

"Group Leaders, Be Odysseus."

Disclaimer :- As far as Homer's "The Odyssey" is concerned - The contents of this post are completely my own views and my own thoughts. I do not claim any of the following text to be factually correct or incorrect. "The Odyssey" is open to the interpretation of the respective viewer / reader.

After months of hectic schedules, I finally got a chance to watch "The Odyssey" (2026) in the middle of August.

"The Odyssey" (2026), directed by Christopher Nolan, is a movie every **serious** RTR Group Leader and anybody who is aiming to be a **serious** Group Leader in subsequent RTR batches should definitely watch. To be sure, anyone attempting to or aiming to lead in any area(s) of their lives should watch "The Odyssey". In addition to its technical aspects, which I loved, as a cinephile myself - The classic "Nolan" direction, the swift editing, excellent and befitting background music, great character portrayals by the cast - I realized that the main substance of the movie's story is also filled with important lessons on Leadership.

As someone who has, in the past, been a RTR Group Leader (Thrice) - I have had my share of triumphs and failures during the respective RTR batches. Many Group Leaders will say the same for themselves. I am just one Group Leader out of the many we have had at AstroMediComp's RTR batches. When I was a Group Leader in RTR1, I had just 3 members to lead - out of those 3 only one was able to complete the batch successfully but I, the leader herself, was exempted from participating in the Final Project by Sir! During the group leadership in RTR4, I could (with the immense energy and support from my RTR4 "MATRIX" group) carry most of my group successfully throughout the batch, only one member couldn't complete the course. During RTR4, my team created a total of 17 OpenGL Demo Projects within 18-21 months and the group was deemed to be a huge success. My RTR5 Group Leadership, which I jointly shared with my husband, was again marked with failures on our side - only 1-2 members remained with us for the development of the Final Project and only 4 members out of 8 could complete the batch successfully. Some group leaders are able to carry their group throughout the batch successfully, while some are left alone to complete the Final Projects by the time the batch ends while some are left with half the strength of their original groups. We have seen many group leaders that can fall into each of these categories - and as I have already proved it - I am no exception!

As I was watching "The Odyssey", I realized it holds remarkable symbolic similarities to AstroMediComp's RTR course! That is why it deeply resonated with me. The perilous journey across the vast, dangerous ocean, filled with challenges at every step which Odysseus and his crew must undertake and confront, is the RTR course itself, the crew members are the students who are new to RTR and must cross it successfully and Odysseus is the Group Leader!

I am listing here, some key Leadership takeaways I immediately made mental notes of as I was watching "The Odyssey" that day. These points are a culmination of my own experiences during all three of my RTR Group Leaderships. I have tried my best to live by these principles. I still do. I hope these will be helpful to all current and future RTR Group Leaders :-

(Warning : Spoilers Alert! Also, the following text is written with reference to the movie - so, only those who have either watched the movie or roughly know Homer's "Odyssey" will understand the relativity. I encourage those who have not yet watched the film to watch it first and then read the following. Ofcourse, this goes without saying, **Mr. Nolan does not pay me for promoting his movies!** Also, I have watched the movie ONLY once, therefore some references may have minor errors. Apologies for the same, if any, in advance!)

1. **Leadership, by its nature, demands sacrifice. The words 'Leadership' and 'comfort' would never go together in the same sentence.** Odysseus left his kingdom and family for the Trojan war and returned 20 years later. RTR demands only 18 months, and no such physical separation from friends and family, but yes, during RTR Group Leadership, life will not be the same as before.
2. **A leader's choices, decisions and mistakes influence not only the leader's future, but also the futures of his / her followers.** The Trojan Horse was Odysseus' brainchild - but the dire consequences of breaking "Zeus' Law" was faced by his entire team - something Odysseus could never forgive himself for. Neither RTR GLs, nor members must consider this mere one-and-half year long RTR course as a fleeting acquaintance. The Leader and The Group will definitely have some or the other, big or small, but a lasting impact on one another. They must strive to make this lasting impact a positive one.
3. **Never leave your men behind (atleast try your best not to).** Take any incident from The Odyssey - the encounter with the Cyclops, Odysseus' dealing with Circe to save his crew mates from a terrible fate, his efforts to honour those of his crew who had died during the battle and the voyage. RTR Group Leaders must try their level best to get all members on-

board and up-to-speed in assignments and in projects as much as possible. A leader must always remember that the group is more important than himself / herself.

4. **Survival of the fittest is the law of nature. Cruel, but true.** Point 3 being said - Even after the leader has put in his or her best efforts, if some member(s) still refuses to stay updated with the Group Dynamics, then, the leader and the rest of the group must respectfully move forward in mutual understanding. Odysseus had no choice but to leave his crew members to their fates when they went against his leadership (other than the accidental casualties, ofcourse) - take the incident of the Sirens for example, or the slaughtering of Apollo's Cattle.
5. **Leadership is not your crown. Let the members take up leadership from time to time.** If your member(s) have thoughts or ideas of their own - hand over the baton to them once in a while so they may get a taste of the powers and the responsibilities of a leader, a chance to implement their ideas and to experience what it is like to do so in reality. The best way to do this is to make one member lead one project, compulsorily. A good leader creates not only good followers, but better leaders as well. Odysseus too, from time to time, is seen handing control over to his crew mates.
6. **When your body, mind, heart and soul are fixed upon your goal, no distraction is big enough to throw you off your path.** Odysseus' perseverance to get back home to Ithaca even under the magical spell of Calypso is proof of his whole-hearted dedication towards his goal.
7. **Always hope for and strive for the best, but prepare for the worst. The Group is definitely more important than the Leader, but it is equally important for the Leader to show up even if the Group is no longer with him / her.** Throughout the movie we see Odysseus striving to get his entire crew across the sea and back to his homeland to safety. However, when all attempts fail and the whole of his crew lose their lives during the voyage due to one reason or the other, Odysseus builds his own raft and completes the journey home to Ithaca successfully, alone. Later, he also safeguards his homeland by killing all the conspirators single-handedly. Group Leaders must make it their first priority to carry their entire group successfully throughout the RTR batch, right up to the Final Project - but if the Group Leader is left all alone, it is important for him / her to still show up and complete the course with all projects. At such times, it won't matter much that a project is not "up to the mark". The glory will be yours, because, no matter what - you showed up and faced the challenges head on, alone! That is the bravest, most noble gesture you could show in such a situation.

8. **A leader may choose to do something specific, but he / she must know ALL.** We see Odysseus doing hundreds of things at different times, which shows he is well-versed in a multitude of areas - politics, sword-fighting, archery, swimming, cooking, hand-to-hand combat, guerrilla warfare, battle strategy, hunting, maritime navigation, and much much more! At one point in the story, when one of his oarsmen is eaten by a monster, Odysseus immediately fills his place, although he is the captain of the ship and a King, nonetheless. RTR Group Leaders may choose to limit themselves to certain tasks but they must know what each member is working on for a project, and in case a member fails in his / her given task, the leader must be able to immediately fill-in that vacancy and complete the said task.
9. **Self-confidence, guarded by humility, is the crowning jewel of a Leader.** Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, whose entire crew have lost their lives, returns to his homeland after 20 years of war and voyage, alone, not announcing himself as the King he rightly is, but in the disguise of a mere beggar and it is in this disguise that he, and he alone, defeats all the traitors in his kingdom and regains his throne and his family. Leaders do not require titles. Leadership is a quality.
10. **Know thyself.** A leader must know himself / herself thoroughly - strengths, weaknesses and all. A leader who is completely honest with himself / herself will be able to navigate his / her group through anything. A deluded Group Leader misguides the entire Group.

The ones who concern themselves only with the end results, may think Odysseus a failed leader, who returned to his homeland alone having lost his entire crew during the return journey from Troy, the crew he had so ardently wished to safeguard at all times. However, the journey matters, much more than the destination. The perseverance and determination of Odysseus, his dedication towards the safety of his men, his strong will which never allowed him to falter even when faced with the wrath of the Gods and in the return, the sheer love and respect his people had for him, their King, and their unwavering trust in his strength and abilities are testimonials to his great leadership.

Failures do not *entirely* define leaders. It is how one learns from failures and acts upon it, that defines one as a leader. Leaders are embodiments of experiences and experiences are smelted by failures. Therefore, a person who has never failed can never lead. **Failures make leaders.**