measures of leadership are flawed. None of the qualities mentioned here indicate that a leader will actually improve the lives of those who follow him. Chances are equally good that such leadership will bring misery, conflict, and oppression. The old definitions of leadership exalt power, and the use of power has always been directly linked to its abuse.

Because leaders have turned out to be so completely unpredictable, and because so few great leaders have emerged from the ranks of those who have seized power, we have been led to believe that perhaps there is some invisible hand at work, selecting which leader will be great. But this is only more spin. The criteria for inspired leadership don't need to be shadowed in mystery. In fact, they are simple: great leaders are those who can respond to their own needs and the needs of others from the higher levels of spirit with vision, creativity, and a sense of unity with the people they lead.

You can be such a leader. The path is open to you. The only requirement is that you listen to your own inner guide. Once you step onto this path, you are on your way to becoming what I call a *successful visionary*. A successful visionary makes his or her vision manifest in the world. Invisible seeds planted in the silence of your deepest awareness become tangible, visible realities. As they unfold, you will manage their growth with passion and energy. Your purpose will be apparent to all. The results you achieve will benefit everyone—you, the group you lead, and the world at large. On a planet challenged on every side with ecological deterioration, everything you achieve must be sustainable, which means supported by awareness. This is an essential part of any vision of the future that draws on the soul.

When I talk about the soul, I'm not referring to the soul as defined by any particular religion, although all the great spiritual traditions acknowledge its existence. I believe the soul is an expression of an underlying universal field of consciousness. Your particular awareness, or soul, is like a wave in this boundless sea, unique for a brief moment in time before it falls back into the larger entity from which it emerged. At the soul level you are seamlessly connected with everything in the universe, to the silent domain from which all matter and energy spring.

In this context it is not surprising that the soul takes on qualities that are essential to creation: creativity, intelligence, organizing power, and love. If you find this notion difficult to accept, perhaps you'll agree with me that the old way of living on this planet is reaching its limits, and that the time has come to try something new. If you find that, by turning to the soul for leadership in the ways I describe in this book, you are able to increase the creativity, intelligence, organizing power, and love in your life and in your larger world, you can choose to credit your soul or not. It won't care, and those who share the world with you will be grateful, regardless of what terms you use to describe your new way of being.

A MAP FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Leadership is an evolving journey. The twists and turns lying before you are unpredictable. But you can be provided with a map. The text that follows divides the map into three parts.

First, I have laid out the core of what it means to lead from the soul in a convenient acronym, L-E-A-D-E-R-S, with each letter outlining a key aspect of defining your vision and then bringing it to fruition.

L = Look and listen. Do this with your senses, as an unbiased observer who has not judged anything in advance. Do it with your heart, obeying your truest feelings. Finally, do it with your soul, responding to the vision and deep purpose it provides.

E = Emotional bonding. Leading from the soul means going beyond the melodrama of living in crisis mode. It requires recognizing and clearing away toxic emotions so you can clearly understand your own specific needs, and those of others.

A = Awareness. This means being aware of the questions that underlie every challenge: Who am I? What do I want? What does the situation demand? A leader must continually ask these questions of herself, and inspire her team to ask them for themselves.

D = Doing. A leader must be action-oriented. In whatever he does, he must serve as a role model, holding himself responsible for the promises he has made. This requires persistence and tenacity, but also the ability to view any situation with flexibility and humor.

E = Empowerment. The soul's power comes from self-awareness that is responsive to feedback but independent of the good or bad opinion of others. Empowerment isn't selfish. It raises the status of leader and team together.

R = Responsibility. Responsible leadership includes choosing considered risks rather than reckless ones, walking the talk, having integrity, and living up to your inner values. Seen from the level of the soul, a leader's greatest responsibility is to lead the group on the path of higher consciousness.

S = Synchronicity. This is a mysterious element from the underlying universal field of consciousness that all great leaders harness. Synchronicity is the ability to create good luck and find invisible support that carries one beyond predicted outcomes to a higher plane. In spiritual terms, synchronicity is the ultimate ability to connect any need with an answer from the soul.

The map of leadership comes into more specific focus in the second part of this book, through the stories of ordinary people who have become successful visionaries. Here we'll follow two such people—Jeremy Moon and Renata M. Black—who began with no material means and went on to lead successful multimillion-dollar enterprises that make a difference in the world. In both cases the vision that started their journey was fueled with passion and purpose. That's not unusual in success stories, but here we also find deeper values, drawn from the realm of soul.

As we'll see, Jeremy's and Renata's paths followed the steps described in the acronym L-E-A-D-E-R-S; everything from looking and listening to synchronicity played a crucial role. Besides being inspiring, this part of the book will give you more confidence that leading from the soul is a viable choice in the rough-and-tumble of the real world. In fact, by choosing visionary leadership as a path to success, the real world became a miraculous place for both leaders, a place where material success took a backseat to personal discovery.

The third part of the book is a brief summary of what you will have learned. I hope it is couched in such a way as to make it easier for you to recognize the landmarks of soulful leadership as they begin to make themselves known in your life.

WHY THE SOUL?

How do leaders emerge from ordinary lives? Every group naturally gives rise to leaders who guide it to a shared goal. Yet some leaders fail, while others succeed. Some are destroyed by a flawed strategy, or by the overwhelming stress of their role. And when crisis arises, leaving us crying out for great leaders, there is a constant threat that such a figure will not appear, leaving the infamous “leadership vacuum” that has become such a chronic problem in our modern society.

In the deeper reality of the soul, a family in disarray, a company without vision, or a nation struggling to adopt a new level of freedom needs to respond to hidden spiritual drives and needs. Once this is understood, countless leaders can rise to the highest levels of greatness. Inspired leadership is established in being, where there is no need to adopt a strategy for climbing to the top. As you unfold your potential for greatness, you unfold the same potential in others. They will naturally turn to you for guidance and leadership in the way forward, and one day they themselves will be able to provide enlightened leadership to others.

Our souls offer the highest inspiration at every moment. With our minds we may see chaos, but the soul knows there is an underlying order, and seeks to find it. Until we turn to the quiet wisdom of the soul, we will continue to fall back on old habits and stale answers in response to new challenges. We will stay mired in pointless struggles and confusion. But when we do understand the ways of the soul, and draw on them, someone will emerge to cut through the fog. Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela undertook their journeys based on the soul’s awareness (however much we clothe them in mythic status). They used this awareness to tap into a source of

wisdom that remains constant throughout history and is available to us all.

In any group the members are acting out two basic themes in life—need and response. If we could see ourselves clearly, each of us would realize every day that:

- There is something we need, ranging from the basic need for food and shelter to the higher needs of self-worth, love, and spiritual meaning;

- There is some response that will fill that need, ranging from struggle and competition to creative discovery and divine inspiration.

These two themes dominate our inner and outer lives. They override all other forces, and like the workings of the soul they are not random. Needs and responses can be organized in a natural order. Lower needs and responses are followed by higher ones. (As the German writer Bertolt Brecht declared, “Don’t talk to me of my soul until you’ve filled my stomach.”) This rising scale is known as *the hierarchy of needs*. As a leader, if you are aware of the hierarchy of needs and their responses, you will be able to continue to respond effectively as the group’s needs move up the scale from basic to increasingly spiritual. This is the most powerful thing a leader can do.

For example, extreme social movements (fascism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic nationalism, etc.) draw upon fear, the most primitive response of a group, which matches its most primitive need: survival. External pressures such as economic depression, social migration, and competitive forces also trigger this need. Vaclav Havel was a Czech poet who became president of the new republic after the fall of Communism because he fulfilled his countrymen’s basic need for safety, and then went on to address their higher needs for unity and self-worth, which had been suppressed for decades. Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr., offered an oppressed minority the opportunity to go beyond the need to survive in order to meet their higher needs for a sense of dignity and spiritual purpose. He offered transformation. Buddha and Christ offered their followers an opportunity to meet their needs at the highest level, the universal desire for unity.

Through the example of these great leaders, we see that leading from the soul is neither mysterious nor abstract. Inspired leadership matches real responses to real needs. This is a skill that can be learned. You can do it, and so can I. We can meet needs at every level of a group's outer and inner life, applying the same awareness to a family, or a community, as to a corporation. In the deeper reality of the soul, leaders and followers co-create each other. They form an invisible spiritual bond. Leaders exist to embody the values that followers hunger for, while followers fuel the leader's vision from inside themselves.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

The journey that a leader takes is one of expanding awareness. The soul itself has complete awareness; it perceives every aspect of a situation. Its perspective is available to you, but ordinarily you don't access it because of your own inner obstacles. We see what we want to see—or what our biases and limitations encourage us to see. On your journey to inspired leadership you will learn how to remove these obstacles. When you do, what was once difficult will become effortless, as your soul clears the way for you. Your vision becomes clearer, and so does the path ahead, until it seems that the universe itself is conspiring to provide the creativity, intelligence, organizing power, and love that lie at the heart of visionary leadership.

PART ONE

L-E-A-D-E-R-S

One

L = LOOK AND LISTEN

Great leaders have a vision, and the ability to manifest it. Defining your own vision begins with looking and listening. You look and listen to the situation around you, but you also look and listen inside. Four steps are involved:

Impartial observation—Look and listen with your senses.

Analysis—Look and listen with your mind.

Feeling—Look and listen with your heart.

Incubation—Look and listen with your soul.

Once you have gone through these four steps, your personal vision can begin to express itself.

The best qualities you can have when starting your career are passion, core values, and dedication to a purpose. These are the elements from which a vision is forged. When you talk to the most inspiring leaders, the kind I call successful visionaries, it turns out that they all began with passion and a view of the big picture. They brought dedication to a deeply felt purpose. They held core values that they were not willing to surrender. In order to find greatness in yourself, these elements should be your primary focus.