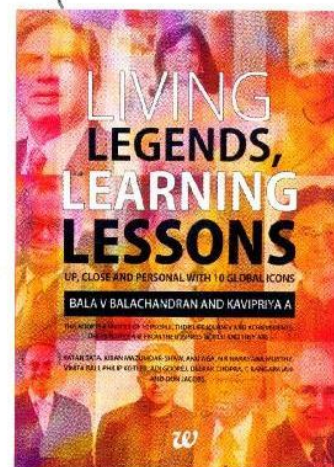


LIVING LEGENDS,  
LEARNING LESSONS: Up, Close and  
Personal With 10 Global Icons  
Bala V. Balachandran,  
A. Kavipriya  
WESTLAND  
Pages 362: Rs 595



## Role Models Revisited

**T**HOUGH NOBODY CAN GO BACK AND make a new beginning... Anyone can start over and make a new ending." This quote from Chico Xavier captures the essence of what *Living Legends, Learning Lessons* by Kavipriya and Bala Balachandran offers to readers. The book is an important exposition that captures the success stories of 10 contemporary global leaders — Ratan Tata, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Anu Agha, C. Rangarajan and so on. The book shares a glimpse into their personal lives, reflects on some of the key events that impacted and altered the course of their lives, and made them who they are. It also divulges on how these leaders dealt with the challenges they faced.

The authors use these leaders as case-studies for readers to learn lessons from and get inspired.

The authors take an analytical approach to biographical content, gleaming from them key leadership traits that were foundational to the success



BY ANSHOO GAUR

of the leaders. The book does not push any position on what one can or should do from the examples. It simply provides personal experiences and lessons and leaves the reader to decide how best to apply these for themselves. In this sense, it is very different from the usual books on leadership, which often recite theories and practices around leadership.


What I have seen in our pursuit for "better" leadership is that we often look at "what a leader does" a lot more than "what makes the person do what they do". The difference here is subtle but an important one. We can appreciate

the best buildings in the world, without recognising that the foundation is what holds these buildings up. This is where, I see the book, if read carefully, excels. It is actually the "core beliefs and values" of the leaders that made them who they are.

The book works well for three primary reasons: It leaves the reader with the freedom to choose and interpret the book, and extract multiple learnings. It re-validates the central importance of ethics, values, humility, respect, hard work, passion, purpose, pursuit of excellence, and resilience in the success of leaders. So while some of these legends were born with the proverbial "silver-spoon" and others weren't, what unites them are the traits listed, which are within the reach of every individual.

The book implicitly shows the strong correlation between spirituality and leadership. It is generally understood today that if people can discover their own 'calling' or sense of purpose and spiritual

direction, then they will be more focused, creative, and service-oriented towards their profession and society.

Kavipriya and Bala have done an excellent job in compiling valuable lessons from the lives of ten living legends. I do wonder whether the examples of these leaders are truly the ten best examples today. That being said, even if there were any other leaders showcased, the lessons offered in this book would be the same, since there are strong similarities in the beliefs held and behaviours demonstrated by these legends. The other thought that comes to my mind is whether the lessons extracted from the lives of these leaders will be relevant in this rapidly changing environment. This view is easy to reconcile because while the context is changing, it likely needs a different "how" while the "what" it takes to make a difference remains the same. 

Gaur is CEO, Amdocs