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Frank Worrell: of legends and leaders
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I must thank Professor Baldwin Mootoo and the Sir Frank Worrell Memorial Committee for the invitation to give this Sir Frank Worrell lecture. I also wish to recognize the very laudable efforts he and the committee are making to keep the memory of Frank Worrell green. It is good to see and hear about his cricket prowess and equally good to know that initiatives such as blood drives in the Caribbean and in India honor other aspects of his life. It is now 47 years since he died and incidentally, 50 years since his knighthood. I also wish to congratulate Sir Wesley Hall and Mr. Tony Cozier most heartily on being honored with the Noble Spirit Award. There must be few if any West Indian cricket luminaries more worthy of an award which seeks to perpetuate the memory of Frank Worrell.

When Baldwin approached me about giving the lecture, I demurred for several reasons. First, because similar lectures have been given by distinguished persons who have had intimate connection with cricket and I wondered if I could add anything new to the abundant lore about Frank Worrell the cricketer. Indeed in a moment of writer's angst I thought to myself that all that was necessary was to read to you the absolutely brilliant and comprehensive essay on Frank Worrell by CLR James in John Arlott's book "Cricket: the great Captains" and simply say Amen at the end.

Second, I have never been a cricketer. Like all Barbadian youngsters of my vintage, cricket was almost a religion, indeed sometimes it competed with religion and it frustrated me that I was no good at it although I tried mightily. I recall displeasing my mother greatly when I confessed to her very earnestly that I would rather be selected for the Harrison College cricket first eleven than win a Barbados scholarship. Luckily I was no good at cricket and thus had no hope for the former, so I had to concentrate on the latter. Although I do confess that in my Walter

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Mitty moments I see myself performing mighty deeds between the stumps. But then I was comforted and persuaded to accept the invitation by recalling CLR James' famous words: "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?"

However, having accepted the invitation to give this lecture, I selected the title partly because of my professional and academic interest in leadership-what makes for good leadership-are legends and heroes necessarily good leaders-how can one recognize leaders-can you identify potential leaders and train them and can you separate the qualities of the personality of the leader from the practice or expression of leadership. Is leadership content specific and can the qualities of leadership in one field be transferred to another. In addition, does outstanding personal achievement in a field have any salience for another disparate sphere of endeavor? Is the team and the nature of its business central to the exercise of leadership?

For many years I have been intrigued by Michael Manley's comment on Worrell's leadership at the end of an illustrious cricketing career which ended in the England tour of 1963. Manley writes:

"Worrell had entered the world of tactics and strategy and shown that he was a master of their equations. He had been tested in the fire of adversity and shown that he could handle this with icy self-control and unfailing dignity. Most of all, he had penetrated a realm that defies analysis: leadership. The most that can be done rationally in discussing leadership is to assess the elements of which it is likely to consist. In the end, however, analysis retreats before the mystery of its indefinable chemistry"

I cannot dilate on my own experience in the practice and pitfalls of leadership this evening, but I will be bold or rash enough to try to tease out some of those elements.

I am also interested in leaders and their relation to history and legend for a simple domestic reason. There has been an increasing cacophony about the lack or failure of leadership in the Caribbean generally, although it is bemoaned most in the political sphere. There is a feeling abroad that we as a people have escaped from Egypt, the waters have parted for us, but somehow the Promised Land is a mirage and there are no leaders, no Joshuas to guide us.

The legends whom I was taught to regard as leaders in my youth were men of arms cloaked in the purple of invincibility and so completely that any clay was

hidden from view. When I was in primary school, thanks to persons like J.O Cutteridge of “Dan is the man in the van” fame, I sang the British Grenadiers song with gusto;

*Some talk of Alexander
And some of Hercules
Of Hector and Lysander
And such great names as these.*

But now I am more concerned with legends of our time who are not so far removed that we cannot part the curtains of myth and mystique, get closer to them and perhaps even see whether they bled when cut and cried when sad. And more importantly, what can we learn from them.

But let us start from the beginning. I knew Frank Worrell, but not very well. Perhaps I knew him better post-humously and vicariously through his wife Velda, nee Brewster who was my cousin and she would never tire of telling about her Frank who had left shoes that could never be filled. I got some insights into who he was, some of his personal trials, what he meant to his many publics and some of the characteristics that made him a legend and a leader.

I have also gleaned much information from the rich cricket literature by and around Worrell, discussions with persons who played cricket with him at the international level, like Cammie Smith and Wes Hall, those who played with him at the domestic university level like Baldwin Mootoo, Ainsworth Harewood and Joe Butchey and others who played with him in pick-up games in the Mona Bowl. I must also thank Vaneisa Baksh who generously shared her research with me.

Frank Worrell was born and brought up in a Barbadian social environment with which I am very familiar. He was 13 years old when the pustule of social discrimination and oppression in Barbados burst or was punctured and if I, born 8 years after him, was conscious of the social conditions of the time, I am sure he must have been also. He must have been seized of the fact that the riots of 1937 burst the boil, but did not heal the scar. He describes himself as having psychological and mental strain throughout his schooldays and a persecution complex at school, but this was apparently more from the attitudes of his peers than the surrounding social conditions, although the latter could not have helped. But undoubtedly it was the constraint of the toxic social climate that led him to leave Barbados for Jamaica. Rarely do the memories of these times come out in his writings, although I could find one pungent comment on the society;

“Barbados has one exceptional feature. It is the only territory in the world without a local hero. This obtains in all walks of life”.

This might have been a bit of an exaggeration as there were at least cricket heroes. My father was a good colonial product who took to cricket with the same satisfaction that he took to wearing his Harris tweed suit to 11 o'clock service on Sunday mornings. I don't remember him ever playing seriously, but I do recall him speaking in glowing terms of the heroic exploits of George Challenor and Tim Tarilton who were white, but I cannot recall him mentioning Herman Griffith or Manny Martindale with the same gusto. But this may say more about my memory than my father's selective hero worship.

But yet in his description of the West Indies in his book Cricket Punch Worrell wrote:

“Nowhere in the West Indies will he (the visitor) find segregation. We all work, live, eat and play together. There is intermarriage among the various races and although some of our visitors raise their eyebrows over that, only a minority in the West Indies thinks anything about it at all. We are all West Indians at home”.

But sometimes our publishers and expected audiences make us see things through different lenses.

To us as schoolboys, Worrell was already a legend. We spoke in awe of Tai Worrell playing inter-colonial cricket in short pants. As an aside, in those days graduation to long trousers was as reliable a sign of approaching manhood as the stubble on the chin or the sweaty palms in the presence of a girl one admired. We heard various lurid versions of his being disciplined by the headmaster of Combermere School for some infringement of school rules after he had returned from a successful series in Trinidad. I recall being told by someone who was probably told by someone who was told by someone that he knew someone who was present and saw the headmaster cane him in front of the school. This was not true of course, but such is the nature of oral history. With Worrell on the team, Combermere won the First Division championship for the only time in its history. We marveled at his having been the youngest player to have scored a triple century which he did in 1944.

I was bitterly disappointed not to see him play in 1948 when Barbados laid waste to Gubby Allen's MCC. I recall vividly being in the schoolboys' stand and heckling a mediocre trundler named Maurice Tremblett. Walcott and Weekes made centuries in the Barbados game which sticks in my memory for another reason. CLR James writes poetically about remembering one stroke. He recalls seeing Arthur Jones cut:

“He wore a white cloth hat when batting and he used to cut. How he used to cut!” And he goes on-“When the ball hit down outside the off-stump (and now I think, even when it was straight) Jones lifted himself to his height, up went his bat and he brought it down across the ball as a woodsman puts his axe to a tree”.

I can join him in that kind of adulation for a stroke. I remember Clyde Walcott batting from the Challenor stand, moving forward, shifting the left leg and square driving for 4. The stand erupted. I still watch cricket when I can, most often now on television, but in all my years I have never seen anything more beautiful than that square drive off the front foot. Walcott's performances were of course of interest to us for another reason. Our school, Harrison College got a half-holiday whenever he did exceptionally well.

But to return to the cricketing basis for the legend of Frank Worrell. I had always considered him the complete batsman, off the front foot or back with that capability to play the ball late which sport physicians would tell you is an indication of exquisite motor control and extra ordinary hand-eye coordination and reaction time. If he did not invent the sweep shot, he certainly perfected it and it was made with an elegance which has escaped the current practitioners of the rather clumsy reverse version. I have read comments that suggest that there was one small chink in his armor. Manley and Sobers suggest that Worrell was never very comfortable with the really quick rising ball. But who is? He had class and style. I recall hearing the encomiums of John Arlott on our Rediffusion box as he spoke of half-hoping and half fearing to see Worrell and Weekes together in flight as indeed they were at Trent Bridge in 1950 when he scored 261. I cannot better the description of what was described as his finest innings than that given by Manley.

“Of Worrell's innings one must pause to say that nothing more perfect can surely have occurred in the history of cricket. Others have scored faster, others have made more. Worrell made it all look so easy and invested ease with a quality of elegance which only a very few batsmen have matched.

What Worrell displayed at Trent Bridge in 1950 was complete mastery. There was no stroke he did not play.”

Pages have been written of his masterful stroke play and I will only quote one of the more elegant word pictures by Neville Cardus in Worrell’s obituary.

“Worrell leaned over his late cuts with time enough to spare, to enjoy, without offence to the bowler, his own delicacy of touch”.

But the late cuts and glances were strokes he had practiced for hours as a boy. He tells of playing six hours a day in a cemetery with a concrete grave as the pitch and a vault as the wicket. He had become a left arm spinner and to quote him:

“But it was not until 1941 that I seemed to blossom a bit into a batsman; presumably I was much too small to get any power into the shots and in my first few years it was a matter of getting runs by deflections like cutting, gliding and glancing”.

His physical stamina was remarkable and I have been told of how he would discipline himself into good physical condition before a Test series. At 36, an age when most cricketers are on the twilight side of the hill and would be fielding at mid on or at point, he would be loping up to the wicket with sleeves rolled halfway up the forearm and plugging away. In the famous tied Test in 1960 he bowled 30 overs in the first innings and in the fifth and final Test of that series he bowled 31 overs, with 16 maidens and took three wickets for 43 runs.

By the time he was thirty, his place in West Indies cricket lore was firmly established and he was already a legend, but that is not what has established his credentials as a leader and a genuine icon of Caribbean sport. I could find nothing in his early life which gave an earnest of this aspect of his career. Indeed he was a bit of a rebel and nonconformist as he himself confessed. I do not believe that his differences with the Cricket Board represent leadership. To me they are a manifestation of his appreciation of what was just and fair and willingness to buck the established order. This was Rosa Parks rather than Martin Luther King. Of course there are always the savants who will claim that those were characteristics which stamped him for leadership.

The popular perception is that his claim to have a genius for leadership is based principally on his changing the face of West Indian cricket, beginning with

the famous tour of Australia in 1960-1961. But there is evidence of players coming to him for guidance even before he was captain and therefore the de facto leader. His adult personality was such that men turned to him almost naturally for counsel and comfort. There were the qualities of technical judgment and expertise and the positive attitude that made him the formidable captain he was on and off the field. But there is more and one gets a flavor of some of it by speaking with some of his players.

Wes Hall and Cammie Smith describe some of these qualities. In his inimitable style, Wes describes Worrell as a man-manager-a style rooted in respect for oneself and for the dignity and personhood of the other. He never denigrated the person-he would identify the fault and address it in personal interaction-never in public. He spent time knowing his men. As Cammie would say, he spent as much time speaking about life and living in personal interaction as he spent in discussing cricket. Such was the rapport and respect that there was ready compliance with his instructions on and off the field, because one did not wish to disappoint the skipper. He removed much of the almost natural island jealousies born of ignorance by having players from different islands room together. Apparently he was not a great fan of large team meetings. He clearly did not know only cricket and therefore genuinely knew cricket.

But perhaps the characteristic which for me identifies and epitomizes the essence of Worrell's claim to iconic status as a leader is demonstration of the classical Pygmalion effect. If I expect you to do well and let you know it, then that brings out some special reserve of resolve and talent. Wes tells a story that exemplifies this. It was the occasion of the Fourth Test in July 1963 in England and the series was tied one apiece. Sobers had an abscess on one of his fingers which was lanced on the day before play was to start so he came to the ground in street clothes, still smarting from the wound and not expecting to play. Worrell called him aside and spoke to him explaining how much he and the team depended on him and how much it would mean to him if he played. Sobers dressed and sore finger and all made 102, put on 143 with Kanhai for the 4th wicket, made 52 in the second innings and in England's second innings bowled 32 overs getting 3 wickets for 90 runs.

In the heyday of his captaincy Frank was of course older than the majority of his players and the paternal or avuncular role would have contributed. But clearly this was not the only factor and the bond of a West Indian team was also not the critical factor, because he had demonstrated his leadership skills in his captaincy of the Commonwealth teams to India.

I have speculated on the arguments in the campaign to have him made captain of the West Indies team to Australia in 1960-1961. My reading suggests that this campaign was built on at least four premises. First he was a cricketer's cricketer and had demonstrated his talents in every place where cricket was played and the cognoscenti were at one over his skill and knowledge of the game. The next would have been that of it being a social imperative. The social ferment, the bubbling nationalism, the kicking over the traces of the old colonial order were undoubtedly factors in the argument. There was the underlying factor of race which cannot be divorced entirely from the former. James points out that he originally rejected Learie Constantine's argument that it was time for a black man to captain the West Indies. In his letter to the Queen's Park Club in early 1960, he wrote;

"I do not bring prejudice to any of the charges. In the campaign I am carrying on against Alexander instead of Worrell as captain, I shall exhaust every argument before I touch the racial aspect of it."

James averred that he wished the best man to be captain but in not so subtle language he infers that in this case the best man was black. The fourth factor was that he had the leadership capacity that made him the logical choice at that particular time. These arguments constituted a powerful and heady brew that so intoxicated the West Indian public and created a vis a tergo so strong that the collected clamor for cricketing justice could not be denied.

But leaders need followers and we must not forget that in that period Worrell had at his disposal remarkable cricketing talent, and if I may parody and plagiarize from Shakespeare's Henry V, I will say;

*....then shall their names.
Familiar in our mouths as household words
Worrell, Weekes and Walcott,
Sobers and Kanhai
Hall and Griffith,
Be in our flowing cups freshly remember'd*

But the value of legends and leaders is that they can imprint upon and mark the present and so I reflect on the current Caribbean and the cry from the doubting Thomases that the Caribbean people lack the leaders to take them to the Promised Land. It is a thesis I reject unequivocally. First, I worry about a popular notion that there is somewhere a real land and not one of make-believe that was promised to us when the Treaty of Chaguaramas was inked 41 years ago. Yes, there was a map for Caribbean integration and progress, but the state of that progress and the positives to date are not preached with the same conviction as the thesis I have heard proposed by the current American President. He points out that the number one objective of their constitution is to form a perfect union. That country and others have struggled mightily to perfect a union. So must we, although I contend that none of us alive today will live to see that perfect union. It falls to us to try to perfect it with the certain knowledge that it may never be perfected. Improved yes, perfected never!

So while I applaud the impatience at the speed with which the perfecting is taking place, let us recognize that steps small and large are being taken by many unsung heroes and many leaders in different spheres to perfect our union. We also recognize the universal human failing to fit the retrospectoscope with pink lenses and fail to admit that the social, economic and other winds that strain and buffet the union are different from those with which our former leaders had to contend. I would posit that in the main our current political leaders possess the capabilities that their forefathers had. They are seized of the contours of the map that has been drawn and the path that has been set, but time and circumstance have not been such as to satisfy the angst of those who would wish to see the union perfected in our time.

But having said that, I do wish that in the public sphere greater attention might be paid to the Pygmalion aspect of Worrell's success. Perhaps Caribbean people could be better served by being informed more regularly and with greater clarity of the steps our current leaders are taking to perfect the union and how the citizens can be challenged to be better than themselves in the way Worrell did to his players. Perhaps the achievements of our past and current legends in so many fields could be presented better, especially to the young who in many of our countries are fed a constant diet of violence framed far too often by images of non-achievement. I do not speak of unjustifiable triumphalism-that would not have been Worrell's style. We only have to recall the modesty of his response in Melbourne after the 1960-1961 tour.

I have no evidence that Worrell ever took formal instruction in leadership, but it is generally accepted that some of the fundamentals can be taught or enhanced by teaching. I am pleased that our own University of the West Indies includes this in many of its programs and has a Center for Leadership and Governance which specifically sets out to train Caribbean leaders.

Professor Mootoo charged me with trying to draw out some lessons for the young from Worrell's leadership and legendary status. I will dwell more on the former as being more relevant. My friend the distinguished sports psychologist and motivator Rudi Webster in his excellent book "Think like a Champion", sets out many of the characteristics of the most successful cricketer- leaders, especially Clive Lloyd. I like his affirmation that "Good leadership starts with self-leadership and that leadership is action, not a position". He goes on to describe the best leaders:

"The best leaders build their leadership on three strong pillars: an agenda for change that includes a clear picture of what they want to achieve and an intelligent strategy to achieve that vision, a cohesive network of competent and highly motivated people to implement that agenda and the eradication of poor excuses, bad habits and outmoded traditions".

He stresses that when people are made to believe that they can truly make a difference to the performance of their team or organization, they bring with them a level of commitment and discipline which when correctly directed and focused, satisfy a major requirement for success. There are many tomes on leadership, but my own experience in leadership roles and my observation of leaders in many spheres make me agree with Rudi.

However, I have found it personally satisfying and useful to set out the essence of good leadership as being grounded in a compelling context specific vision and sustained by five characteristics-5“Cs”. These are **commitment, conviction, communication, competency and character**. There must be commitment to the vision-some ideal scenario which should be realized. There must be **commitment** to the persons with whom you share that vision and who will help you to achieve it; there must be commitment to enduring the rough and rocky road. There has to be the patent conviction of the appropriateness of the vision the justness of the cause and the capacity of the persons around you. There must be **conviction** of the merits of the Pygmalion effect. The ability to **communicate** the vision is absolutely critical. A vision is useless unless it can be made real to those who are around you and whose help is needed to achieve it. **Competency** is often taken for granted as it is often assumed that those who reach a leadership position are competent, but it is critical that those around you appreciate your competence for the purpose-not competence in irrelevant fields and I do not speak necessarily of genius. And finally there is **character**, by which I mean the display of a set of standards and practices that a good society values and needs, such as transparency, integrity, consistency and respect.

Frank Worrell undoubtedly showed these qualities which are the elements on which the claim for him to be a legendary leader extraordinaire can be securely based.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me paraphrase another famous Frank and have Frank Worrell say

*I've lived a life that's full
I travelled each and every highway
And more, much more than this
I did it my way.*

And for doing it his way-the right way, we in the West Indies will be forever grateful.

I thank you.