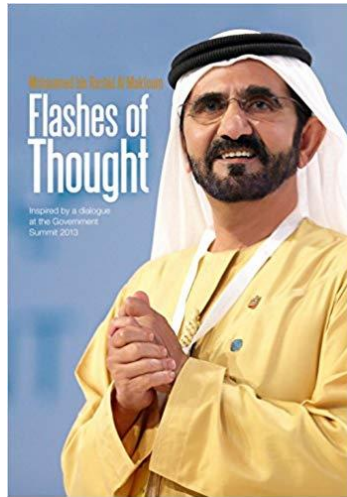


Book Review

Reviewed by: Gouher Ahmed; PhD, PMP

Professor of Strategic Leadership and International Business
Skyline University College, University City of Sharjah, UAE
gouher.ahmed@skylineuniversity.ac.ae



His Highness, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, *Flashes of Thought* – Inspired by A Dialogue at the Government Summit 2013, Motivate Publishing, Media City, Dubai, UAE, pp. 144, 2013.

The United Arab Emirates' rise to great eminence in the world in a short span since its founding in 1971 by the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras-al-Khaimah, Umm-al-Quwain, Fujairah, is a very fascinating part of the history of our times, with many a lesson. The UAE's is a 'miracle', which appears to be similar, to the German and Japan Miracles of the post-second world war (1939-45), or even more. A key to understanding of the UAE phenomenon, representing a seeming Arab Renaissance, is provoked by the book under reference-such of which one rarely comes across, by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the eminent UAE Vice President, Prime Minister & Ruler of Dubai, the world-fame principality, as a wonder land.

One feels privileged to Review His Highness's book, full of scholarship, wisdom, experience, fore-and-far sight, human values, concern for women children-orphans and workers, and deep love for young and advancing United Arab Emirates and its patriotic citizenry. It's a rare and noble quality of head-and-heart in a sovereign personality, making His Highness – their pater families/father-figure of the Union. The topics dealt with are quite wide ranging, concerning the Emirates and the broad spectrum of their people, including expatriates. Here is a graceful flow of the language through-out the work, majestically. Nations especially of the Arab world should wish for leaders like Al Maktoum.

In spite of an overflowing population of more than 7 billion, the world today appears to be in leadership 'deficit' and short of leadership 'trust', the global financial crisis of the dimensions of a Great Recession (or Depression) in 2008-09 driving these points home. Pleasantly, the theme of Leadership is the most running one of the work, quite deeply and enlighteningly. The Flashes of

Thought one aim to make the United Arab Emirates an outstanding nation in the world, with the best of educational, health, infrastructural, sports, tourism and public/government services, and law and order, peace, security and stability, to make the people happy, contend and enlightened. It's a new definition of leadership and development. Yet at the same time, the helping hand of the Emirates extends to the extent of 1% of its GDP, 95 % of which is not intended to be recovered, and the aid flows through the lows of the global economy, such as the financial fall of 2008. Increasingly, the impact of the fall upon the well managed UAE appears to be minimal, there being no panic, plight, stimuluses' and bailouts or dole outs. It's business-as-usual.

The book which has foreword words of appreciation and recommendation by His Highness Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Hon'ble President of the United Arab Emirates and the Sovereign of Abu Dhabi, flashes through 36 high themes, brilliantly, namely, Achieving happiness is our mission-The government of the future-Positive energy and positive thinking-Development priorities of the UAE –The Victory sign-Burj Khalifa-Spirit of the Union- A day in my life-Number One-Empowering women-Horse racing, poetry and leadership-the Gulf Cup-Endurance-My role model –Time Management –The Arab Spring-Arab Spring and investments – Ideas and creativity –UAE Vision 2021 – Taking risks-Challenges-The impossible-A gathering with business people – Monitoring government performance-Accession Day-The UAE's success –Aid to the world- Our expectations from employees-Motivating teams-one nation –No time to waste –Family tourism – Leadership redefined cabinet reshuffle –A child's dream, and A sound leader in a sound body. The narratives are in question –and-answer forms. Here is quite freshness of thinking in the Notes giving a new understanding of their problems and quite right perspectives on them. The flashes of thought are elevating, and both practical and philosophical and well relevant to the affairs of the United Arab Emirates, which is set to higher levels of achievement by the Golden Jubilee of its establishment in 2021 sure to be a grand occasion.

The author is a remarkable statesman. The first question posed by him is regarding the government's job, the answer to which is to “achieve happiness for people”, which sets at rest the for-ever controversy concerning the role of modern governments, of authority of power versus service. It's a democratic definition of government. Far more, the governments of the future are expected to be clock –and-year round. “The government of the future is open for service 24/7, all year round” According to the royal principle of decree, the UAE people have one of the best of governments or the best government in the world. What of the people? They, according to His Highness, need to have ‘Positive energy and thinking’ of, right mind and attitude for facing the challenges of life and for doing one's duty. “It is your mind and your way of thinking that creates your reality. You choose whether you want to live your life with positive or negative. The citizens need to be quite enlightened and responsive.

After the government' and the people, it is ‘Development priorities of the UAE’ that attract the royal attention the DPs are Three, namely, Empowerment, Education and Emiratization-3Es., in which it is felt, there is a long way to go. “They also feature prominently in ‘UAE Vision 2021’, the strategic document that guides our longer-term priorities for the nation”. The sovereign-author has great faith in Emirates and their creativity to shape ‘their own destiny’. “To be creative is to add something new to life as opposed to being a passive part of it”. Personally, the author raises the creative Arab Victory sign of Three fingers-v-fingers plus the thumb-standing for ‘I love you’. “We Arabs have a deep rooted civilization, a rich language and immense creativity”.

Burj Khalifa (6), ‘the tallest building in the world’, named after the President of the Union, Sheikh Khalifa, is dealt with most eloquently, as the symbol of the national pride, Arab creativity and the enterprise and the economic strength and stability of the UAE. It's a modern day wonder of the world.

“Today, I hope that Burj Khalifa symbolizes the new global changes taking place; a new world where East meets West, where; where civilizations come together and where human creativity reigns with no need to geographic, ethnic or religious boundaries.” The creator of the marvels the Burj, the United Arab Emirates, a Union of seven emirates brought into being on 2nd December 1971 by the great visionary leader Sheikh Zayed, is a Union held together by the spirit of oneness. It holds itself a Number One in the world in many respects, and is guided by outstanding leaders like the author of the spirited work, devoted to the Nation, every day (7,8,9), spirit of the Union, A day in my life and Number one.

His Highness feels the empowerment of women (10) a national imperative. He feels that ‘women are the soul and spirit of the country’. Women are noted to be ‘the very heart’ of the country. They, moreover, are held to be at the back of the development of the country, and they are most affectionately addresses as ‘sisters’. Provided a proper environment, they are held to “perform nothing short of miracles”. These are very elevated views, leading to more than 65 per cent presence of women in the administration of the country, which seems a global record. They are very safe in the UAE.

Individually, there is seen to be an alliance like thing between leadership and indulgences of horse racing and poetry (11). “I am not saying that every leader has to be a poet or a horseman; but every leader should have a passion in life that adds depth, uniqueness and style to his leadership”. Football is also a passion of the sovereign of Dubai and his pleasure knows no bounds when he sees the home team winning the prestigious Gulf Cup of Football. It is seen as an assertion of national pride and self-confidence. On the basis of his experience of taking first place at the world *Endurance* (13) Championship in the UK in 2012 knowledge is said to be the shortest path to victory even in sports.

It would be interesting to know the role model or statesman author. Predictably, is Holy Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him. Next, the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Zayed and the author’s father Sheikh Rashid, God bless their souls. The 15th Note is on Time Management, regarding which, His Highness is considered national example or role model and his advice on the matter is quite pertinent. “Manage your time, know your priorities, enjoy life and leave your mark”. Time gone is gone for-ever.

On the recent political unrest and changes in some Arab countries “Time is like a flowing river, you cannot step in the same water twice”. Indeed, a poetic view of time management.

Arab Springs, there are two very thoughtful write-ups-The Arab Spring (16) & Arab spring and investment (17). The spring was not an unanticipated thing, given the public indifferent governments. They in fact, were warned or the unrest as early as 2004. The UAE’s only wish is stability in the region and has no desire to benefit from the unrest in the form of investment flows. The UAE, thanks to its visionary founding fathers, Sheikh Zayed and Sheikh Rashid, has no fear of Arab springs at any time, being akin to islands amidst a turbulent sea. The UAE appears to present an Arab model of governance and development.

Creativity too is a recurring theme in this scholarly royal discourse, as change and improvement is the law of life of individuals and nations. And, for creativity the royal Suggestion is to “..... get accustomed to not getting accustomed”. Of all, “UAE vision 2021” (19) is bestowed maximum attention, as by the nation’s golden founding year of 2021 the Union through the vision is planned to attain stellar global heights. Following the maxim, that “The future of nations starts in their schools”, First rate education is No.1 priority of the Vision 2021, followed by world-class healthcare system, human development, competitive knowledge economy, sustainable environment and integrated infrastructure, and safe, just and secure nation significantly, there is no reference to GDP rate of growth, which of course would be significant, sustainable and environment and people friendly or green. The UAE is described as a small nation of remarkably people whose achievements

are ‘amazing’ No doubt about the creativity and pace of the UAE being most amazing, a development of the world-like projects great governance and others is made known to taking risks, facing formidable challenges and making the seemingly impossible by the founding fathers and those who followed them. “Throughout his life, Sheikh Zayed never failed to rise to a challenge. The greater the challenge, the stronger is his determination”. “The impossible cannot be where there is perseverance and faith. There is no impossible in life”. That is, taking risk, challenges and the impossible (20,21 & 22) are made to appear as very much on agenda of the UAE.

In “A gathering with business people” (23), three stories are told the Emirates Airlines (1985), Jabel Ali Port (1970s), and Dubai Internet City (1999) to a group of around 500 top business executives gathered in Dubai. Today, these projects stand tall internationally, as symbols of great planning, determination, competition and foresight and they are extraordinary projects.

There is a good governance behind the great economic and business success of the United Arab Emirates. From the narrative ‘Monitoring government performance’, there seems to be 24/7/365 governance in the Emirates, with proper empowerment and multi-level monitoring and evaluation. It’s public-friendly governance.

Accession Day (25) is a description of the dedication of the day of coming to power of His Highness, 4 January 2006, to Orphans, Mothers and general labor of domestic workers, street cleaners and others in 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively, and the tremendous public response and the joy of it. In the “The UAE Success”, the celebrated success is held to be a continuous saga, following the love of the people of UAE for their notion and their excellent team work and dedication.

The Emirates is noted to have extended foreign aid and amounting to \$ 48 billion since its inception in 1971, the trend having been set by the generous Sheikh Zayed, which is being continued by Sheikh Khalifa and Philanthropists like Sheikh Fatima bin Mubarak, God bless her, known as the ‘Mother of the Nation’ or the ‘Mother of Giving’. His Highness’s expectations from employees are high and exacting, with each expected to be a leader, patriot, passionate, craftsman, and excellent artist. The keys to Motivating teams-government work being mostly working in teams-are held to be three, namely, empowerment, Reward and Happiness. And, “A great leader creates more great leaders”. In spite of being a Union of Seven Countries, the UAE is most emphatically asserted to be One Nation (30), notwithstanding its critics. With still great miles to go, the UAE is made known to have ‘No Time to Waste’ (31), as the “future state today, not tomorrow”. An innovation in tourism is Family tourism (32), for the families in the Arab world and elsewhere. Leadership redefined is that which benefit one’s society, and is a combination of intelligence, resourcefulness, wisdom, strong personality and aspiration to the greatest of things”.

Any much stipulated cabinet reshuffle is held to be for better performance horse racing, a perfect aspiration in any child, calls for the nobility of treating horses with all kindness. The last (36) is sound leader in sound body, calling for making exercise a daily habit, more so by ‘busy’ leaders, as leadership is also good health.

Simply, it is an overwhelming work, overflowing with learning, experience, wisdom, warmth, high values, Arab culture as well as universality. It is delightful to go through by one- and-all especially in the Arab world. It is business and leadership guide too. For Diplomats, it gives an understanding of UAE on the Rise.