

Life Leadership and Middle Eastern Legacy of T E Lawrence

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Introduction

Even though his nickname could suggest that he was from Arabia, especially to those who have never heard of him, Lawrence of Arabia was actually a Briton. His nickname “Lawrence of Arabia” came from his great emotional attachment to Arabia triggered by his experiences in the region. His actual name was Thomas Edward Lawrence, and he was born of Sir Thomas Chapman and Sarah Junner in Tremadoc, Wales, in the year 1888. His family hardly settled in one place, but finally, they settled in Oxford.

Education

Thomas Edward Lawrence went to school in Oxford and graduated with first-class honors from Oxford University (T. E. Lawrence Biography). His love to study old churches and castles made him fall in love with culture and research. T. E. Lawrence’s love for history and travel saw him get an opportunity to travel to Syria, where he spent a lot of time learning about Arabs and some of their cultural practices. This trip enabled Lawrence to expand his study of castles, after which he decided to master archaeology (T. E. Lawrence Biography). He went on to sharpen his skills in archaeology by taking an interest in the culture of the people in the Middle East. It is, therefore, true to say that Lawrence was a dedicated student who knew what he wanted to do in the future and made maximum use of all opportunities Oxford could provide.

Profession

Even though Lawrence had mastered archaeology, he had diverse skills and talents which aided him in his professional duties. For instance, in addition to his archaeological know-how, he was highly skilled in photography. The combination of archaeology and photography helped him come up with innovative solutions during his service in the British military. In 1910, Lawrence got an opportunity to go back to the Middle East, this time to work at an excavation in Northern Syria (Lawrence of Arabia). This trip enabled him to meet and befriend Dahoum, a young Arab who ended up being his assistant and travel companion during his trips (Lawrence of Arabia).

Lawrence became part of the team that conducted the excavation projects in Northern Syria. During his stay in the Middle East and also his time with Dahoum, he learned a lot about Arabs, including

their language. These can be considered added skills because they helped him interact very well with Arabs. This made him love the people in the Middle East, and the people loved him as well, making his work in Syria a great success. This made some people feel like Lawrence felt more affiliated with the Arabs than his people in Great Britain. His superiors, however, never doubted the loyalty of Lawrence, which is evidenced by the multiple responsibilities given to him in Syria. The bosses knew about his abilities and his undying will to contribute to things whenever the need arose.

In Syria in 1910, under the leadership of Leonard Woolley in the British excavation team in Carchemish, Lawrence played the roles of pottery and photography as well as being a manager to the workers recruited from the local areas (Lawrence of Arabia). The management role was given to him because not only was he conversant with their language, but he also knew a lot about their culture. This made it easy for him to communicate with them, enabling them to perform their duties efficiently. Four years later, after working for several seasons, Lawrence and Woolley were tasked with the mandate to provide “an innocent archaeological camouflage for a survey of the British military, of an area which was under the control of the Turkish forces” (Lawrence of Arabia).

During this time, Lawrence believed that the British authorities were acting in the best interests of the Syrian citizens. Considering that he knew about almost all the challenges that the Syrians were facing as a result of the invasion by Turkish forces, he completed the required task to the best of his ability and in good faith. Later, in the same year, Lawrence returned to England to prepare a report on one of the projects done in the Middle East. Lawrence could not return to Syria immediately for the next season of excavation because war had been declared.

Being a person who was always ready to help out whenever he could, Lawrence had an interest in joining the British military in the war so as to provide his services. His wish was granted, and he was posted in Cairo, Egypt. There, he joined the intelligence team, where his skills in photography, combined with the flying capabilities of the air forces, enabled him to use aerial photography to create maps, which proved very helpful in the war. This shows yet another quality that Lawrence possessed, which is innovativeness. Lawrence could see an opportunity where no one else would. He was capable of discovering a means of making work easier when solving another problem. In his line of duty in Cairo, he developed ideas that had the potential to make it easier for them to make successful military attacks on opponents. Some of these ideas included using aerial photography to survey opponents’ geographical positions as well as their communication lines. This led to several tests being carried out on his ideas of aerial surveying, and the results were satisfactory, leading to the adoption of the techniques in military operations. His knowledge of Arabic made it possible for him to interrogate Turkish prisoners and extract information about the geographical positioning and the strengths of the Turkish forces.

The Arab Revolt

In 1916, Lawrence was sent by the British military to join the then-ongoing Arab revolt, which was

being spearheaded by Prince Feisal. During this period, Lawrence was interested in keeping the revolt running until it was successful. He, therefore, took part in the planning and execution of guerilla tactics to defeat the Turkish forces. Among the tactics he employed was avoiding direct confrontation with the Turkish forces. With the knowledge he had about the locations of the Turkish forces, he was able to plan and execute attacks from where they didn't expect. The knowledge of their strengths enabled him to come up with countermechanisms prior to the execution of attacks. This rendered the Turkish army theoretically defenseless whenever the Arab fighters made an ambush.

Lawrence acquired money and weapons, such as guns for use in the revolt, increasing the resources they had to combat the enemy. T. E. Lawrence played a major role in the attack on Aqaba without the consent of the British military. He chose not to seek orders probably because he was not sure that the British military would approve the proposed move. He probably was avoiding a situation where his request was turned down on the basis that the move was too risky and that the estimated loss of resources if the move backfired was not worth the risk.

The Arab troops with the aid of Lawrence both in the planning and in the actual combat, managed to defeat the Turkish army and took over the port town. This was partly due to the expertise of Lawrence and his remarkable brilliance in planning every phase of the attack. After the victory, however, Lawrence reported to his commander in Cairo, whose delight made him pledge to provide more resources in future attacks.

The victory led to the realization that France and Great Britain had a pre-planned future for Syria. Being a liberal-minded military officer, Lawrence did not approve of the plans, and he demonstrated his resentment by refusing to accept medals from the king. In addition to this, he expressed his support for Arab independence by repeatedly writing to the local and international newspapers about the matter (Wilson).

After a long period of unrest in the Middle East brought about by these issues, all stakeholders agreed that something needed to be done. This gave hope to the Arab states and Lawrence, too, because he was advocating for self-governance in the Middle East. In 1919, a peace conference was therefore held in Paris and the Arab delegation was led by Prince Feisal. Accompanying the delegation was T. E. Lawrence who was the translator to the Prince (Wilson). The conference ended up as a great disappointment to the Arabs and Lawrence because none of the concerns raised by the delegation were taken into consideration (Dudney).

The Western leaders concluded that France would be in control of Syria and that no Arab country would enjoy self-governance. This made Lawrence retire from his duties because he felt so helpless that there was nothing he could do. He also felt sorry for the people in the Middle East, seeing how unfairly they were treated after all the struggle. He probably remembered all the efforts he made in Syria to get rid of the Turkish forces and felt like he had played a role in the Arab revolt to make it easier for even bigger powers to oppress the people in the Middle East. Considering how sympathetic he was, he probably felt like he had disappointed, if not betrayed, the Arabs (Dudney).

Lawrence And Sir Winston Churchill

In the year 1920, T. E. Lawrence had to come out of retirement after being offered a role in government by Sir Winston Churchill. Lawrence became an advisor in the colonial office, a role which gave him the opportunity to aid in the construction of “a pro-Arab settlement for the Middle East” (Lawrence of Arabia). This led to the holding of a conference in Cairo in the following year, which saw Feisal become the ruler of Iraq while Abdullah became the king of Jordan. This gave him some relief and peace of mind because, this time, the Arabs got a big share of what they rightfully deserved. He must have felt like he had been given a chance to make things right and be part of the positive change.

Lawrence Returns To The Forces

After this deal, which he referred to as “honorable,” he decided to rejoin the forces by first joining the air force and, later on, the Army. In his second term in the forces, he preferred to be anonymous, a move which saw him change his name twice. This is because even though he enjoyed his celebrity stature to a certain extent, he wanted to leave all that behind and start afresh. Before his death following a tragic motorcycle accident, Thomas Edward Lawrence had worked as a mechanic for a short period of time (Dudney).

Reputation

Looking at the professional life of T. E. Lawrence, it is possible to deduce his reputation by looking at his actions, attitude towards other people and work, his performance in different fields, his decisions and their impacts on himself and other people (Wilson). Looking at his actions, it is true to say that Lawrence was a quick thinker and he possessed excellent problem-solving skills. This is proven by his innovative mind during his service in the British military. Lawrence was able to come up with new solutions to problems that the people were facing. A good example of his great mind at work was his innovation of aerial surveying.

Lawrence had a positive attitude towards work and people. His attitude enabled him to focus on what he was doing and come up with the best results. This process included making use of all available resources available and exploiting all opportunities that came across him to improve his skills at work. This is proven by the fact that he took his time to learn the Arabic language even though he was not a linguist. This came in handy when he was working as an intelligence officer in the British military based in Cairo. The knowledge allowed him to prepare better for war against Turkish forces, and in the end, he led the Arabs to a historical victory. His positive attitude towards people is shown by the fact that he related so well with Arabs even though his culture was absolutely different from theirs. He took his time to learn about their culture and this helped him develop good relationships with them.

An analysis of the performance of Lawrence in different fields where he worked in would make it appropriate to call him an achiever. This can be evidenced by his excellent archaeological work, photography and even at Oxford University, where he graduated with first class honors. His work in the excavation projects was excellent which is why he was given several responsibilities at the same time. To be able to plan and ensure that all the tasks are carried out with the highest efficiency possible without any delays makes it right to say that Lawrence of Arabia had excellent organizational skills.

The decisions made by T. E. Lawrence throughout his career make him an assertive person who believes in his course of action with maximum conviction and consistency. It does not matter the prevailing circumstances, to Lawrence, what was right was bound to be right and what was wrong was bound to be wrong. When he had made up his mind that he was right, he would stick to his decision and be ready to face the consequences. An example of these instances was when he decided to join Prince Feisal in the attack of Aqaba and even provide them with money and weapons at his disposal without seeking permission from his superiors in the British military.

Another example is when he decided to stand for the independence of Arabs by not accepting medals from the king as a reward for his good work. To stick to this decision, he also campaigned for the course in the media and also took part in the negotiations at the peace conference in Paris, and chose to be part of the Arab delegation despite being British. This showed that he believed in equal rights for everyone and that if Britain and France ruled themselves, what was so special about them that would make them see Arabs as unfit to rule themselves? When he saw that the negotiations in Paris did not turn out well for the Arabs, Lawrence showed his decisive nature again by retiring from the forces.

Lawrence must have felt like there was no point in helping the same people who were trying to deprive other people of their freedom after a hard-fought war. The decision by the Western nations not to let any Arab state rule itself must have made Lawrence feel betrayed for working so hard to liberate the Arabs from one monster, only to hand them over to a different kind of monster. His whole service life must have felt pointless at that moment, and that is probably why he chose to retire, to show his solidarity for the independence of the Arab states.

The impacts of most of his decisions were generally positive both to himself and others. For example, the decision to go on a mission to capture the town of Aqaba proved fruitful both to Lawrence and the Arabs. This is because the victory saw an end to the oppression of Syrians by Turkish forces. The victory also made his commander happy, and he promised to provide him with more resources in the future, which meant increased efficiency and effectiveness in war. His decision to stand for the rights of Arab states caught the eye of Sir Winston Churchill, and this is probably the reason why he was given the advisor position in the initiative to give Arab states their freedom of self-governance. The impact of this was good to him to the extent that he chose to go back to the forces. The impact on the Arabs was positive, too, because they were free to rule themselves, especially Iraq and Jordan.

Importance Of The Life Of Lawrence In The Modern Society

The life of Thomas Edward Lawrence can be emulated by people in modern-day society to cultivate good values in people. An example of such values is the respect for other people's rights despite the natural differences that exist between them. In modern society, it is common to find people changing their decisions based on circumstances, as far as fairness is concerned. Someone starts following a certain course, but when it turns out that someone with whom they identify is on the other course, they suddenly go silent or abandon their original course completely. This is a bad behavior for anyone to engage in. The life of Lawrence teaches us that we should stand for fairness even if the end result is against us.

The importance of Lawrence can also be seen in the liberation history of Arab states. His participation in the Arab revolt was a very significant part of the history of the Middle East, hence the title "Lawrence of Arabia." His interaction with and enthusiasm in fighting for the freedom of Arabs can be used as an example of love for all human beings despite their race, religion or culture. In the modern days, people discriminate against other people, especially on the basis of religion. This is exhibited by the recent terror attacks by extremists on people belonging to other religions. Such people can emulate the life of Lawrence and learn something from him that will help reduce or end the hatred.

Thomas Edward Lawrence is a symbol of integrity. Even though he played a major role in the guerilla war waged against Turkish forces, he cannot be seen as a violent man. This is because the war was for a good course, and he fought till the end. Even when Britain had betrayed his course for liberating Arabs, he did not switch sides despite being British and in the military. Lawrence did not allow himself to be corrupted by the beliefs and ideologies of his people; instead, he remained true to his course. This value can be adopted by people in modern-day life, and the world will be a better place.

Conclusion

In conclusion, T. E. Lawrence was a hero who, despite passing on, the world can never forget him. This is because of his contribution to the liberation of Arab states as well as his reputation as a professional and as a person. His selflessness was a strength which makes it right to say he deserved all the things he achieved.

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