

FREE LEADERSHIP GUIDE | ISSUE 01

THE LEADERSHIP CAPSULE

10 Qualities Every Leader Needs • 10 Power Habits • A 30-Day Challenge

INDUS STATECRAFT RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Ancient Wisdom | Future Command

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A NOTE FROM ISRF

Leadership is not a title; it is a practice. At the Indus Statecraft Research Foundation we believe great leaders are built from the foundation up, beginning with the self and growing toward the service of society.

This capsule distils that thinking into **ten qualities**, **ten power habits** and a **30-day challenge** you can begin today, wherever you are. Read one quality a day, try the trick, and notice what changes.

Then join us for the live **Shunya Leadership Masterclass** to go deeper.

Ancient Wisdom | Future Command

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INTRODUCTION

What Is Leadership?

Leadership shapes the pace of the future.

Most people think leadership belongs to those with big titles. In truth, leadership is the ability to **influence others toward a worthy goal**, and it can be practised by a parent, a student, a shopkeeper or a CEO. Ancient Indian statecraft taught that true leadership begins with the self and ends with service to society. The ruler who cannot rule his own mind, it said, cannot rule a kingdom.

Modern research agrees: leaders are made through habits, awareness and practice, not born with a fixed gift. This capsule gives you ten qualities to build and simple tricks to build them. Each is explained with an everyday illustration so you can apply it right away.

THE SEVEN-STAGE PATH OF THE INDUS PROTOCOL



How to read this capsule: the ten qualities that follow are the foundation of Stage 1 and 2. Master them, and every higher stage becomes possible.

QUALITY 01 OF 10

Self-Awareness

Atma-Sthapana: know the leader within

01

WHY IT MATTERS

Every strong leader begins by knowing their own triggers, strengths and blind spots. Without self-awareness we react to people instead of leading them. Ancient statecraft teaches that whoever would govern others must first govern the self.

IN PRACTICE

- Notice what makes you angry, anxious or proud
- Ask two trusted people for honest feedback each month
- Write your core values and test big decisions against them
- Separate what you feel from what you do

> **The first person you must lead is yourself.**

SELF-CHECK

Can I name my top three strengths and two weaknesses?

When did I last change my mind because of feedback?

What situation reliably triggers me?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

Meera, a team supervisor, snapped at colleagues whenever deadlines slipped. She began a three-line evening diary: what happened, what I felt, what I did. Within two weeks she saw the pattern: Monday-morning tension. She replaced it with a calm five-minute briefing and the arguments faded.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Observe

Note one trigger or feeling today.

2 Reflect

Ask yourself why it affected you.

3 Adjust

Choose a calmer response next time.

TRY THIS

The 3-Line Diary: each night write what happened, what you felt and what you will do differently.

QUALITY 02 OF 10

Vision & Foresight

Agra-Drishti: see the horizon early

02

WHY IT MATTERS

Leaders see further than today's problem. A clear vision gives people direction and a reason to keep going when work is hard. Foresight means scanning the horizon so that you meet change prepared, not surprised.

IN PRACTICE

- Describe where your team should be in three years in one sentence
- Read outside your field to spot early trends
- Ask "what could change this plan?" before you begin
- Repeat the vision often, and keep it simple

> **Vision is seeing the destination before the road exists.**

SELF-CHECK

Can everyone on my team state our goal in one sentence?

What trend could affect my work in two years?

Am I only solving today's fires?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

Imran, a small shop owner, noticed customers asking about home delivery. Instead of waiting, he set up simple WhatsApp ordering for his top fifty customers. When a road closure cut footfall, his sales held steady while neighbouring shops struggled.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Imagine

Picture your ideal outcome in three years.

2 Write

Capture it in one clear sentence.

3 Share

Tell one person and ask for reactions.

TRY THIS

The 3-3-3 Horizon: write three goals for the next 3 days, 3 months and 3 years.

QUALITY 03 OF 10

Integrity & Dharma

Dharma-Stambha: the pillar of trust

03

WHY IT MATTERS

Trust is the currency of leadership. People follow those whose words, values and actions match. Dharma, doing what is right even when no one is watching, turns authority into genuine respect.

IN PRACTICE

- Keep small promises; they build large trust
- Admit mistakes quickly and openly
- Treat juniors and seniors with the same respect
- Say no to shortcuts that harm others

> **Position gives authority; character earns trust.**

SELF-CHECK

Do my actions match what I say?

Have I admitted a mistake recently?

Would I decide the same way if nobody ever found out?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

Anil, a project manager, found a calculation error that made his team look better in a report. He corrected it before submission and explained why. The client trusted his reports from then on and gave the team a larger project the next quarter.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Define

List the values you will never compromise.

2 Check

Test each decision against that list.

3 Repair

Fix any gap openly and quickly.

TRY THIS

The Front-Page Test: before a big decision, ask if you would be comfortable seeing it in tomorrow's newspaper.

QUALITY 04 OF 10

Courage & Decisiveness

Karma-Siddhi: act when the path is unclear

04

WHY IT MATTERS

Leadership means choosing when the answer is not perfectly clear. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is acting well in spite of it. Delay often costs more than an imperfect decision.

IN PRACTICE

- Decide with about 70 percent of the information
- Speak up respectfully when something is wrong
- Own the outcome, good or bad
- Review decisions to learn, not to blame

> **Not deciding is also a decision, and usually the costliest.**

SELF-CHECK

What decision am I postponing?

Do I wait for certainty that will never come?

Do I defend or learn from my mistakes?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

A school principal had to choose between two timetable plans a week before term. Waiting for full agreement would have caused chaos. She consulted three teachers, chose a plan, explained her reasons and fixed two small problems in week one. Term began smoothly.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Name

State the decision and its deadline.

2 Weigh

List the risks and the cost of waiting.

3 Act

Choose, announce and review in a week.

TRY THIS

The 70% Rule: set a decision deadline and decide once you have roughly 70 percent of the facts.

QUALITY 05 OF 10

Empathy & Emotional Intelligence

Atma-Manthan: master yourself, read others

05

WHY IT MATTERS

People remember how a leader made them feel. Empathy helps you understand motives and concerns; emotional control keeps you steady in a storm. Together they create loyalty that no rule can enforce.

IN PRACTICE

- Listen fully before you reply
- Ask "how are you really doing?" and wait for the answer
- Stay calm when others are upset
- Recognise effort, not only results

> **Seek first to understand; the answer often follows.**

SELF-CHECK

Do I interrupt more than I listen?

When did I last ask someone how they truly are?

How do I behave when I am under pressure?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

When Sunita missed three deadlines, her manager asked privately what was happening before reprimanding her. She was caring for a sick parent. They adjusted her workload for a month. She later became one of the team's most loyal performers.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Pause

Stop and give the person your full attention.

2 Reflect

Repeat back what you heard.

3 Respond

Help in a way that fits their need.

TRY THIS

The 6-Second Pause: when triggered, breathe in for three seconds, out for three, then respond.

QUALITY 06 OF 10

Communication

Samvada-Niti: make ideas travel

06

WHY IT MATTERS

A great idea poorly communicated is lost. Clear speaking, active listening and honest feedback align people and prevent confusion. Communication is how vision becomes action.

IN PRACTICE

- Lead with the point, then give the reason
- Use simple words and one example
- Give feedback privately and praise publicly
- Check understanding by asking people to restate

> **If they cannot repeat it, you have not yet said it.**

SELF-CHECK

Can I state my message in one sentence?

Do people leave my meetings clear on next steps?

Do I give feedback early and kindly?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

A hospital coordinator replaced long daily emails with a five-line handover note: what is done, what is pending, what is urgent. Misunderstandings at shift change dropped, and the nurses said they felt better informed.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Clarify

Write your message in one sentence.

2 Structure

Organise it with the PREP formula.

3 Confirm

Ask the listener to say it back.

TRY THIS

The PREP Formula: Point, Reason, Example, Point again. Use it in every short talk or message.

QUALITY 07 OF 10

Strategic Thinking

Niti-Pragya: choose wisely, then focus

07

WHY IT MATTERS

Strategy is choosing what to do and, just as important, what not to do. Ancient statecraft treats strategy as the art of using limited resources wisely over time.

IN PRACTICE

- Define the real problem before listing solutions
- Look at issues from three angles: yours, theirs, long-term
- Pick few priorities and protect them
- Always prepare at least one backup plan

> **Strategy is the discipline of saying no.**

SELF-CHECK

What are my top three priorities this quarter?

What am I doing that I should stop?

Do I have a plan B?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

A young entrepreneur had ten product ideas and little money. She asked which one served the most customers at the least cost, picked it and said no to the other nine for six months. The focused product reached break-even sooner than she expected.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Frame

Define the real problem in one line.

2 Compare

List three options and their costs.

3 Commit

Pick one and drop the rest for now.

TRY THIS The 1-3-1 Method: define 1 problem, list 3 options, recommend 1.

QUALITY 08 OF 10

Discipline & Execution

Karma-Siddhi: turn intention into results

08

WHY IT MATTERS

Plans mean nothing without action. Discipline is doing the important thing daily, even when motivation fades. Execution turns intention into results other people can see.

IN PRACTICE

- Fix a daily time block for your top priority
- Break big goals into weekly milestones
- Track progress where you can see it
- Follow through on every commitment you make

> **Discipline is remembering what you truly want.**

SELF-CHECK

Do I finish what I start?

Where does my day leak time?

Can I see my progress on a single page?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

Rahul wanted to start a community library. He committed to one task a day: find a space, collect books, recruit volunteers. Ninety days later it opened with hundreds of donated books and a roster of volunteers.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Schedule

Block 60 minutes daily for your priority.

2 Protect

Switch off distractions in that block.

3 Track

Tick each day on a visible chart.

TRY THIS

The First-Hour Rule: do your hardest task in your first working hour, before email and messages.

QUALITY 09 OF 10

Adaptability & Learning

Tantra-Yukti: grow with the times

09

WHY IT MATTERS

The world changes faster than any plan. Leaders who keep learning, accept feedback and adjust course stay relevant. The humility to say "I don't know yet" is a sign of strength, not weakness.

IN PRACTICE

- Learn something new for fifteen minutes every day
- Treat failures as useful data
- Ask the youngest person on the team for ideas
- Update your methods when the evidence changes

> **The learner inherits the future.**

SELF-CHECK

What have I learned this month?

Do I welcome ideas that challenge mine?

Which skill will matter most in five years?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

Mr. Verma, a veteran teacher, felt lost when classes moved online. He asked a student to teach him the tools, practised for a week and ran his first digital class. His students admired his willingness to learn, and several began helping him.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Learn

Spend 15 minutes daily on a new skill.

2 Test

Try the idea in one small real task.

3 Adjust

Keep what works, discard what does not.

TRY THIS

The Sunday Review: write one thing you learned, one mistake you made and one change you will make.

QUALITY 10 OF 10

Service & Humility

Seva: leadership as responsibility

WHY IT MATTERS

The highest leaders see power as responsibility. Serving your people, their growth, wellbeing and success, creates teams that give their best willingly. In the classical Indian view, a ruler's purpose is the welfare of those he serves.

IN PRACTICE

- Ask "how can I help?" regularly
- Share credit and take responsibility
- Develop successors, not followers
- Make decisions for the common good

> **Great leaders make more leaders.**

SELF-CHECK

Who have I helped grow this month?

Do I share credit generously?

Whom does my leadership serve?

REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION

Kamla, a newly elected village head, spent her first month listening to every household before making plans. Her water-supply project came out of those conversations, and villagers volunteered labour because they felt it was their own.

BUILD IT IN 3 STEPS

1 Listen

Ask people what they need most.

2 Help

Remove one obstacle for someone this week.

3 Grow

Coach a person to do it themselves.

TRY THIS

The Credit Habit: every week, publicly thank one person for a specific contribution.

PUT IT TO WORK

Leadership in Daily Life

AT HOME

- Lead by example: children copy habits, not speeches
- Hold a weekly 10-minute family check-in
- Share chores and thank people for doing them
- Stay calm in disagreements; listen first

ILLUSTRATION

A father, tired of arguments about chores, held a Sunday family meeting where everyone chose their own tasks. Complaints dropped because everyone had a voice.

AT WORK

- Clarify goals, not just tasks
- Delegate the outcome and trust the method
- Give feedback within 48 hours
- Protect your team's focus from needless meetings

ILLUSTRATION

A team lead began each Monday with a ten-minute priorities huddle. Missed handoffs fell because everyone knew what mattered most that week.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Start where you are: a street, a society, a club
- Listen to every voice before planning
- Share credit widely
- Turn complaints into small, doable projects

ILLUSTRATION

Residents of a housing society, tired of a broken park, formed a five-person volunteer group. Within two months the park was repaired and a monthly clean-up began.

FOR STUDENTS & YOUNG LEADERS

- Lead a study group and make sure everyone understands the topic.
- Volunteer for the task nobody wants; it teaches more than any lecture.
- Learn to say "I will find out" instead of pretending to know.

A LEADER'S DAY IN THREE MOMENTS

MORNING

Choose one priority and one leadership behaviour to practise today.

MIDDAY

Check in with one person: ask how they are and how you can help.

EVENING

Write three wins and one lesson. Plan tomorrow's first task.

QUICK TRICKS

10 Power Habits

Small actions, big leadership

1 The 2-Minute Rule

If a task takes under two minutes, do it now. Small delays pile into big stress.

2 Praise in Public, Correct in Private

Recognition lifts the team; private correction protects dignity.

3 The Question Habit

Ask "What do you think?" before giving your own answer. People support what they help create.

4 The One-Page Rule

If you cannot summarise a plan on one page, you do not understand it yet.

5 Morning Intention

Each morning choose one leadership behaviour to practise, such as listening or patience.

6 The Friend Test

Ask: what would I advise a friend in this exact situation? Then follow that advice.

7 Walk the Floor

Spend fifteen minutes a week with the people doing the real work. You will learn what reports hide.

8 Stop-Start-Continue

Ask your team what to stop, start and continue. It opens honest feedback.

9 The Five Whys

Ask "why?" five times to reach the root cause instead of treating symptoms.

10 The Evening Close

Write three wins and one lesson from today. It builds confidence and learning.

BUILD THE HABIT

The 30-Day Challenge

One small action a day. Tick it off as you go.

Know Yourself · Think & Decide · Connect · Execute & Serve · Pledge

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6
Write your 3 core values ☐	Start the 3-line diary ☐	Ask for one honest feedback ☐	Do the 6-second pause once ☐	Keep every small promise today ☐	Admit one mistake openly ☐
DAY 7	**DAY 8**	**DAY 9**	**DAY 10**	**DAY 11**	**DAY 12**
Review the week: wins and lessons ☐	Write your 3-3-3 horizon ☐	Read about one future trend ☐	Use the 70% rule once ☐	Decide something you postponed ☐	Speak up on one issue ☐
DAY 13	**DAY 14**	**DAY 15**	**DAY 16**	**DAY 17**	**DAY 18**
Try the 1-3-1 method ☐	Review the week: what to drop ☐	Listen without interrupting ☐	Ask "How are you really?" ☐	Use PREP in a conversation ☐	Praise someone publicly ☐
DAY 19	**DAY 20**	**DAY 21**	**DAY 22**	**DAY 23**	**DAY 24**
Give private, kind feedback ☐	Ask the team: st op-start-continu e ☐	Review the week: relationships ☐	Do the hardest task first ☐	Break a goal into milestones ☐	Learn something for 15 minutes ☐
DAY 25	**DAY 26**	**DAY 27**	**DAY 28**	**DAY 29**	**DAY 30**
Ask the youngest for ideas ☐	Walk the floor for 15 minutes ☐	Offer help: "How can I help?" ☐	Thank someone with specifics ☐	Mentor one person ☐	Write your leadership pledge ☐

KNOW WHERE YOU STAND

Self-Assessment

Circle 1 (needs work) to 5 (strong) for each quality.

1	Self-Awareness	1	2	3	4	5
2	Vision & Foresight	1	2	3	4	5
3	Integrity & Dharma	1	2	3	4	5
4	Courage & Decisiveness	1	2	3	4	5
5	Empathy & Emotional Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
6	Communication	1	2	3	4	5
7	Strategic Thinking	1	2	3	4	5
8	Discipline & Execution	1	2	3	4	5
9	Adaptability & Learning	1	2	3	4	5
10	Service & Humility	1	2	3	4	5

ADD UP YOUR SCORE (OUT OF 50)

10–20
SEED
You are at the start. Pick two qualities and use their tricks daily.

21–35
SAPLING
Growing well. Focus on your two lowest scores.

36–45
TREE
Strong base. Begin mentoring others.

46–50
BANYAN
Excellent. Keep learning and serve widely.

Tip: retake this assessment after the 30-day challenge and compare your scores.

AVOID THESE TRAPS

Mistakes & Better Ways

Six common leadership slips and how to fix them.

MISTAKE

Micromanaging

Checking every detail kills initiative and trust.

BETTER WAY

Delegate the outcome, agree on checkpoints and let people choose their method.

MISTAKE

Avoiding hard conversations

Small issues grow quietly into big conflicts.

BETTER WAY

Speak early, privately and kindly. Describe the behaviour, its impact and the way forward.

MISTAKE

Taking all the credit

People stop giving their best when ignored.

BETTER WAY

Name contributors publicly and be specific about what they did.

MISTAKE

Decision paralysis

Waiting for perfect information stalls everything.

BETTER WAY

Use the 70% rule, set a deadline and review the decision later.

MISTAKE

Talking more than listening

You miss problems that only others can see.

BETTER WAY

Aim to listen twice as much as you talk; ask one more question before answering.

MISTAKE

Leading by title or fear

Compliance without commitment is fragile.

BETTER WAY

Lead by example, explain the why and earn trust through consistency.

YOUR MENTORS

Meet Your Acharyas

Master scholars guiding the Shunya Leadership Program.



Acharya Hitesh

Counselling Psychologist | Meditation Teacher | Author | Corporate Trainer

Specialises in neuroscience, psychology, Vedanta and Rajyoga to foster mental well-being, compassionate leadership and purposeful living.



Acharya Neelam Yash Chauhan

Educator | Literature | Human Behaviour | Counselling

A passionate educator who brings together English literature, the study of human behaviour, counselling and personal development to help people understand themselves, communicate with clarity and grow into confident, purposeful leaders.

ABOUT ISRF

Vision: to equip the next generation of high-potential leaders with a multidimensional understanding of statecraft, blending ancient wisdom with future command.
Mission: to identify and select 50 high-potential individuals every year through the Indus Protocol.

GO DEEPER

Join the Shunya Leadership Masterclass

Sunday, 6 December 2026 | 11:00 AM

Registration fee: **Rs. 499**, fully adjusted in the main course fee.
Certificate of participation from ISRF.

*The Shunya Flow begins on **1 January 2027**. Only 50 high-potential leaders are selected each year.*

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Wisdom is currency.