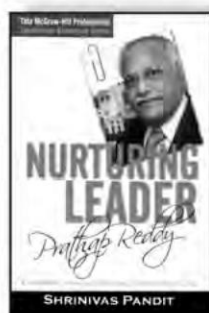


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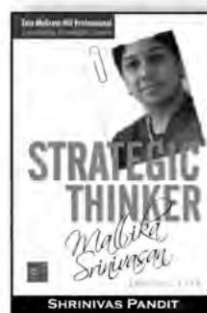
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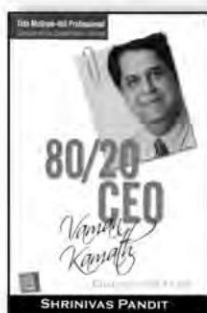
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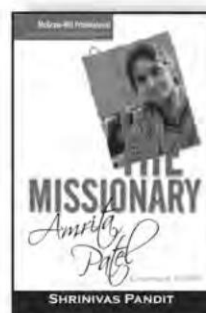
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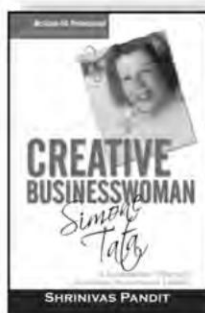
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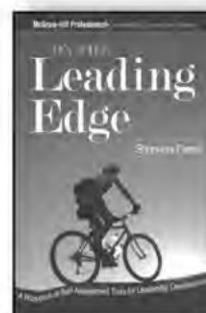
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Leadership Essentials Series

THE ALCHEMY OF LEADERSHIP

Shrinivas Pandit

Leadership Counsellor



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To

*All the thought leaders and
exemplary CEOs I interacted with
for my books and
otherwise in my long career*



Preface

“Call the role in your memory of conspicuously successful business giants and ... you will be stuck by the fact that almost everyone of them encountered inordinate difficulties sufficient to crush the gamest of spirits. Edison went hungry many times before he became famous.”

—BC Forbes

How to Get the Most out of Business

A CEO of a renowned organisation once rushed back from Delhi to Mumbai to attend a scheduled top-management meeting. He looked a bit concerned. Without looking at the agenda, he said to me, “Pandit, we have too many managers but don’t have general managers—those who are prepared to take risks and are passionate about results”.

My response was, “All these decades we probably wanted only managers and not general managers”.

Grumbingly he asked, “What do we do now?”

viii Preface

My answer was, “Start selecting talented people and nurture them into leaders. Depending upon the sincerity and passion with which we all involve ourselves in developing them, it would take 3–5 years to assign them real leadership roles.”

The coffee boy came in at the right time to enable the CEO to shift to the first point of the agenda for the meeting. Smiling within, I sipped my Cappuccino.

Barring exceptions, I found that this malaise was prevalent in numerous organisations. In my experience as the head of personnel, lack of leaders with passion for achievement did feature as one of the concerns of development. However, it did not have teeth until the business paradigm drastically changed the needs of growth, particularly since liberalisation in 1990–91.

Globalisation abetted by technological upheaval hastened the need for flat structures and 24 × 7 delivery process models to meet high aspiration levels of investors, customers and employees. The dividing lines between creators and consumers, history and geographies, and “we and they” got blurred. The requirement of leaders who would make a difference in such a fluid state of affairs skyrocketed with every passing month.

In the operative theatres of organisations where I interacted with job seekers and in training workshops for managers, the inchoate demand for role models was volubly voiced by new generation. This triggered me to undertake a systematic study of leadership styles in 1998–2001 of leaders like Dr. Verghese Kurien, Narayana Murthy, Bhavarlal Jain, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Deepak Parekh, Ashok Soota, Anu Aga, and many others (Ref: *Thought Leaders*).

A completely transformed business paradigm and cry for role models deepened my curiosity to detect the alchemy in leadership, which would lead to higher growth beneficial to society. I again read some classics on leadership and took

extensive notes from them on world and Indian leaders. Late Jamsheji Tata stood tall amongst galaxy of Indian entrepreneurs.

The search for the alchemy of leadership led me to the accomplished CEOs like K V Kamath, Venu Srinivasan, Jamshed Irani, Mallika Srinivasan, Amrita Patel, Simone Tata and Dr. Prathap Reddy. The probe conducted in 2001–2004 led to zeroing in on the portfolio of personal assets of these leaders, which they leveraged to achieve exemplary results (Ref: *Exemplary CEOs*).

The Alchemy of Leadership is embedded in the manner in which business leaders when faced with gruelling adversity, stuck to their vision of creating value, wealth and a better future—and the often unspoken spiritual perspective—beyond IQ and EQ—they held about leadership responsibilities. Their ability to unearth deeper meanings in events and people, and the nexus between the two, is the key to their stellar performance in a competitive market. To validate the model, I evaluated my assets; the result was astonishingly humbling.

This book provides you insights into the working of accomplished minds. It enables you to determine where you stand in your growth trajectory for reaching your goals.

It is my belief that you will be persuaded to act differently from reflection on these findings to reach exemplary goalposts and leave behind a legacy of your own.

SHRINIVAS PANDIT



Acknowledgements

To all common folks and followers who shared uncommon insights on how to detect the alchemy of leadership.

SHRINIVAS PANDIT



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The Nature of Adversity

"If Necessity is the mother of invention, adversity is the father of mindset change."

—Shrinivas Pandit

This chapter provides a sketch of the nature of business adversity. It unfolds the underlying multidimensionality of issues and strategic deployment of resources for achieving sustainable growth. Globalisation has incubated a conundrum, which appears to have, at the macro level, a “university of Adversity–Opportunity”. It has only one aim: change the mindset of leaders and their teams to nurture aesthetic growth of organisations.

The evolution of Indian business in the last 300 years from moneylending and trade to industry has been through the combination of different aspects of adversity through ages.

- The traditional 18th century communities of traders and moneylenders had entrepreneurial skills but no supportive environment in which to move forward to industrial capitalism. Buying power and restrictions on movement of goods, even within the country, limited the market size.
- The business ethic did not spread because of absence of social recognition, which left the field to traditional mercantile class. Coupled with this was the non-availability of opportunities, which kept away new entrants belonging to other communities and castes. The inborn lack of entrepreneurial drive in other communities also prevented the growth of business class.
- The British rule made a significant difference. They built the infrastructure of roads, railways, ports, communication, and a system of disciplined governance, to manage a vast country. In the process, the business climate was transformed. It increased trade and commerce, and led to the expansion of the mercantile class. More non-traditional business groups emerged in that milieu.
- Increased interaction with societies of the world, particularly European societies, either for education or for trade and commerce, provided exposure to new ideas, different living styles, and systems of world business operations. This expanded the opportunity base and opened up large vistas for business growth.
- The laws and rules introduced by the British served their political and economic interests. Reforms we needed to make during the British rule, including fixing currency rates against the Rupee, had to be won through political and social pressures. Partnerships and sole proprietorship remained the dominant mode of conducting business.

- The abolition of managing agencies led to the establishment of a managerial system in joint stock companies. Production processes were imported from the west, and private enterprises did well under the British rule.
- After independence, businesses faced a hostile environment with control mechanisms of “licence and permit” *raj*. The socialist ideology led the government to enact unproductive labour laws and anti-growth legislation like the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Policies Act (MRTP). The highly regulatory regime corrupted the entire system to the very fabric of its governance.
- The public sector was instrumental in giving a boost to basic industries like oil, steel, coal, etc. It played a catalytic role in dispersing the industry to remote places, and spurring industrial growth in those regions. A certain geo-political equilibrium was achieved. However, politicians treated the public sector as ranches for providing employment without any consideration for business or enterprise economics. In the process, they made that sector as unprofitable as they possibly could.
- The restrictive policy and regulatory framework coupled with political, union, and bureaucratic control killed many industries. The small-scale industries set up in different industrial estates became sick for various reasons—the menace of unions was an important factor.
- Certain large undertakings, however, did well when they had good leaders who followed professional management practices. Some names that come immediately to mind are: Luthra of Damodar Valley Corporation, Krishnamurthy of SAIL, S. V. S. Raghavan of Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation, S. N. Jain of National Fertilisers Ltd—there are many more.

- The mindset of people was soaked in an ethos of living on principles like “reduction of wants”, “world is *maya*”, and “poverty and spiritual growth are compatible bedfellows”. In addition, social and political reforms were preaching “poverty” as “virtue” and “prosperity/affluence/material enjoyment” as “vice”. This was against growth. Material ambitions were based on simple living and high thinking. Simple meant bare minimum, i.e., affordable by the lowest denominators of society. However, the business of business is to create “wants”, and these wants face this socio-cultural mental block.
- The adversarial ethos enshrined in labour legislations gave birth to inter-union rivalries and protests of various denominations like go-slow, pen-down strike, work-to-rule, general strikes, violence, etc. Labour cases, court delays, adjudication, and conciliation proceedings further polluted the atmosphere. This culture was created and nurtured by a muddled socialist ideology that gave a mortal blow to productivity and growth of business, even those belonging to the cooperative sector.

The common thread through the times is that Indian businessmen never had a friendly regime. They were not fortunate enough to experience a Japanese Meiji era. The preconditions for business growth were absent. The socio-cultural, economic, and political ideologies were decidedly anti-business. Faced with such constant adversities, those who continued to do business despite being jeered at as “monopolists”, survived. G. D. Birla, in his speech to FCCI, on March 4, 1949, said:

Any fool can establish business when there is boom. But it is during a period of depression that's one's ability to establish and run business is tested. I therefore appeal to businessmen not to be disheartened but to learn to take risks.

Gita Piramal notes that this was not mere rhetoric. When small businessmen ran aground, four men (G. D. Birla, Walchand Hirachand Doshi, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, and J. R. D. Tata) did their best to help. I haven't heard of such magnanimity in recent times.

The ability to take risks, foresight, passion, commitment to society, and preparedness not only to withstand adversity but pull the organisation out from depression, and constantly look for opportunities, are touchstones of business acumen. Such businessmen show tremendous acumen in dealing with politicians, bureaucrats, foreigners, competitors, colleagues, and employees. This means their people skills are of a high order.

The Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad, did a very interesting study of successful entrepreneurs in 1988. The study and findings are published in the book titled *Self-made Impact-Making Entrepreneurs* (2005).

Most of the leaders featured in the book are doing well today. Their practices have stood the test of time and proved to be sound. The EDII found that the majority of the impact-making entrepreneurs had achieved their success mainly through their policies and practices, identified in the form of entrepreneurial heuristics, which appear applicable even today. Most of these entrepreneurs selected products or modified product lines which were relevant to their education or work experience.

The IT graduates are doing the same now. They also took up challenges by competing with big business houses, including multinationals. They set their sights high. Since the nineties, so have new generations. The leaders nurtured their enterprises in the initial stages by exercising tight control over operations. There is much more sharing now because the nature of businesses has undergone major shifts over the last two decades.

They have developed indigenous technology for economic reasons, such as reducing the cost of the project, and for non-economic reasons, such as pride in doing things on one's own. This also is happening now on a larger scale. Quite a few had long-term perspectives, and never resorted to business practices leading to short-term gains at the detriment of long-term interests. They established themselves in market by understanding users, by educating customers, and by emphasising quality products, low prices, timely deliveries, and efficient post-sale services.

This is difficult to accept as representative. That consciousness is now seen in many. A select few concentrated and spent substantially on research and development activities. Such focus was unique in those days, but is the norm today. Substantial responsibility was delegated to a professional team after having reached a certain level of operations so that the leaders could devote their time to expansion and diversification.

Most of them evolved effective strategies for motivating dealers, maintaining close contacts with customers, and responding expeditiously to customer complaints. They maintained industrial peace and high employee satisfaction, by offering welfare schemes, personalising relationships, and encouraging expression of labour concerns. MNCs, and most Indian organisations, did not have this culture.

More and more educated entrepreneurs are now venturing into new, technically advanced business fields. The demand for managers with entrepreneurial competencies is also on the rise. Whether embarking on diversification, expansion, creating new SBUs for domestic or international markets, CEOs are on a look out for entrepreneurial talent. All of them find the profiles of successful entrepreneurs useful. These entrepreneurs are strategists. They overcame initial hardships through foresight, vision, proper planning and creativity.

However, the mortality rate in new ventures and corporate sector is extraordinarily high. About 70 per cent of corporates change every decade in major stock exchanges like Dow Jones and BSE Sensex. They face hardships, which they understand are often self-made and avoidable. Entrepreneurship is not just guts, ideas, risk-taking (thoughtless?) and luck. Realisation of business goals is a long and arduous journey. Proper study and thorough preparation are minimum prerequisites to success.

It is, therefore, essential for an aspiring entrepreneur or manager to develop entrepreneurship talent taking into account the mistakes that can be avoided. S. J. Phansalkar's book, *How Not to Ruin Your Small Industry* (1996) can be of immense help to such entrepreneurs. The findings are based on research he did on the small-scale industries. He identified some important mistakes as follows:

- Excessive or exclusive dependence on one buyer and doing “informal” business.
- Unrealistic project planning and expanding fixed assets before making provisions for working capital.
- Borrowing in the cash market to stock up materials spawning too many firms.
- Marketing myopia, or the inability to look at the needs of customers.
- Hiring employees for reasons other than competence.

The winds of liberalisation have blown hot and cold since 1991. The atmosphere has now become business friendly. The government is listening to employers' lobbies. Their suggestions are given serious consideration. The Government's disinvestment policy and programme are moving in the correct direction, though haltingly. The first-generation entrepreneurs are making headway in local and international businesses. Dwijendra Tripathi in his excellent volume *Business History* (2004) wrote:

There is no doubt that under the more liberalised economic regime, the Indian private sector has embarked upon the most progressive, creative, and competitive course in its entire history. And the sky will be the limit for its growth, if it continues on this course.

However, while sculpting an edifice one also needs to take into account the main characteristics of the changing nature of adversity.

External Changes

The ingredients of external adversarial convergences changed with the advent of liberalised policies.

Before liberalisation, socialist regimes known for their anti-business stance were in power. They remained there for nearly four decades. The governments were wedded to public sector controlled growth; bureaucracy was committed to red tape under “Licence and Permit” dispensation; and powerful unions set the agenda and direction for company governance.

Globalisation injected massive change leading to liberalisation, and fierce competition.

A paradigm change occurred when government control over business was liberalised. Acceptance of the forces of market economy led to business growth, transparency and accountability.

Although the constellation of adverse factors like governments, unions, regulatory framework, and bureaucracy, has still to be reckoned with, its ferocity is on the decline. The new constellation provides its own combination of opportunities and hardships, as discussed below:

- (a) world trade regulatory framework—unfavourable till now

- (b) more fierce competition—global as well as local
- (c) technological advances and upgradation
- (d) need to climb up the value chain
- (e) product–service innovation and packaging
- (f) 24 × 7, prompt deliverables
- (g) environmental concerns and poverty alleviation

Internal Changes

Organisations were static, inward looking with old mindsets, and outdated leadership styles.

The paradigm change occurred when organisation change programmes gave up unworkable command styles. Efforts at mindset change forced leaders to introspect deeply. This process gathered momentum after liberalisation because fierce competition multiplied the need for change many times.

Organisation restructuring, governance, mindset change and talent management: what are their lessons? There is a certain amount of historical baggage one carries from generation to generation, which contains a package of assets and liabilities that one controls only when one acts discriminately. The legacy of each event, relationship and loss–gain calculations has to be understood on an individual and organisation plane. The individual and organisational balance sheets reflect not only the gain and loss of money but also that of reputation, brands and assets as well.

The impact depends upon the gravity of the adversity. What one needs to think about is one's own contribution to the making of

that adverse situation, and what circumstances have conspired to put one in a limbo, i.e., distinguish between adversity created by oneself, and by others. It is easy to escape this by blaming others. What one tends to forget is the old chicken and egg story: which came first?

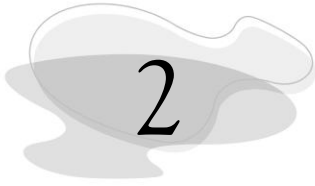
The inherent character of adversity is changing. Earlier, it was bipolar and had boundary walls. Its fixed nature has now given way to the dynamics of seamless market evolution on a global scale. Therefore, we need to look at its multidimensional character.

TAKE-AWAYS

- The touchstones of business acumen are the ability to take risks, commitment to society and preparedness to withstand adversity.
- The new paradigm of globalisation, technological revolution, relatively free international market movement, dissolution of Soviet Union and liberalisation of many a national economies provides its own combination of opportunities and hardships:
 - World Trade Regulatory Framework still not very favourable.
 - Fierce global as well local competition.
 - Emerging new middleclass especially in countries like India and China with considerable purchasing power.
 - Changed demographics leading to high aspiration levels across the Eastern hemisphere.

- Need to climb up the value chain.
 - Product-service innovation and packaging.
 - 24 × 7 working cycle enabling prompt deliverables across world time zones.
 - Environmental concerns, terrorism and poverty alleviation.
- The nature of adversity has substantially increased the tempo of working rhythms disturbing the work-life balances. It is causing unhealthy stress without the transition of mindsets from “rights” to “service and duties”; and “I” to “We”.

The inherent character of adversity has changed. It's no more bipolar. Its fixed nature has melted into the dynamics of seamless evolution of market economies and mindsets. It requires multidimensional leadership competencies and multiskilled workforce to steer through the fog of altered adversities.



Multidimensionality of Issues

Take any issue—fixing agricultural prices, patent laws, restrictive labour legislation, trade, commerce—it acquires at once a global and local connectivity and has simultaneous impact on both levels. Similarly, issues of immigration, religion, race, autonomy, supra-national and sub-national identities have reverberations at global, regional and local levels, within minutes.

Boundaries have become blurred. The sovereignty of national governments and the autonomy of regional governments is sacrosanct only on paper. Whether it is over lowering tariffs, custom duties, or octroi, the principles of independence and interdependence are at loggerheads from macro to micro levels. Everything is becoming conjoint, from naval exercises to commercial alliances. MOUs, mergers, and acquisitions are only tools.

Business no longer is:

- Bipolar, i.e., between governments of two countries, between a government and business house, etc.

- Free from the influence of technology, markets, consumers, media, press, communications and peoples' aspirational goals.

These factors are the major determinants of business. The governments are being driven back to the basics, i.e., good governance. That does not mean a free-for-all market supremacy. Roles are being redefined to allow more free “flow” of ideas, products, services and options, for cost-effective different life styles. It's a movement from the restrictive ideologies of the past to creativity and freedom.

The world of business has become multipolar and multidimensional. It does not matter whether the size of business is big or small, macro or micro level, general or niche market, or grey or black in complexity. All it asks of management is to develop multiprocessing competencies, period.

Whether it is the export or domestic market, customers expect:

- (a) advanced high-value IT product-service package, or high-yield crossbred seeds for agriculture, and so forth
- (b) cost-effective quality product and service
- (c) reliable deliveries

To fulfil these customer expectations, management has to have:

- (a) the latest process technology
- (b) brand building and new marketing drives
- (c) off-the-shelf deliverables

Look at automobiles, banking, insurance, two wheelers, automotive components, hospitals, or hospitality businesses: one notices that their bandwidths have increased their reach factor manifold. This has been achieved through induction of new technology, collaborations, mergers, acquisitions, improved

capacity utilisation, better yields, systematic upgradation of employee competencies, and above all, through the improvement in the morale of employees. This is the formula used by businessmen across the country for better growth and a solid base. Let us now look at the deployment of resources, which led to this revival.

TAKE-AWAYS

- The inherent character of adversity has changed. It's no more bipolar. It's fixed nature has melted into the dynamics of seamless evolution of market economies and mindsets. It requires multidimensional leadership competencies and multiskilled workforce to steer through the fog of altered adversities.
- Whether in export or domestic markets, customers expect high-value product and service package, cost-effective service and reliable deliveries.
- Managements need to:
 - upgrade process technology and multiskilled competencies,
 - develop flexible structures and keep just essential checks,
 - produce instantly integrated internal response mechanisms to quickly meet needs of all stakeholders and
 - build their own unique brands on the character of commitment to quality products and more so to service quality including delivery schedules.

A CEO may be a good strategist and may yet fail if she/he has no strategic insight in the deployment of key human resources in critical assignments because right solutions add value; expedient ones damage in the long run.



Strategic Deployment of Resources

Each organisation has to deploy its available resources to achieve targets and results. The leaders I interviewed revamped their organisations using certain tools:

1. Change management

They conducted programmes that focused on customers, quality products, timely deliveries, prompt service, cost cutting, speedy execution and mindset change.

2. Organisation restructuring

Flat hierarchies and autonomous divisions were created on network architecture. Reporting to more than one person became the rule rather than an exception.

3. Manager and employee participation

Active participation was achieved through the formation of taskforces, which led to a cross-pollination of ideas and thinning of departmental boundaries.

4. Voluntary retirement

Voluntary separations were carried out by giving personal attention to loyal old timers, with regard for their sensitivities and age.

5. Assortment

Accomplished through TQM, SWOT analysis, Six Sigma, benchmarking, Balanced Scorecard, competency mapping, outsourcing, 80/20 rule, cannibalisation and planned obsolescence.

One of the challenges Drucker talks about is the need to develop new concepts of “performance”, and new measurements of it. At the same time, performance had to be defined non-financially so as to be meaningful to knowledge workers, and to generate commitment from them as a value return. It is easier said than done in a mercenary world, built and nourished on mammonic industrial culture. However, to restore them is the job of new leaders.

In such a system, there are no means of measuring loss and profit incurred due to the inadequacy of managers, or of their performance with regard to their potential. So the cost to the company is not only their salary and perquisites but also such non-estimable losses. In the past, such candidates were retained on grounds of their loyalty, or service guaranty. Management does not want legally enforced service guarantees but treats loyalty with compassion in the interest of keeping organisation morale intact.

When one finances a particular project that has been prioritised for action, one’s commitment to its execution becomes visible: it is strategic deployment of financial resources into building a future. That alone does not ensure execution. The culture of

execution gets a boost if rewards are linked to it. People have to be trained into following certain norms of behaviour and practice, with regard to execution.

The essentials of strategic deployment of resources are as follows:

- (a) right people in right jobs
- (b) debate over assumptions so that the various departments of the organisation can move forward with mutual understanding about external environment—political, economic, and market competition
- (c) company-based SWOT
- (d) customer service
- (e) investment in areas of thrust

The most damaging mistake management can make is to put unsuitable people in key jobs. I have seen top management preoccupied with maintaining seniority balance and accommodating plateaued executives in important positions. The need to maintain balance supersedes strategic deployment considerations.

Top colleagues of CEO jockeying for the promotion of their favourites is a sustained pastime, which pushes companies to the lowest common denominator in meritocracy, team management and performance.

Expatriate CEOs of MNCs who come for a fixed tenure of 3–5 years easily fall in this trap because their eyes are set on showing results over their short tenures. This enables them to earn early promotions and sugarplum positions in the corporate hierarchy back home.

Such power play empowers competitors and affects executive morale. It generates cynicism about the management's integrity.

CEOs and top executives who indulge in such practices in the name of *realpolitik* don't care for management discipline. This gives a lethal blow to the idealism of young graduates looking forward to building bright careers. Sad, but true.

Be that as it may, there are examples of successful CEOs, who gave deep thought to strategic deployment:

- (a) Venu Srinivasan, who spent over a year scouting and hiring executives at the corporate presidential level
- (b) Vaman Kamath, who spelt out his policy for promoting competent executives without gender bias
- (c) Mallika Srinivasan, whose logic made a non-technical executive leader of a technical task force

There are many more like these. In the long run, *right solutions add value, expedient ones, damage*. A leader may be a good strategist and may yet fail if he has no strategic insight in the deployment of key human resources. There is no secret formula of success. Graduating from a business school is not necessary but studying at the university of adversity–opportunity seems absolutely essential.

TAKE-AWAYS

- Organisations use combination of tools like conducting change management programmes for employees, seek their participation through task forces, restructuring with downsizing through VRS.
- TQM, Benchmarking, Balance scorecard, Planned obsolescence of products, etc. while undertaking a major revamp.

- This is a strategic move but where they relatively fall short is in investing sufficient funds in thrust areas and delegating clear authority, autonomy and accountability for results to a single designated head.
- A CEO may be a good strategist and may yet fail if she/he has no strategic insight in the deployment of key human resources in critical assignments because *right solutions add value; expedient ones damage* in the long run.
- Many exceptions are there like Venu Srinivasan of TVS, Vaman Kamath of ICICI and Mallika Srinivasan of TAFE who showed strategic insight in selecting right candidates for crucial positions. They invested considerable personal time in thinking through these matters.
- However, one cannot trot out a secret formula of success. First, assessment of the minute requirements of the job needs to be made. It is not sufficient to only list the KRAs.
- While making the selection the chewing over that has taken place for some valuable time on the SWOT of incumbents culminates into finding as near a perfect match as possible. This deep reflective thinking process matures into developing strategic insight competency over a period of time.

Adversity brings knowledge and insight into spotting opportunities, which in alchemised capsules provide practical wisdom.



The University of Adversity— Opportunity

This institution for practical learning can be nicknamed AOU, “Adversity–Opportunity University”. One can observe from the following leaders’ profiles in *Exemplary CEOs* that they have gone through different kinds of adversities, to tap opportunities:

Amrita Patel
Chairman,
NDDB

Faced MNCs on a spree to capture markets, cooperatives in a disarray, and major disagreements with mentor Verghese Kurien on policies, direction, and marketing strategies

Jamshed Irani
Director,
Tata Sons

Turnaround of TISCO, massive reduction in workforce, resolve problems left over by his predecessor, and shift self-limiting boundaries to improve his abilities to face challenges and improve his performance

Mallika Srinivasan
Director,
TAFE

Rejuvenated the organisation caught in prolonged market depression

Prathap Reddy Chairman, Apollo Hospitals	Getting into hospital business without any entrepreneurial background
Simone Tata Chairman, Trent Ltd	Exiting cosmetics to start business in retailing
Vaman Kamath Chairman, ICICI	Transformed a project finance institution into a big bank
Venu Srinivasan Chairman, TVS Group	Ushered quality revolution in the company with conscious and serious attempts at self-transformation

Difficulties appear to work like tonics: they spurred on these leaders to greater exertion and better achievements.

If we aspire a free market economy with minimum government control, then the responsibility for good governance will automatically pass on to organisations. Every organisation will have to share the responsibility for governance of neighbourhood and community. The stakeholders will demand transparency and accountability. Unions will be replaced with social activists, environmentalists, the unemployed, and a host of such groups. They will form the nucleus of external adversaries.

Under such circumstances, mindset change will be a constantly evolving phenomenon wherein the basics of civilised, enlightened behaviour will remain somewhat unchanged but the skill-competency sets will require constant update. Daily rigorous routine will be followed to cultivate and maintain vibrant, positive attitudes. Management will innovate in these spheres to keep up the tempo.

If one tries to take a holistic perspective in the midst of overwhelming turbulence, one realises that the adversary is located within oneself. We, therefore, need to take a fresh look at our mindsets. *There are times in everyone's life when something constructive is born out of adversity.* If one believes this, one must garner the courage to first introspect and see what changes are required in oneself. Thus said Samuel Johnson, *"Adversity is the state in which a man most easily becomes acquainted with himself, being especially free from admirers then".*

While identifying the common threads in adversities faced by different leaders, it becomes evident that business organisations are becoming colleges, or continuous learning centres, attached to the conceptual AOU. I am not talking about corporate universities. The concept of AOU germinated from:

- (a) Managers' queries about leaders' experiences in handling difficulties, facing hardships and failures. Were there any common pitfalls which could be avoided, and what could be practised to overcome similar situations?
- (b) Leaders themselves saying that in top leadership positions they look for such qualities and competencies that can ably navigate the organisation through adverse situations.
- (c) The psycho-philosophical dimensions that come up for discussions in various forums.

The first Jewish Prime Minister of England, Benjamin Disraeli said, *"There is no education like adversity"*. That, I discovered, was the foundation of grit in these leaders. If "continuing education" is a need of the 21st century leadership training, then it is incumbent upon business leaders to put their fast trackers on hardship postings and the most difficult assignments. This practice existed in the foreign service, armed forces and civil services.

Such complex assignments and classroom training provide participants with an integrated view of ground realities. Management development and training has become a specialised craft. Trainers use modern techniques of simulated games, case studies, group discussions and outdoor physical exercises (rafting, rock climbing, etc.). The package inputs help in changing mindset, leadership styles and team work functioning. It enhances awareness about oneself, others and the organisation.

Leaders who face adversity and failures during their voyage of business growth feel that the attributes they possessed gave them the grit, resilience and fortitude to survive and grow, and a passion to excel. These leaders think that such attributes can be instilled in their managers.

Dharni Sinha's research on *Leadership in Unpredictable Times* showed that resilient leaders had a definite personal profile, which integrated seven characteristics and was reflected in their behavioural patterns. The characteristics he found matched many earlier studies carried out here and abroad. What is pertinent is that he identified them whilst organisations were passing through the unpredictable times.

It seems that the nature of change also changes but the characteristics of leadership remain constant. They provide guidance in future turbulence as well:

1. clarity of purpose embedded in values
2. strong personal identity
3. self-driven, self-motivated
4. commitment to life long, continuous learning
5. active personal and professional networks
6. well-articulated internal standards
7. action orientation

The in-company training and development is basically on the job, wherein one learns to face adversity, supplemented by experiential inputs through a variety of need-based programmes. In addition to all the behavioural training, there are urgent needs to focus on Sinha's recommended actions. I would add the following:

- Developing resilience, grit and patience in facing adversity
- Intellect to intuition
- Biographical studies
- Story-telling
- Philosophy of integral development
- *Upasana*, the vital discipline for achieving success and significance

To gain acceptance for behaviour-oriented training, it is imperative that the CEO's faith and commitment are visible. It would do a world of good if he is seen relieving executives for training, and making special efforts to put them through hardship module on the job.

Also, those who failed or succumbed to adverse circumstances candidly confess that they failed to develop a comprehensive perspective, and skills to find a way out of the quagmire. That is my experience too; failure is never fatal. Quite a few failures are due to lack of self-introspection or correction, a lack of nerve in handling complex interpersonal relationship and political issues.

In my experience of major organisational restructuring, the factory heads of departments did not become the heads of a division, especially where marketing and factory responsibilities were grouped together. However, the marketing heads attained those positions rather easily.

Barring certain exceptions, marketing executives did not succeed in handling factories or gaining acceptance among their manufacturing colleagues. Those who succeeded were sensitive to the emotion-choked atmosphere of the factories. They were prepared to understand and learn the ropes of a different ball game.

The reason for many not succeeding is simple. Managing factories is a hardship because of the high interconnectedness of issues, groups, people, unions, and different leadership styles, functioning in a closed environment. It requires a high level of emotional intelligence to handle ambiguous, seamless and fluid situations with patience and foresight. Marketing chiefs did not possess that skill set or did not show a desire to learn it. The learning curve had dipped even before they reached 50.

In the new regrouping, functional silos have been broken. Transparency in operations, sharing information and communication across functions has improved considerably. Companies now operate in the knowledge economy. This paradigmatic change compels them to think that they cannot provide value-added product-service package on the high end of technology unless they acquire cutting-edge proficiency in action.

Success is not measured in IIT or B school degrees, and jobs at Infosys or Wipro. Nor is it measured in Citibank-like postings in US for a couple of years, before hopping over to another company. To manage change, one needs to become stable in a job, and not jump as soon as the ship faces rough weather. Success is never final; it does not give durable prosperity. Says Edward de Bono:

Any style of success must also include a style of failure. Failure takes different people different ways. It can utterly destroy or build a person's confidence; it can activate a spiral of depression or be a stimulus.

Sydney Finklestein, Professor of Management, Dartmouth's School of Business, did a study of 51 companies in the UK, the US, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Australia and South Korea, and wrote an interesting book titled *Why Smart Executives Fail*. Companies like Satchi & Satchi, Motorola's Iridium project, and Wang Labs also feature in the book.

These companies had records of success. The leaders were not rogues or foolish. They did not lack perspective or intelligence. They were knowledgeable. Six factors contributed to failures:

1. not coping with innovation or change
2. brilliantly fulfilling the wrong vision
3. ignoring vital information
4. misreading the competition
5. clinging to an inaccurate view of reality
6. identifying too closely with the company

Human beings try to avoid the repetition of their mistakes and failures. The latter have, therefore, cultivated an uncanny art of sneaking through when we become complacent, lower our guards or are even temporarily possessed by the persuasive spell of our egos.

In the explosive growth of *positive thinking* literature in the last three decades, many people became somewhat blind to the ground realities. Hope and optimism are necessary for sound health and growth. One cannot ideate a positive future without them. But, one must ensure that they do not make one

impractical. Everything is not rosy once one joins a good company. That's why there is the need to carry both success and failure styles in one's style guide.

The fundamental message of cataclysmic change is: be ready to face and learn from unpredictable, severe hardships. The cry for mindset change is heard all over. However voluntary change is 5 per cent, and enforced one is 95 per cent. Initiating change in oneself is difficult because it requires the confrontation of one's ghosts, one's SWOT. Hence, one prefers to shelter behind a mask, until one's employability and survival are threatened. If one is ambitious, one might take cognisance of change because one's chances of promotion and growth may be in jeopardy.

Enforced change comes from socio-economic pressures, legal compulsions, threats to reputation and public image, and inimical forces released by God. When such circumstances entrap one without any alternatives in sight, one perforce begins to change.

However, those who are self-conscious (and their numbers are growing) equip themselves to face change proactively. There is also a realisation among some people that freedom is difficult to handle unless we change responsibly. The constellation of new adversarial forces holds out hope and alternatives for self-aware knowledge workers to change themselves. This book presents role models. And there are many others around one, whom one would find, if one sees and observes differently!

The paradigm change in my thinking was stimulated by the daunting process of transmutation underway in almost all organisations. Adversity, I see, is constant. It recurs frequently. When one starts handling adversity adroitly, one learns to spot opportunities. A reassuring Welsh proverb, *adversity brings knowledge, and knowledge wisdom*, puts one on the path of hope if one enrolls in this unconventionally conceived abstract university for continuing education!

TAKE-AWAYS

- This institution of practical learning can be nicknamed AOU.
- While talking to leaders—Amrita Patel, Jamshed Irani, Mallika Srinivasan, Prathap Reddy, Simone Tata, Vaman Kamath, and Venu Srinivasan for *Exemplary CEOs* and Narayana Murthy, Anu Aga, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Raghunath Mashelkar, Verghese Kurien, Deepak Parekh and many others—for *Thought Leaders*. I went with them on an astounding journey of the difficulties they encountered and the way they surmounted them with determination.
- It proved the maxim: *there are times in everyone's life when something constructive is born out of adversity.*
- The concept of AOU took birth in a cubicle of three ingredients: *one*, managers' questions on how successful leaders handled difficult situations and/or failures; *two*, while spotting talented performers, leaders look for crisis handling competencies that they have acquired; and *three*, philosophical debates that take place in various forums on such vexed issue.
- In addition to the known characteristics of resilient leaders and the in-company grooming on the job, it is essential to supplement the growth with programmatic inputs.
- These would include biographical studies, story-telling techniques, philosophy of integral development and transition from intellect to intuition by adopting a devotionally methodical approach—*upasana*—towards achieving not bland success but success with significance.

- The theme of AOU's syllabus is embedded in the belief:
*Adversity brings knowledge and insight into spotting opportunities,
which in alchemised capsules provide practical wisdom.*

A path treaded with discipline and devotion (Upasana marg) can lead a person to live individually a life of significance, and collectively to revitalise organisations and institutions.



Is There Anything Spiritual about Globalisation?

*“Yadeva Vidyaya Karoti Shraddhayopanishada
Tadeva Viryavattaram Bhavati”
(Whatever is done with knowledge, faith, and attitude
of Upasana becomes most vigorous and fruitful.)*

—Chandogya Upanishad (1.1.10)

Globalisation through market mechanism has not rectified the global disequilibrium. Some would argue that it has further eroded the global balance. The economic life has become inane. However, no country will be able to help restore its own balance or the world equilibrium by remaining isolated from the forces of globalisation.

It is only through gainful participation in global change that we can strengthen our economic growth. To achieve this objective, we need more transformational leaders who can rejuvenate organisations and institutions. Never before was this need so acute and urgent.

Against this background, the following chapters explore the spiritual perspectives of globalisation. It describes how a path treaded with discipline and devotion (*Upasana marg*) can lead a person to live individually a life of significance, and collectively to revitalise organisations and institutions.

We could not ride the boat of industrialisation due to the exploitative goals and policies of British. Later, we missed it by engaging in Marxist-Socialist ideology. Nor did we have the protestant Calvinist work ethic, nor the Zen tradition of perfectionism found in Japan.

Perfectionism comes naturally to the Japanese. They have a terrific concentration on their work—whether in carpentry, wire wielding, painting, silk weaving, archery or swordsmanship. That kind of focus has religious roots rather than economic ones. The success of its quality movement is due to these ingrained habits, and the spirit of nationalism.

We had neither of the above preconditions available as launching pads for our industrial growth. *Bhagwad Gita's central message on Karma Yoga was shamelessly consigned to the dustbin by promoting labour aristocracy, anti-work ethic, and deadly labour laws, all patronised by undisciplined socialist governance.*

It compounded our tragedy in that our government could not establish command or control, of either the Russian or the Chinese variety. Our professional protestors, with government connivance, promoted indiscipline and landed us into man-made chaos.

For industrial progress, a nation requires a very high level of discipline either imposed by dictatorial regimes or built into the cultural fabric of society. Rational utilitarian economic models alone do not guaranty economic prosperity. A senior social scientist at the Rand Corporation, Francis Fukuyama, confirmed this when he said that human beings frequently do not act like rational utility beings in any narrow sense of the term utility, but they invest economic activity with many of the moral values of their broader social lives.

Fukuyama also found that the degree to which people value work over leisure, their respect for education, attitudes towards family, and the degree of trust they show towards their fellows, all have a direct impact on economic life, and yet cannot be adequately explained in terms of the economist's basic model of man. The correlation is difficult to establish.

In India, we do respect education and family responsibilities, but we had stopped valuing work under the negative influence of unproductive labour laws, and politicisation of the entire industrial and commercial working class. Our trust levels deteriorated rapidly. As against this, the migrant Sindhi, Jain, Sikh and Gujrati communities have done extremely well abroad with exactly the same set of values, identified by Fukuyama in *TRUST*, and Kotkin in *TRIBES*. *Tribals have trust amongst themselves, whereas tribes of professionals have it in the least!*

For businesses to prosper, or for political organisations to become stable, spontaneous sociability is required. In this respect, we suffered from the centuries old baggage of religion-language-caste configuration, which has been inflamed by politicians rather than contained. As a consequence, we do not have high secular trust levels.

Our upbringing, habits, norms and traditions determine our preparedness to mix socially, lend money to each other not in

times of difficulty alone but also for business. It widens the social network and builds social capital and trust. This has not happened.

However, our community-based trust levels have always been fairly high. This is the reason Gujaratis, Parsis, Marwaris, Sindhis and Jains are able to do business. Their spontaneous sociability and social capital is solid. Kotkin gives many examples of the spread of these trading communities over the continents across the globe.

Sindhis uprooted from their homeland Sindh, Pakistan, have dispersed globally and captured business. There is a remarkable story of values inculcated by the Hindu religion—values like thrift, belief in education, strong family ties, self-help, entrepreneurship and communal living. It is quite inspiring to say the least.

The system of money transfers across the global tribes of Chinese, Koreans, Jews, Gujaratis, Sindhis, etc., rose out of such family-community considerations rather than merely economic ones. The volume of money transactions through private channels must have been in trillions of dollars a few decades back. Now that they have become established and naturalised citizens of their respective countries, transactions may occur through official banking channels.

The progress of the business world was powered not only by channelling the destructive energies of the warrior class into commercially adventurous tribes. Adds Fukuyama in *TRUST—The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*:

It seems that what has happened in the modern world is spiritualisation of economic life and the endowment of the latter with the same competitive energies that formerly fuelled political life.

The first step to globalisation was taken at Brettonwoods in 1944. World bodies like the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, ILO, WTO, GATT, etc., came into being one after another. However, there was little, if any, market globalisation in the period from the fifties to the eighties. The dissolution of USSR in the early nineties, coupled with advances in IT, particularly Internet technology, gave a boost to economic globalisation.

It was a paradigm shift for the socialist countries that opened up their markets to the forces unleashed by western technological advances. The socialist governments of Asia, Eastern Europe, China and other parts of the world had to give in because of near bankrupt economies, and public demands for market reforms. However, there is a strong feeling that the utilitarian philosophy of marketing every facet of life is promoting consumer values and homogenisation of cultures, thus inviting human and environmental disaster. There are two telling observations, in this context, which merit reproduction:

The World Bank chief economist Joseph E Stiglitz:

The West has driven the globalisation agenda, ensuring that it garners a disproportionate share of the benefits at the expense of the developing world. The result was that some of the poorest countries of the world were actually made worse off.

The leading authority on international money management, George Soros:

Many people, particularly in less developed countries, have been hurt by globalisation without being supported by a safety net; many others have been marginalised by markets. The heedless pursuit of profit can hurt the environment, and conflict with social values.

Since the labour movement is on the retreat and socialism on a stretcher, there is no counter-effective force to unbridled free-

market capitalism. The World Social Forum and the resurgence of religions have just started gathering some momentum. However, the spectre of job famine, dependence on governments and the sheer incapacity of a large mass of people to do something on their own are daunting problems for which these movements have no solutions.

The pathologically anti-government militant leaders, who organise protests at the drop of a hat, do not have alternative manifestos either. When they come to power, they realise that the management of the economy is embedded in the international geo-political and financial network. It functions on its own socio-politico-business agenda. It compels them to abandon their idealistic promises, or do something half-hearted, face saving gimmickry.

Very few militants turn into mystics to carry the masses with them like Vaclav Havel, who said:

We cannot devise, within the traditional modern attitude to reality, a system that will eliminate all disastrous consequences of previous system. In a world of global civilisation, only those who are looking for a technical trick to save that civilisation need feel despair.

However, those who in all modesty believe in the mysterious power of their own 'being', which mediates between them and the mysterious power of the world's being, have no reason to despair at all. This reassurance from a sensitive poet, an experienced militant thinker and a ruler of Havel's stature should give us the confidence that our mysterious capabilities will shape human destiny towards more order than chaos.

The fact of the matter is that businessmen do thrive in unstable conditions, paradigm changes, technology jumps and demographic shifts, even without reading Tom Peters' *Thriving on Chaos*. The

inequities in wealth, consumption patterns, epidemics like AIDS, malnutrition, environmental degradation and stark poverty in parts of the world are all issues which governments on their own are unable to handle, let alone solve. They are, therefore, coming to the doorsteps of the corporate world, which is struggling to add value and create wealth in market marathons. They must flourish. Unless they create wealth, none of these problems can be tackled.

My curiosity drove me to find out if there was any spiritual base to this upheaval. What is functional behind the conspiracy of these events? We start seeing the spiritual profundity in mind-boggling happenings when we go beyond logical thinking and scientific reasoning.

By criticising the West's intentions and despairing at technological advances, one is not able to fathom what is behind this change, this illusion (*Maya*), this reality. One has to move beyond one's perspectives, assumptions, and pet theories to implore the "third eye" or "sixth sense" to throw light on it. Gradually, the path gets lit. The dilemma had been badgering me for seven to eight years. I allowed the structural tension to raise its own questions, collect data and search for meaning and solutions. It took me three years to present these findings to you.

The resurgence of religions and spread of *yoga* in the last 40 years, the flurry in temple building activities, and the reams of new-age literature, are pointing to some silent convergence in thinking, taking place on a global level and lifting us from the abyss of extreme bipolarities.

My memory lane took me down to the late sixties at Marks & Spencers, Oxford Street, London. While seeing the *Hare Krishna*, shaven-headed, dhoti-clad devotees of western origin singing *bhajans*, I wondered about the meaning behind the movement. The upsurge in the west for studying eastern religious practices

was on the increase, making me think, is there any order unfolding right in front of us?

There were other movements belonging to Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Bahá'í, and other religions that were also spreading. The spread of *yoga* was providing peace in stable postures (*Aasana*) to the roving minds of the westerners. Bookshelves carrying catchy titles on humanism, self-help, leadership, meditation, and such other topics were multiplying in Europe and US. All these developments lead me now to conclude that global spiritual awakening underwent a paradigm shift.

Parallel to these developments, a conviction was gaining ground in the East that materialistic perspective had to be adapted to the spiritual one. We could not have fed our people on the philosophy of fasts. Aspirational goals of the society embraced creation of wealth and prosperity as primary requirements for the alleviation of poverty.

These metamorphoses in the East and West about the exact relationship between material and spiritual orders is leading towards the spiritualisation of economic globalisation. It has led to the rejuvenation of religious institutions and a competition between religionists to interpret and communicate the values in new jargon using the most modern devices and media. It is not revivalism of the religions as is commonly understood. It is a reinterpretation movement with much broader frames of reference.

One difference is noticeable: there is no dogmatic assertion. It is resulting in the acceptance of other points of view. The world is being seen through different lenses, and that's a great leap forward when we know that something deep within us tells that the traditional view is the truer vision.

While searching for a set of assumptions and values that are shaping the destiny of four interdependent variables like globalisation, governments, organisations and individuals, Ira Rifkin's *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalisation* (2003) came in handy. Rifkin tries to make some sense of this economic and cultural upheaval in this book. He says:

... humans are programmed to search the inner cosmos for meaning, and recent world events underscore how important their religious conclusions are, to actions taken. Understanding how these beliefs motivate individuals is crucial if we are to cope successfully with the stresses

As many executives are experiencing, these stresses threaten to blow the world apart. It seems that the stresses are only aggravated by globalisation and are unlikely to reduce their pace and intensity in the near future.

My interaction with many leaders gives me the toehold to say that they have a strong foundation in spiritual belief systems. I did not specifically discuss spiritual issues with each leader. However, in the course of the conversation it came up naturally. They have abiding conviction in that spiritual forces are guiding world events like globalisation, progress in technology, the future of their organisations, and their own leadership function. Their faith does not go anywhere near fatalism. It is firmly rooted in *Karma Yoga*.

Prathap Reddy, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals, feels that we have built walls between our inner strengths, i.e., potential, and what we have performed so far. We are unaware of God's bounty. If we knew only how to tap it, we would get much more. Prathap's faith in God, gurus and the coincidences in his life look to me as a function of his heart. Said William Wordsworth, "*Faith is a passionate intuition. It is a spiritualised imagination*".

In any case, Prathap is a heart surgeon passionately putting his *mantra* “Tender Loving Care” into action at his Apollo Hospitals, to make India a global healthcare destination. His faith deepened as he started practising meditation. Now it has become a part of life. As soon as he sits in his car, he takes off his shoes and starts meditating. I once observed this practice when we drove together to the Chennai airport. With his permission I interrupted it for a while to finish my list of questions.

I had discussed the spiritual aspects with some thought leaders: Ravi Khanna of Controls and Switchgears, and Dhananjay Bakhle of Aventis Pharma come to mind. They have gurus who guide, and their spiritual leanings are a great source of strength to them.

Meditation is central to all processes that enable transpersonal development. Easterners always believed in the benefits of meditation, westerners did not until the sixties. Their interests widened and deepened once they were able to get scientific proof of its positive effects on blood pressure, heartbeats and most of the other aspects of physical and mental health. Since then, there has been a veritable explosion of professional, popular and research interests. It was reported that over six million Americans had taken to serious meditation by 1980. Current guess, fifteen million!

Those who did not talk directly about spiritualism, also gave me the impression that their belief system is not too different. Spiritual forces are operating at inflection points and have invisible links that cohere to take individuals, organisations and globalisation towards a new unfolding world order.

This new world order is ushering in a new global civilisation. That's why the boundaries between different nations, sciences and cultures are becoming porous and blurred. We have moved from agricultural to industrial, to technological, and now to

knowledge revolution. This knowledge revolution is taking us away from land-based traditional cultures.

Culture forms, whereas civilisation transforms. Both are developmental processes with no fixed life spans. In fact, they are overlapping cycles in constant interaction between two opposite and complimentary forces, whether you call them *Yin-Yang*, *Male-Female*, or whatever.

As with every other civilisation, this one has its own characteristics. It is taking us beyond dualities now that we have enough experience of them. Dualities gave us the experience of relationship and mutuality, which made us realise that interdependence is inevitable. By teaming up, we have to move beyond, although the future will polarise the past. According to the composer, philosopher and poet Dane Rudhyar, no culture is omniscient, omnipotent or permanent. In *Culture, Crisis, Creativity* (1977), he says:

There comes a time when for the sake of our spiritual heritage, we should consider breaking away from established patterns and values that have been imposed upon us through culture. "Spirit creates, culture reproduces". Crisis appears to be necessary to the creative process.

We must allow space for our creative spirits to guide us safely through this unprecedented crisis. The process of civilisation is one of transcendence, and transcendence implies crisis. The act of walking implies a fall from a position of equilibrium. It is only through the medium of meditation that we regain our equilibrium. Rudhyar thinks that dissatisfaction, fall and recovery is inherent in the process of civilisation, and Man, archetypically, is the civiliser.

We can now imagine where Mahesh Yogi's movement of Transcendental Meditation came from; and why the Beatles,

artists, composers and professionals got hooked on to that wave of the future. Such transcendental developments, I would argue, indicate that the fusion of economic and spiritual globalisation is in sight. Quite a few of the leaders I studied appear functional on the transformational plane, consciously and unconsciously. The call for acquiring spiritual intelligence is coming from these changed ground realities, not from any crystal gazing.

A superficial understanding that spiritual intelligence means some higher form of intelligence is not sufficient for gaining mastery over it. It does not come by following traditional rituals, the daily *pooja*, standard prayers and all that. These have their own important place in our belief system, which is not belittled; yet we must know more about spiritual intelligence and the method to acquire it.

TAKE-AWAYS

- It is a well-established fact that entrepreneurs thrive on unstable conditions, paradigm changes, technology leaps and demographic shifts; in short on chaos.
- The origins of current worldwide turbulence are on surface seen in the convulsive occurrence of the phenomena of microchip revolution and borderless world, terrorism and insecurity, fierce domestic and international competition, ecological disaster and epidemics like AIDS, pollution and energy crisis; and widespread spectre of hunger and demographic disequilibrium.
- My curiosity prompted me that there could be a grand design of the creator/s behind these synergistic happenings upsetting the relative stability of the bipolar world of power blocks.

- The power dynamics produced boringly repetitive status-quoists' responses from socialist mindsets obsessively engaged in strangulating the economic growth through mechanisms of a variety of protests, strikes and "anti-work-ethic-job-security-guaranteed" labour laws.
- The creative universe, call it GOD if you like, saw through this impasse and decided to set in motion for us to grapple with a new set of forces to manage its affairs.
- There is room to believe that it took recourse to the philosopher Alan Watt's dictum that there is "*Wisdom in Insecurity*".
- Any excess is bad. We humans proved it with impunity. Excess of security to the tiny industrial labour aristocracy and its bureaucracy made it arrogant, and people idle.
- The world power blocks had excess power, which stalled releasing productive forces of the people and entrepreneurial growth.
- That creative universal impulse dissolved the Soviet Union and with it the power equations of all nations. It made a paradigmatic shift in globalisation, which unleashed new technological discoveries and freed the market forces to a new level of interdependence between cultures, races and nations. We are in the first phase of "order-chaos-order" cycle in the cusp of 20th and 21st centuries.
- We are facing new challenges and different *avatars* of terrorism. The thinkers of the world are realising that we cannot find answers to current reality by looking into history and taking recourse to a sleuth of traditional responses.
- Since the socialist regimes did not turn militants into mystics to take socialism to its proclaimed glorious goals, we have

to hunt now for new mystics who would open creative pathways for our integral development through dense forests of excesses of all kinds.

- In our search for new pathways, we need to tap the inner cosmos for meaning through spiritualisation of economic life. The signs of such a metamorphosis in human thinking are in the chrysalis stage, observable to discerning eyes.
- I was fortunate to get a glimpse of spiritualisation unfolding through leaders I interacted with. The process is very gradually spreading to other layers of society. Crisis appears to be necessary to the creative process.

If necessity is the mother of invention, adversity is the father of mindset change; and spirituality guides both.

Spiritual intelligence re-orders our habitual response patterns to stimuli from body and mind so that it makes a breakthrough in new vistas of self-exploration.



Spiritual Intelligence Leads to Integral Development

A spiritual approach bridges the gap between your inner and outer selves. Thomas A. Stewart, editor Harvard Business Review noted: a leader gets into trouble when there's dissonance between the inside and outside—what today we'd call a disconnect.

The Nature of Qualitative Transformation is such that we need to move from emotional to spiritual intelligence to develop keener insight into one's being, to bridge the gap between one's potential and performance.

In *SQ—Spiritual Intelligence, The Ultimate Intelligence*, Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall conclude from the experimental research:

The 40 Hz oscillations are the neural basis of SQ, a third intelligence that places our actions in a larger context of meaning and value, thus rendering them more effective. Here I am assuming that the 40 Hz oscillations are required proto-conscious

bits into consciousness. Our spiritual intelligence is rooted in life itself...

It grounds us in the wider cosmos. We know very well that life has a purpose and meaning within the larger context of cosmic evolutionary processes. This belief makes us human. Our business icons have to ready themselves to play a far more significant role in the current global crisis, at the micro Indian level as well as the macro world level.

Therefore, the need to have spiritual intelligence for integrated development is not a new find. The new development is the increase in our awareness about the nature of evolutionary processes. Technological advances and the Internet revolution are a part of that evolutionary process, which has awakened us to its profound impact on our lives.

We cannot remain aloof from the consequences of our inputs of intelligence, which have ushered in this technological civilisation. The key distinguishing feature of this phase of evolution is the speed, and the threat that if human intelligence does not take a leap with the same speed to garner benefits, then the economic and environmental losses will be disastrous.

The progress in brain research, behavioural and leadership styles, performance criteria for measuring results and eastern spiritual practices has reached a plateau. What is measurable is not worth measuring any further, and what is worth practising is immeasurable because it emanates from the realm of spirituality. People are stuck at Peter Drucker's observation "*What is measurable gets done*". However, research on intelligence brought us from IQ to EQ. We are knocking at the doors of SQ but afraid to enter because it's correlation to success, results, growth and contribution cannot be directly established and demonstrated.

When I asked Venu and Mallika Srinivasan about correlating EQ/SQ competencies to results, they were very clear that it is not possible to do so. Venu is convinced that these capabilities are vital for individual and company progress but that they are not chemical components, which can be assigned weights and taken into account for action in rational world.

Both said that flashes of brilliance, intuitive prompting, gut feeling, convergence of ideas or synchronicity are describable phenomena, but not measurable for the designing of a scheme on performance payments. Other leaders have voiced identical opinions.

We need more creativity to overcome our current predicaments. It means we have to enter the unconscious mind. The approach is through the development of SQ. It is, therefore, essential for one to know:

- Where one is now.
- Where one wants to change.
- One's deepest desires, i.e., life motivations.
- Which path to select among those available.
- Reflection which leads to understanding and wisdom.
- Which daily discipline to undertake; monitor its progress also daily.
- One's obstacles—guilt, laziness, fear, jealousy, anger, ignorance, obsessions, self-indulgence, etc.

When Drucker coined this phrase “knowledge worker”, he had a far deeper meaning in mind. He was not thinking only of technology, computer savvy graduates working in IT, Life Sciences, Biotechnology, Banking and other sectors at the high end of the value chain. His emphasis was on making the

knowledge worker responsible for continuous innovation, learning and teaching.

Although we are passing through a kind of knowledge explosion, following *jnana yoga* (yoga of knowledge) alone won't help unless we intersperse it with *bhakti* (devotion). By knowledge, we mean split logical thinking, more analytical than synthetical, more grammar than substance and meaning. At the high end of knowledge-value chain, we will not achieve breakthroughs unless we become creative, and for that we need SQ. And that will come through the practice of integral *yoga* with emphasis on devotion.

The reason is simple. People management makes one successful. One has to approach them, and influence them. It cannot be done through rational approach alone, nor with an additional flavour of emotional intelligence (after attending a seminar on it), because it is susceptible to being labelled as emotional blackmail. One has to be more creative in reaching colleagues' hearts. The ability to discover what one can do well, and enjoy doing it, is the hallmark of creative people. SQ helps develop that ability. One becomes a more genuine person.

Inspiring leadership means spirited and educative leadership. The spirit provides heightened energy, to connect people to a common cause beyond materialistic aspiration. It embraces the future as if it were the present and give impetus to bouts of creativity.

If one has spiritual disposition, the change in the pattern of one's energy use and consumption will have a positive impact on others. Whatever transformative disciplines (integral practices) one undertakes to study must be suitable to one's make-up. A few important traits commonly possessed by creative people are:

- A strong desire to develop intuition and find pattern and meaning

- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Attraction to complexity, adventure, unknown territory and asymmetry
- Flexibility of perception
- Ability to spot similarities in dissimilarities, and create order from chaos
- Willingness to float in uncertain situations by temporarily setting aside reality testing
- Readiness to explore latent capacities

Artists, scientists and initiates are generally supposed to have these traits. They weave a new tapestry of awareness that enhances our aesthetic sense and capacity for experiencing new meaning in our relationships. They select problems from their domain expertise and operate in the field they enjoy most. They have a childlike curiosity and tremendous interest in finding a solution to the problem they have chosen to solve. It's the same temperament that children display in solving crosswords and puzzles.

The motivation for a creative artist is neither money nor position, but a burning desire to find new expression. He tries to establish a new understanding by going beyond what is already known. His insights then present a reformulation that bears the stamp of his personality. This comes to him not from his intellect but more from deep feelings embedded in the assortment of his memorable experiences.

It is not necessary to control knowledge. That this is one unlimited area is welcome because it procreates knowledge, and therefore wealth. It also procreates wisdom when soaked in a spirit of devotion.

As against this, a CEO is required to find solutions, or to get someone, or a team, to find them. This is where his talent management, insight into capabilities, potential and learnability of people come into play. In one's exploratory journey, one has no signposts for developing new value-added products and services if one is at the high end of the value chain. One is venturing to make a breakthrough in grey areas, new territories, interdisciplinary and interdependent domains, which requires a very high level of creativity. All our psychological and somatic (relating to body) processes are interdependent. It is well nigh impossible to separate proactive outcomes and methods into precise categories. Integral yoga combines both.

Desired capacities, however, can be cultivated directly or indirectly, by reciting a *mantra*, *pranayam*, concentration on a single point, *upasana*, surrendering to a difficult regime of a seminary, or quiet meditation, whatever is suitable to the individual.

One cannot afford to lose one's grey cells. Only integral learning practices can keep them nourished. In *The Future of the Human Body*, the co-founder of Esalen Institute Michael Murphy says:

Integral practices reorder elements of the body and mind, as if they were artistic materials, into new forms of power and beauty, and for that reason require those personality traits that promote creativity in general.

Here also one identifies and adopts "best practices" from various fields like sports, music, art, science, athletics, aikido, karate and other marital arts, religions, craft skills, meditation, somatic disciplines, yoga, mathematics, philosophy, psychotherapy, etc. Such an interdisciplinary approach is more reliable. These practices are used in the development of attributes, traits and values, e.g., movement abilities like speed, flexibility, coordination,

vitality, self-regulation, perception of external events, communication, cognition, volition, empathy, desire that others strive, independence, courage, resilience, mathematical abilities, language proficiency, etc.

The exact combination of what training is needed can be decided by going through the literature on the subjects, and consulting experts and relevant institutions in the field. There are tools available to monitor progress. One should be able to endure long learning curves, and love practice for its own sake. Sharpening the skills to achieve mastery whether in archery or empathy is likely to be overturned by one's weak will and feeble self-discipline. If one expects instant results from transformative practices, one is on an ego trip!

Murphy feels we can anaesthetise ourselves and remain addicted to external activities through our outbound habits, or re-channel our energies into integral practices that offer creative alternatives to the social and ecological problems we confront at home and work.

Management is "do-able" but leadership is increasingly requiring more knowledge to handle equally knowledgeable colleagues and technically qualified managers. Transformational leadership transforms one's very being, and in doing what one wants, it takes one through the trial by fire (adversity). Venu Srinivasan covers this ground exhaustively.

In my endeavour to find out what I thought or did wrong in the failures I faced, I was brutally honest with myself. I always found some error here or there. I tried to share these occasionally but there was no interest in providing a fresh viewpoint. In fact, in counselling sessions also, I found that counselees were not prepared to dig deep. They wanted to hide themselves from their true selves.

I was happy to note that Danah Zohar also thought that one must have the honesty to admit that these are failures of one's own making. It is not that I have not met the right person or that I was not there at the right time. The kernel of truth is that I must want to be different, must long to broaden myself to a larger and more diverse group. Zohar acknowledges that these are the reasons the path of knowledge requires discipline in reflection, prayer, meditation and study.

TAKE-AWAYS

- It is well accepted by a large majority of the world that life has a purpose and meaning within the larger context of cosmic evolutionary process.
- The true meaning of globalisation grounds us in the wider cosmos. For us to access that holistic meaning the purpose of life must become clearer.
- That access is through spiritual meanderings. We have had our romance with IQ for centuries and lately with EQ for a few decades.
- Now the global conundrum is calling for a paradigmatic shift to SQ. And unless we access that inherent potential in each one of us we will continue to adrift in the global meltdown.
- In such a predicament one needs to overcome ones weaknesses housed in guilt, fear, jealousy, anger, ignorance, excessive indulgence in status symbols, financial security concerns, appreciation from others and such other addictive dependences.

- Artists, scientists, saints and such creative people engage in exploring the depth of meaning in the vicissitudes of life in order to anchor themselves into their being. They weave a new tapestry of awareness to enhance our aesthetic sense for experiencing life.
- Such brilliant minds world over now accept that spiritual intelligence—SQ or by whatever other name it is called—leads to integral approach with its accompanying practice kit.
- Spiritual intelligence re-orders our habitual response patterns to stimuli from body and mind such that it make a breakthrough in new vistas of self-exploration as good as our space exploration. In the twin penetrations, ‘progress’ is getting redefined.

The path to significance of eminent CEOs is trodden with a certain rigour of daily practice in the belief system they devoutly follow.

This prayerful practice—upasana/sadhana—is their battery charger which keeps them focussed on organisational goals; and more, on the path of excellence in life.



Upasana: A Path to Significance

Patience was Venu's KRA for development. Without meditation, patience becomes difficult to cultivate. In any craft, practice is the only means to success because the underlying principle of all development is practice intelligently, practice regularly, and practice hard. The practice in following the process of quality circles led to quality enhancement. The theory does not matter as much as the practice itself does.

Manuals are available for all functions whether it is quality, safety, personnel management, audit, manufacturing, internet, or whatever else, but what matters is practice. Therefore, companies benchmark best practices of best companies against their own to find out where they can improve performance.

In *The Benchmarking Book*, Michael Spendolini defines benchmarking as a "continuous systematic process for evaluating the products, services, or work processes of organisations that are recognised as representing the best practices for the purposes of organisational improvement". Regardless of industry, location, and ethnic background, it is a search for excellent practices across

the world, with which to compare one's own level of achievements.

For companies that want to become global organisations, benchmarking serves a good tool for improving performance. As much as managers need a framework for strategic thinking, CEOs need framework for plotting competitive advantage. Benchmarking provides that. After studying hundreds of organisations world wide, Aurther Anderson formed a six-stage scheme for incorporating customer-oriented processes.

In *Best Practices*, Anderson state:

In our practice, we have found that this habit of mind, this ability to seize the core insight of a best practice and then use it as a performance catalyst, is transferable.

Anderson recognised that there was indeed a pattern of three common, lasting messages to be found in these thousands of best practices. In the study of best practices, the intention is to establish a pattern in the meaning underlying the repeated messages conveyed by participants.

In this study, Anderson found that the companies constantly searched for better ways, developed serious, positive, and substained relationships with key stakeholders, and adopted a strong process-centric view of business.

What Anderson has done is identify transferable and adaptable practices for improving performance. Global search helped him change the lens. Breakthrough thinking came from focussing on universal processes—the key enablers. He found out the context invariant, culture-free variables that are transplantable everywhere.

However, certain leaders are exceptional because of their sustained performance, predictability in achieving success, durable

influencing capacity, and use of source code. They have high credibility, use vivid language with compelling evidence, and they connect emotionally. They are not paragons of virtues. They do not lay claim to great wisdom. They readily acknowledge their shortcomings and deeply revere their humble beginnings.

These findings apply to the leaders covered in this study as well. However, I went ahead to unravel the **one constant practice** that was catalysing their intuitive capabilities, emotional and spiritual intelligence, strategic insight, creativity, aesthetics, flexibility, and discipline to become functional and show better performance year after year. Said Lao-tzu, *“Knowing the constant gives an impartial perspective”*. It does. That “constant”, I discovered, is the discipline of *Upasana*—devotional practice.

Take music, orchestra, sports, acting, or any other field of art, and one will find it has its own disciplines of practice. The legendary coach of Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi said, *“Nobody ever attained greatness in anything who was not willing to continuously practice, drill, and rehearse”*. We know, great athletes spend a lot of time practising and comparatively less time in performing. When our cricketers increased their practice sessions, they showed a marked improvement in their performance. Our executives however, have no time for any practice. Executives spend no time practising and all of their time performing. No wonder they recycle their problems. It is understandable that they are pressed for time, but the desire to learn and make time for it, is low. In order to reach their targets and complete their tasks, they starve themselves of learning to lead better.

The key lies in mastery over old habits. Musicians rehearse so much that finally their fingers move on instruments as automatically as rhythmic breathing. Practice develops fluency.

To lead one through the prescribed practice lessons with discipline, one requires direction from teachers, counsellors, coaches, mentors and gurus. Although the common vocation of all these professionals is teaching, and their specialties overlap, they play different roles.

No matter how expert one is, or what celebrity status one may have achieved, one needs to constantly follow the discipline of practice. For example, to learn new skills, and keep mind, body, and crucial centres of performance in a well-groomed state, one needs daily practice. One needs to do specific practice, which has its own strict code of conduct and demands. In fact, to practice means to perform repeatedly with discipline.

The importance of disciplined thought and action was stressed by all leaders without exception. The reason is simple. *Opportunities are in chaos but the business lies in solutions.* And solution implies bringing order through systems discipline. If we apply that principle to ourselves, we find that the chaos is in our minds—stress is a symptom of chaos—and therefore, we have to first find order in the mind.

To bring order in the mind we process thoughts, sequence them, see patterns, segregate emotions, see through different lenses, understand the big picture, arrange the pieces differently, and see the emergent whole. But to establish such clarity we require a certain disciplined mental training.

Unfortunately, few leaders are good at inquiry while most are excellent at advocacy. Inspiring leaders move from habit to discipline. Drucker is right when he says, “Innovation is discipline”. Says Peter Senge, “Many have talent, but real learning requires discipline, the process through which we draw out our potential through commitment, practice, passion, patience, and perseverance”.

In *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J Foster (1998) divides discipline into three movements of spirit, which contribute to a balanced spiritual life. The internal disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, which offer avenues for personal examination and change, and the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service, which help us make the world a better place. The corporate disciplines of confession worship, guidance, and celebration bring us nearer to one another and to God.

And I like the definition of God given by Julia Cameron in her classic *The Artists Way: God Means Good Orderly Direction* (1992). When we open ourselves to exploring our creativity, we open ourselves to God. Here again, we are back to basics: *God is order, demon is disorder*.

One cannot invoke God unless one dissolves ego, because ego propels one to edge God out. Whichever way the essence is understood, it takes us to ancient wisdom. All gurus affirm that devotional discipline for developing SQ is a must.

If one's emotional intelligence is high, one will empathise well with the feeling of the other. However, changing feelings affect one's perception of things. One must be able to understand them in a larger context. That one can do if one meditates on improving one's perception. To perceive better one must focus ones attention properly.

It is important to pay attention to *how* one pays attention. The habits of placing your attention will determine what one knows. Dr. Paul Brunton said, "*The faculty of fixing attention at will and retaining it ultimately helps burn a way through the hardest of intellectual problems*". Where attention goes, energy flows.

Leaders emphasise heavily on practice that produces excellent results but they have not spelt out the details of their methods.

I term it “devotional practice” because I feel that they must have carried out their tasks with unwavering commitment, faith, intensity, regularity, vigour and a focus on results. They must have vibrated some feelings, though not necessarily from religious texts.

Devotional practices in Indian culture are described as *tapasya*, *sadhana*, *abhyas*, *upasana*. They convey, that practice permeated with *bhakti* (devotion) stills the mind. It awakens faculties of inner knowing. In *Meditation and Life*, Swami Chinmayananda says:

To cultivate the faculty of contemplation and to brighten it up in us is the content of all spiritual practices, Yōga-Sadhana. Meditation is a process by which the seeker develops in himself this faculty of contemplation, which is already in him.

Thomas Merton provides guidance in *Contemplation in Action* (1998):

The contemplative prays for particular intentions when he is strongly and spontaneously inspired to do so but does not make it his formal purpose to keep asking for this and that all day long.

Upasana, means devotional practice. The devotee chants prayers (*bhajans*) in a sitting posture in front of God. It has a different import. When one sits in front of God, follows certain rituals, prays, recites mantras, meditates, and performs all this with total faith, it is pure devotional practice. When one sits studying *Upanishads* with one's guru in total faith, it is devotional practice. The important point is the sitting posture, faith, and prescribed prayers for invoking God's blessings.

There is no need to go into the details of *upasana* here. It is sufficient to understand its significance for our purpose. The practice is carried out with feelings. One has to understand the deeper meaning of love, compassion and blessing. They are

communicated through those sentimental renderings. A devotee becomes so involved in those moments that he forgets his own existence.

The central concept is that when one is dealing with the mind one cannot make it receptive to intellectual appeal only. It is aroused to act only when one entreats it with feelings imbued with affection, faith, commitment, compassion and love. Such sincere imploring emanates from the heart.

It is true that life must become prayerful. Every moment must be soaked in the knowledge that power is the creator and I am that. For one to become so subsumed in His grace one needs to devotionally practice invocation. The difference between ordinary practice and devotional practice is that the latter is filled with feelings. It requires emotional imploring. In effect one prays to one's mind to respond, to provide insight.

Based on her work at the Foundation for Mind Research and Human Capacities Training Programmes, Jean Houston wrote *The Possible Human* (1997). Jean describes the new breed of heroes—people who have a healthy and spirited appreciation of the complexities and capacities of their own being:

They regularly spend time in discovering, refining, and applying the latent potentials of their own body-minds. They take time to prepare themselves so that they can listen to the rhythms of awakening that may be 'pulsing' from a deeper, more coherent Order of Reality.

I now recall what former managing director of Glaxo and Kodak, Humayun Dhanrajgir, said to those who wanted to launch an idea: *create an opinion and pulsate with enthusiasm*. After this comes sincerity and determination which should shine through presentation and body language. Humayun's gesture radiated a

vitality which electrified me into carrying on our animated discussion with added zeal (Pandit, S., 2001).

I would draw your attention to the phrase Humayun uses: *pulsate enthusiasm*. And Jean Houston uses “*pulsing from a deeper, more coherent order of reality*”. The connection I see in use of these phrases suggests that Humayun, although suffering from prostrate cancer (or because of it, i.e. suffering from a fatal affliction), must be unconsciously sensing some unknown order of reality, which was vibrating to enthuse others.

Take the example of *yoga* practice. It is not merely physical training or bodybuilding. It is *yoga sadhana*. It aims to train the mind and body. One does *yogic* postures (*asanas*) to improve mental and physical faculties. Along with meditational practices, prayers and chanting of mantras form a main part of the spiritual discipline of *yoga*.

In the context of the importance of devotional practice, Lin Yutang’s observations in the introduction to his book *Wisdom of India* (2000) is quite relevant:

India is a land of people intoxicated with God. It is my belief that it is entirely unimportant which God one worships, monotheistic or polytheistic; what is important is that belief should produce the true spirit of devotion in the life of the worshipper.

The western materialist assumption—fixation?—based on perceived wisdom seen only in “bottomline financial results” monotheism is being seriously challenged. This is where the paradigm change in thinking businessmen comes from. There is life here on earth beyond such financial goals, which needs attention and investment.

Lin Yutang believes that in modern terms, it is important that religion be efficient, i.e., it should produce results, and that modern monotheism is less efficient than when men believed in

the spirituality of trees and rocks, and mountains and rivers. Indians believed in the spirituality of the ecology of earth.

The current drive towards gaining SQ is leading the most powerful block of leadership in the direction of enlightenment. This may sound idealistic but the undercurrents—spread of *yoga*, inter-faith dialogues, spiritual literature, paradigmatic shifts, etc.—bear testimony to the transitions various societies around the world are going through.

We are concerned here with the intermediate step of rejuvenating organisations and ourselves to tackle with the change we face in our work life. We need integral development of attitudes and competencies to become better leaders. One cannot correlate each input to a specific outcome. It is not possible to separate methods and practice outcomes with great exactitude since our psychological and somatic processes are interdependent.

Integral *yoga* means the scientific study, and practice, of the body and mind. Although both are important, mental training is given precedence over physical training. The postures do not give desired results unless the dos and don'ts of mental training back them. The practices apply to the body and mind simultaneously.

The integral conscious engagement of the body and mind sharpens one's overall faculties. In *The Eye of Spirit—An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad*, Ken Wilber (1997) says:

It soon became obvious that to engage in genuine transformation required time, work, and sustained intentionality—in word and practice.

In support of this, Wilber says Michael Murphy came to the same unmistakable conclusion in his book, *What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America*, that integral practice is now the only viable mode for human transformation. In his work Murphy drew on the pioneering insights of Aurobindo.

To prove the point further I will cite the example of Nandan Nilekani, CEO of Infosys. He also heads the Bangalore task force for improving that metropolis. It shows high social awareness, commitment to a specific improvement cause, finding time for work, self-discipline, and such other qualities that a professional of his stature shows in taking his company to the high end of the business value chain. He has, in modern parlance, achieved work-life balance! To me, it means Nandan has taken a path of significance.

He learnt this from his mentor Narayana Murthy. This is *upasana* in practice, which means one learns by devotionally following ones guru. The word “devotion” and the concept behind it, have little value, if any, in the lexicon of western professional management. I dare to introduce it as USP of Indian management. It connotes affectionate loyalty (applied emotional intelligence) to ones mentor, the cause he stands for, and the values he cherishes. It is not religious devotion.

Even when one is learning programme, or design skills, one shouldn't do it mechanically. One should pour one's emotions in the practice; be devoted to one's teacher, mentor, coach, whoever it is. Such practice takes one beyond intellect to intuition and insight. It is not rote learning, memorising, or cerebral understanding. It is digesting, and self mutating.

The hypothesis I tested:

Vocationally integrated leaders are disciplined practitioners of certain integral daily practices. Such practices are not merely a mechanical drill of skills and routine remembrance of some eloquent proverbs. They're emotionally involved exercises for internalising values, visions, and refining competencies that become the drivers and raise the bar of their performance higher and higher.

My discussions with the leaders featured in this book have given me the confidence to say that the hypothesis has been validated. It has stood the scrutiny, as organisational results speak for themselves. My intuitive assumption that such leaders must be leading a fairly ordered life founded on daily disciplined integral practices, carried out with deep emotional feelings and commitment, was confirmed by the manner in which they responded to these issues. Their disposition unquestionably corroborated that they were speaking on the actual experience of their daily regimen.

More importantly, I trust my assessment that they were speaking and relating from the bottom of their hearts. Their responses reflected sincerity, integrity, and the mileage they accumulated from their daily walk on the path. That context-invariant “disciplined practice” is therefore the key differentiating factor between ordinary leaders and CEOs who produce sustained results.

The pagoda of excellence of any eminent CEO is founded on orderly thought processes, which s/he has cultivated painstakingly. Excellence is closely linked to order. I was interested in understanding the meaning behind such processes, rather than the ritual each one followed. From the elements of that “order” I have formatted a model easy enough for anyone to adapt.

Now that we have understood the spiritual perspective behind globalisation at the macro level and how leaders internalise the concept at micro level through daily *upasana*, we have a deeper insight into the source code presented in my previous book, *Thought Leaders*.

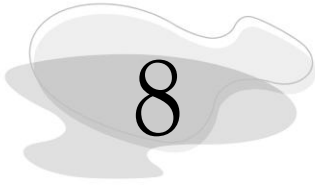
Such daily, disciplined, ardent practice of thoughts and action leads to the creation of value and wealth. We shall know more about its process and roadmap in the next chapter.

TAKE-AWAYS

- In all endeavours of human progress the theory does not matter as much as the practice does. It spells out the ability to seize the core insight of a best practice, which then becomes transferable.
- As much as adopting best business practices identified from benchmark studies of outstanding organisations holds in good stead for a new enterprise; tried and tested methods of practice hold key to best body building as also awareness building.
- The tonic of sustained performance of an athlete, player, singer, performer or an initiate is devoted practice, what is termed in music as *riyaz* and in spiritual literature, *sadhana*, *abhyas-nijidhyas* and *tapasya*.
- This one ‘constant’, viz., devotional practice, is the ‘faith’ key to integral growth. It tends to sharpen your tools of insight and implementation.
- It is the disciple’s discipline, passion, and commitment to continuous daily learning as distinct from rote learning that has the potential to open for her/him the hall of eminent.
- The central concept is that you are appealing your mind for integral growth and progress. It will respond not only to intellectual pleading but also, to devotional prayers.
- The path to significance of eminent CEOs is trodden with a certain rigour of daily practice in the belief system they devoutly follow. I call it *Upasana*.
- This prayerful practice—*upasana/sadhana*—is their battery charger which keeps them focussed on organisational goals; and more, on the path of excellence in life.

It is always the supreme management of mostly intangible assets like players, coaches, systems, selection processes, leadership and values that created extraordinary wealth.

After opening markets this principle applies more forcefully to all kinds of organisations and institutions.



Creating Value and Wealth

“The value you add comes from the values you hold, and wealth provides the power to do what you want, our task however is to fix the course of the future by creating both”.

—Anon

This chapter looks at the process of creating values and wealth that pathfinders have followed so far. It then lays down a road map that individuals and teams can follow to a better future.

Creating value and wealth is the fundamental purpose of business organisations and the principal responsibility of the CEOs that head them. It is the business of business to create value-based wealth. However, when moneymaking becomes the objective, as distinct from wealth creation, we procreate corruption.

In such a corrupt ethos, the society becomes bereft of value maps to guide. Values are maps, not territories. Honesty and truthfulness are principles, which form territories. They are guidelines, which have permanent values. As we go through, we shall see how leaders have created values and wealth; and along with it built tangible, and intangible but priceless, Indian assets.

Amrita Patel has been facing a conflict of values and vision with her mentor Verghese Kurien, the architect of “white revolution”. The differences are about the direction NDDB should take in further development of milk cooperatives and the marketing of products through tie-ups, to meet the challenge posed by MNCs.

Circumstances and contexts determine the values. It is pertinent to note that Deepak Parekh said:

Visions can be wrong, hopelessly off the mark, if they are not born from strong values, strengthened, and nurtured by an analytical ability to constantly assess emerging alternatives.

(Pandit, S., 2001)

The differences between Kurien and Amrita appear to be in their perceptions about the role NDDB should play in shaping its future, and the mechanisms it requires to realise the vision. It is essential to build the social capital on certain value commitments in the face of changed ground realities. Whenever there is a conflict of values at the top, growth suffers.

There are two urgent needs in India:

- Create wealth and social capital
- Reduce corruption to negligible levels, if not totally eliminate it

Both are interdependent variables of the value set. If we create more value-based wealth, corruption will automatically go down.

Victor Frankl (1963) identified a set of three central values: attitudinal, experiential, and creative. How we respond (attitudes) to difficult periods (experiences) in life, together with what we create, determine the values we practice in life. Adverse circumstances show one's true mettle, one's new reference frames, and shifts in perspectives. This is what we are seeing at Anand.

Jamshed Irani wrote thirteen action guidelines for himself. The one about values is worth recapitulating: *Preserve the core values of Tatas (and my own)*. In adding "and my own" Jamshed showed the significance of coherence in values required in a top executive to steer the organisation through a mammoth disequilibrium.

Covey (1989) thinks it amounts to being responsible for one's own first creation, to rescript oneself so that the paradigms from which one's behaviour and attitude flow are congruent with one's deepest values and in harmony with correct principles. When Jamshed drafted his own charter, Covey had not written his book. Even if he had, in all probability, Jamshed would not have read it because there is no love lost between him and management books!

Creating wealth is an age old vocation. The world has passed through periods: Stone age, Iron age, Agricultural age, Industrial age and Technology age. It is currently in Knowledge and Information age. These periods have been linked to the technologies of their time. The development from steam engine to turbo jets, booster rockets to robotics and Internet, procreated needs for advanced technical skills at each stage.

The investment patterns of merchants and entrepreneurs in factories, machinery, huge organisations, technology and scientific discoveries, underwent radical changes in these periods. Thinking on the management of enterprises, assets, manufacturing, logistics, strategies and marketing, witnessed concomitant shifts. We have

now transited from hierarchical to networked organisations and from the “strategy-structure-systems” to the “purpose-people-process” model.

These periods also witness certain disequilibriums in local and global economies. In such transitions, merchant-entrepreneurs make money by taking risks in forging a new combination of assets, which create new values.

As markets developed, a new class of business leaders emerged. They and their organisations perfected the art of exploiting the opportunities presented by chaos, and scientific inventions.

Technological, sociological and developmental dis-equilibriums, paradigm changes, natural calamities, technological complexities, conflicts and chaos, all present opportunities for creating wealth. If it was Andrew Carnegie and Bill Gates in U.S.A., in India it was Jamshetji Tata, Ghanshyamdas Birla, Dhirubhai Ambani, L. N. Mittal, Azim Premji, Brij Mohanlal Munjal, Rahul Bajaj, and Narayana Murthy, to name a few. *Business is embedded in difficulties and complexities; and opportunities are in providing simple solutions.* Such leaders:

- Creatively built physical, financial, employee, customer, and organisational assets.
- Made combinatorial and purposeful use of assets, which they traded to build social capital.
- Had the foresight, risk-taking ability, and capacity for creative hard work.
- Designed sturdy and realistic business models.
- Assessed life cycles of assets, and trends in market, which enabled them to strategically move across the paradigmatic economic phases of growth.
- Built companies, which are not just profitable, but create value.

In *Cracking the Value Code*, Richard E. S. Boulton (2000) provides the example of Chicago Bulls:

The long answer: it was the management of assets—although mostly intangible assets—that made the difference. It was the players and coaches, systems, and processes, leadership and values, customers and suppliers. The Bulls’ management built a portfolio of assets that created extraordinary wealth.

The recognised intangible assets which produce superior market value are: leadership, speed, talent, efficiency, innovation, learning, accountability, collaboration, shared mindset and customer connectivity (contact network). Attempts to assess the value of these assets on a 0 to 10 scale are made in some companies abroad. However, is it still not considered a very reliable measure and therefore has not found general acceptance. One can imagine how difficult is it to measure the portfolio of personal assets described in this book.

The management of the Chicago Bulls experiment is applicable to our national obsession—cricket! In fact, in the major paradigm shift to the “purpose-people-process” model over the last decade, these factors have acquired special significance. After having built assets by subjugating people assets, organisations have come to realise that only people assets multiply other assets.

What doesn’t get commoditised easily are the intangibles, like leadership, integrity, risk-taking ability, entrepreneurship, faith, courage and professionalism. Our minds think linearly, although the reality is non-linear. Of late however, there is a realisation that such intangibles alone can create lasting value.

This awakening is a divine gift of the knowledge era. At last, in the land recognised as the seat of eastern wisdom, knowledge (*gyan*) is regaining its lost status. Coincidentally, the Indian spiritual

diaspora is getting official recognition and social acceptance in many foreign countries.

The spine of this spiritual expansion is *yoga*. The sitting posture, *Padmasan* (the Lotus pose) has become a symbol of peace, tranquility, and balance world wide. Our presence abroad has acquired a new respectability.

Narayana Murthy, Rajesh Hukku, Kiran Mazumdar, Prathap Reddy, Arun Jain, Anji Reddy, B. Ramalinga Raju and many such people did not hold any land, gold, oil, or other natural resources; not any industrial processes either. How have they created such enormous wealth right in front of us in the last fifteen years?

1. Six breakthrough technologies—microelectronics, telecommunications, computers, new man-made materials, robotics and biotechnology—have interacted to create a new knowledge-based economic world. These wealth creators have built knowledge assets to create wealth.
2. We are a “service society” like U.S.A. and Italy, not a “product society” like Germany, Japan, China and Korea. The differentiating characteristics between the two are:
 - (i) service society—democratic, individualistic, heterogeneous population lacking collective discipline
 - (ii) product society—periodic dictatorships, homogeneous, non-individualistic and capable of high level of collective discipline
3. What gets commoditised gets done, viz. tangible goods and skills and short cuts. When we commoditised knowledge into IT skills and 24 × 7 service package, we established our brand as excellent IT service providers, the world over. We will therefore do much better in the entire service sector

like hospitals, hospitality, tourism, etc., provided our labour laws become more work-ethical and performance cultured.

4. Consumerism has crept into our society and the leftist factions of the media and press have started criticising this. Unless the “saving” to “spending” journey begins, how are we going to become prosperous? We must realise saving money does not make one rich.
5. Successful businessmen are good at cannibalisation. Eliminating one unit, product, service, or part, to save another is a necessity. Similarly giving VRS to some, to recruit the skills one requires is a need imposed by the massive change.
6. Radical technological change and developmental disequilibriums leads to high growth. It jerks the society to change paradigms and action.
7. There are no institutional substitutes for entrepreneurial change agents. One can provide capital structure to cooperatives, but they cannot create wealth unless the management is entrepreneurial. The reason for the dismal failure of our cooperatives becomes clear from this perspective.
8. A successful knowledge-based economy requires large public investments in education, infrastructure, data collection and storage, research and development. The corollary is that a knowledge worker should invest his private time in self-education, improving his infratitute and research into his personal competencies.
9. This new economy, with its flat structured organisations does not provide careers. How to build one, is the dilemma a professional has to face and resolve, if he loves to call himself a knowledge worker!

Lester Thurow's observations in *Creating Wealth* (1999) are relevant:

Knowledge creation requires highly educated skills at the very top of the skill distribution. Superior deployment skills in the middle and lower skill ranges allowed America to generate higher levels of wealth than Germany. In modern times, mathematically trained workers make just-in-time inventories.

His three words of advice for individuals are skills, skills and skills. *Brawn earns little and brains much.* We would add, *attitudes, attitudes and attitudes.* Said William James, "*The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind*".

In *The Creation of Wealth*, R. M. Lala (1991) makes the following profound observation:

If words and slogans could create wealth, the streets of India would be paved with gold. It takes more than that...the wealth created by an industrial house is to be measured not only on the basis of its balance sheet but also in terms of the skilled manpower, its advanced technology and in terms of its ripple effect on a nation's life.

Way back in 1963, my mentor, the late S. R. Bhise of Bank of India, in the course of a conversation on abilities and capacities asked me, "What is the age of your uncle?" I said, "He has three grown-up children". A usually serious Bhise gave me a quizzical look and said, "That does not tell me his age". It suddenly dawned on me that at 30, a person married at 18 could have three children in the age group 10 to 13. We both shared a smile and I left.

While returning to my seat it occurred to me: merely having the capacity to be a parent does not make one a parent. To become a

parent, one needs to procreate. To create something out of nothing one needs to be original. One may or may not need the stimulus to create. M. F. Hussain creates art on a blank canvass. Creating wealth is something like that. One brings that result into existence, which was not there before.

There was no steel city, named Jamshedpur, in 1907. But it was taking shape in the creative mind of Jamshetji Tata. Lala writes:

In 1902, five years before the site of the steel plant was finally located, he (Jamshetji) wrote from abroad to his son, Dorab, of what his dream city of steel should look like,

“Be sure to lay wide streets planted with shady trees, every other of a quick-growing variety. Be sure that there is plenty of space for lawns and gardens. Reserve large areas for football, hockey, and parks. Earmark areas for Hindu temples, Mohammedan mosques, and Christian churches”.

Jamshetji had seen it all in the mind’s eye.

It is noteworthy that Jamshetji, although a Parsi himself, did not propose to build an Agiary (Parsi temple). In due course, at a village called Sakchi near the meeting point of two rivers Kharkai and Sabernarekha, a couple of miles away from the railway station Kalimati in Bihar, Jamshedpur came into being.

This is creating. The creator had a clear picture of his creation in mind. He loved something before it came into being. This is proactive behaviour, not responsive. The focus is on creation and the creator is able to negotiate the structural tension between the result he wants and the reality he faces. It was unfortunate that Jamshetji did not live to see his steel plant come up.

A creator like Jamshetji stretches himself to pursue what he wants, step by step. His creative visualisation of what he wants,

concentration and capacity to send positive inputs to his mind in the entire creative process, is far more important for his desired objective to come into being. Such legends operate from third-person orientation, which helps them focus on the actual creation rather than their own identity.

One example is sufficient to prove the point. There are many others like Kasturbhai Lalbhai, G. D. Birla, J. R. D. Tata, Walchand Hirachand, K. M. Mammen Mapillai, Raunaq Singh, Anji Reddy, Dhirubhai Ambani, Shiv Nadar, T. P. G. Nambiar, Rahul Bajaj, T. V. Sundaram Iyengar, Brij Mohanlal Munjal, Azim Premji who created wealth in a big way. They did it by exploiting the opportunities presented by techno-sociological and developmental disequilibriums.

The important point to note is that whatever the background, these people mastered wealth-creating skills with a blend of rational and intuitive thinking. They trusted their abilities to secure results through sheer hardwork and infinite patience. More importantly they had implicit faith in the higher powers of God and a firm belief that they were born to create wealth.

Said Narayana Murthy:

There are only a few people who can lead the task of wealth creation, just as there are only a few surgeons, professors and lawyers...for heaven's sake there is absolutely nothing wrong in creating wealth by legal and ethical means.

Leaders with ambition and values drive successful companies. Dwijendra Tripathi, a business historian and author of *Indian Business* (2004) says about Kasturbhai Lalbhai:

Kasturbhai's reputation was disproportionate to his business power but he earned it because of his values and ethics.

Business legends have not taken an easy road to prosperity. Gita Piramal observed that Birla, Walchand, Lalbhai, and Tata hacked through jungles, built factories in villages, and transformed barren tracts of land into profitable assets. The contribution of such businessmen, who have placed industrial ethos in the mindset of peasants, is very significant and invaluable.

That apart, their patriotic entrepreneurship, their pioneering spirit and their promotion of education, is unequalled. These men are legends because of their rare sense of economic nationalism. Our current business leaders need to carry forward this legacy.

Many businessmen create ethical wealth and imperishable values to shape society. There are black sheep in all flocks. One has to discern the *sattvik* (pure) from *tamasik* (impure) by bearing in mind the 80/20 rule. Those who cannot create anything are cynical and envious about others' creations. Envy never enriched anybody. The problem with socialist ideologues is that they never chose between inequality and poverty. Creation of wealth is a difficult vocation. Few have the ability to venture into it. We must encourage such people to do their jobs.

TAKE-AWAYS

- It is the business of business to create value-based wealth. However when money making becomes the pre-occupation we procreate unhealthy disequilibrium, disasters, and corruption. In such a frustrating ethos society becomes bereft of value maps to guide.
- Visions go at a tangent if they are not founded on strong values and nurtured by a holistic approach and ability to scan emerging alternatives for creating social capital.

- The process of building social capital is through wealth creation, which is embedded in complex paradoxes. However, the opportunities are there in providing solutions through combinatorial and purposeful use of assets.
- If you crack the value code of successful teams you will find that it is always the supreme management of mostly intangible assets like players, coaches, systems, selection processes, leadership and values that created extraordinary wealth.
- After opening markets this principle applies more forcefully to all kinds of organisations and institutions.
- The worldwide cry for better skills and transformation of attitudes/habits and experiments showing substantial measure of success in meeting these needs is the greatest discovery in the last fifty years or so.
- To illustrate the above point, as example one could look at Late Jamsheji Tata who showed it at a village called Sakchi near the confluence kharkai and sabernarekha rivers, a couple of miles away from the railway station Kalimati in Bihar that Jamshedpur, the steel city came into being.
- The other example is Mr. Narayana Murthy's creation, Infosys—the IT role model, just to name one amongst many in that sunrise industry.

Creation of wealth is a difficult vocation. Few undertake it seriously. I am in the flock which shows grace to support and remain ever so grateful to those few that have the vision, competency and blessings of the universe to build the wealth pyramid of our country.

The current reality is hopeful with governments being business friendly, worldwide opportunities opening up in sector after sector, India is young, getting more educated; and socialism and unions are on retreat. It's quite a growth-friendly basket.



Creating a Better Future

Having said that, a dispassionate view of the current reality based on certain changes suggests that we have a better future.

- The government is business friendly. It is disinvesting from its huge loss-making portfolios. It is creating space by deregulating a number of unwarranted controls imposed on business.
- Phenomenal opportunities for growth are opening up, and more people are taking the entrepreneurial route. Small is beautiful has become a reality. In software industry also, 90 per cent of the firms are small.
- Young India is gradually taking interest in governance, politics, social, and environmental matters. They are demanding transparency. It is moving from “saving” to “spending” habits. Fortunately, it is not carrying much of the old baggage of communal and casteist thinking.
- The emergence of knowledge workers is a forerunner to the period of Indian renaissance.

- Unions and socialism are on retreat.
- The Week has recently published *Prophets Of New India*, a compilation of their “Man of the Year” series. They have profiled twenty social workers, who transformed the lives of thousands of people. They are relatively unknown but their vision has endured in the form of institutions and people to carry on the work. Prophets like Baba Amte, of Anandwan, Maharashtra; Dr. B. V. Parmeshwara Rao of Dimri village, Andhra Pradesh, Abhay and Rani Bang, both MDs of Gadchiroli District, Maharashtra, and 17 others profiled in the book are real torchbearers of Gandhian legacy. Society learns from them, loves them, and contributes its humble might. They are admirable role models.

The most important point is that these social workers do not go on protest marches disrupting normal social life and causing public inconvenience. They do not force the government to spend enormous amounts of money in policing their *morchas*, fasts, and other sterile fads claiming to represent the deprived.

It must also be noted that many young qualified graduates are devoting their lives to such noble causes. To opt for such peaceful transformational careers surrendered to the noble causes is one of the most significant factors in our renaissance. It has many lessons for the NGOs which have brought disrepute to a promising movement in our developmental efforts.

As I said earlier, a total free market system of the American variety, mindless consumerism, lavish styles of the rich and famous, is not the cherished future of business. Even Americans have woken up to this fact. In *Good Business*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2003) shows concern that if business continues to be oblivious to the responsibilities attached to the power it has acquired, sooner or later the immune system of the society

is going to reject the free market paradigm. The greens and world social forums have begun to flex their muscles.

A very small beginning is noticeable in the philosophies of American organisations like, GE Plastics, Amex Life Insurance, The Body Shop, and Des Moines Water Works, Semco in Brazil, which have undertaken social work, involving employees in decision making, etc.

However, the attitude, history, civilisational values, and culture of Americans are eminently different from ours, except for faith in democracy and individual freedom. They will take quite some time to come out of their free market OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder).

We have many examples:

- Wipro's involved in education
- Narayana Murthy's wife Sudha is engaged in social work initiatives
- Tatas have decades' worth of contributions to public life, from science and education, to community work
- Lupin's Gupta has adopted a village
- Excel Industries' Shroffs have discharged their social responsibilities excellently

Our record in this respect is much more admirable than that of other countries. What the Americans or the West do is not a role model for us.

The impetus to growth is borne out by the general boost in stock and other markets. The upbeat mood is here to stay, as many learned commentators confirm. The growth has its own momentum, and the youth of India will not allow it to halt. Even farmers' second and third generations are looking forward to a paradigm change in their life styles.

The connectivity of young India is more humane. It has crossed income and status barriers. The mixing of graduates from elite institutions, partially educated from *jhopadpattis* of the metros, and new generation farmers living in villages, is taking place. There are no income barriers to understanding each other. Bollywood has played a significant role in building acceptance between classes and segments of society. So also Internet, cell phones, and media images of modern India. All this change is visible to the naked eye, and the movies reflect it.

Arun Maira has shared his experience of a recent scenario planning exercise, involving people from different fields, viz. Jharkhand state, Keggfarms in Bangalore, Bharat Petroleum and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). These are pathfinders in business and communities, who are working to make change happen. The Generative Scenario Thinking approach was used to understand and align the “know-wants” of diverse people. It also provided insights into complex systems by combining many perspectives.

The driving forces were to facilitate local initiatives in strengthening infrastructure, new models and skills of leadership, and enable children and women to access relevant knowledge through new technology. What made an impact on me was the effort to propagate successful stories and build confidence. This is the most important gap in our training methods. We use case studies, but not group story building and story telling techniques for effective participation and motivation in training sessions.

Bennis identifies one requirement which enables a future leader to develop new models and skills in leadership. He should have the ability to identify, woo, and win the mentors, who will change his or her life. The real test of character for a leader is to nurture those people whose stars may shine as brightly as—or even

brighter than—their own. One has to be so self-effacing and self-sacrificing to become such a leader that it dissuades most. Amrita is finding it extremely difficult to nurture such a breed at NDDb, and also at the cooperatives.

In *Evolution and Business*, Gary Zukav makes telling observations on licentiousness, male-female principles, and authentic empowerment:

The economics of abundance is a direct reflection of the profligacy of life that is at the heart of the female principle. It will produce businesses in which the equality of the male and female principles is fundamental, as more and more individuals begin the journey toward authentic empowerment.

We are experiencing this difficult journey. The antagonisms between men and women and between business and environment have been there for centuries. But, Zukov thinks they will reduce and be replaced with new, harmonious and mutually reinforcing relationships between men and women and between business and the environment. The progress, however, might be at a snail's pace in traditional societies all over the world.

The “environmental health” of the planet earth is being damaged beyond recuperation. The movement to preserve the environment—forests, croplands, water resources, topsoil, ozone layer, etc.—started some forty years back. That process of awareness building has taken firmer roots in the last decade and businesses have woken up to their responsibility to preserve the national resources for common weal. The old paradigm of the west, based on science, mechanical systems, advances in technology and total belief in unlimited material progress, has driven them to demolish the walls of ecology and destroy its natural harmonic balance. The new paradigm is holistic, deeply ecological and recognise the interconnectedness and interdependence of all animate and inanimate systems.

In *A Systems Approach to the Emerging Paradigm*, Dr. Fritjof Capra, observes:

Ultimately deep ecological awareness is spiritual or religious awareness. As far as thinking is concerned, we are talking about a shift from the rational to the intuitive, from analysis to synthesis, from reductionism to holism, from linear to non-linear thinking.

There is a corresponding value shift from competition to cooperation, expansion to conservation, quantity to quality and domination to partnership. We see this value shift and the resultant friction in Amrita Patel's 'Anand' story. While facing stiff competition from MNCs, she is trying to regain her competitive position in marketing battles on one side, and trying to expand the vision of the NDDB and milk cooperatives to include concerns for ecology on the other.

Amrita is trying hard to make them own responsibility for that. This is a fight for values. Thinking based on Cartesian philosophy leads to fragmentation. Amrita with her integrative thinking is trying to put into practice a systemic approach to management of all resources in order to secure a balance.

The prime responsibility of business organisations is to create wealth and recreate time-tested values. In a discontinuous world, strategy innovation is the key to wealth creation. Strategy innovation is the capacity to reconceive the existing industry model in ways that create new values for customers and produce new wealth for all stakeholders.

Business leaders have tremendous power and society will not allow them to misuse it for wanton use. That means, the western obsession of mindless consumerism and unlimited material progress, which is a cultural anathema for Indians, will find no great takers over here. It is the job and responsibility of CEOs

and their teams to demonstrate holistic lifestyles, while shaping a better future through their organisations. And I dare say, quite a few are showing in action that maturity and common wisdom shown by Indians for centuries.

The reason for confidence, is our frame of reference in living a balanced life and our inborn proclivity towards spirituality. Our leaders will not easily give up this precious legacy. Or shall we say that the inherited conditioning of our great civilisation will not permit them to do otherwise.

The current ethos of successful business progress has been shaped in the last twelve years by Indian leaders. It is quite motivating. Many inspiring role models have emerged. The future now being carved out looks promising in the hands of current generation of young leaders. But the demand outstrips supply. We need more, and someone to show us the path.

TAKE-AWAYS

- The current reality is hopeful with governments being business friendly, worldwide opportunities opening up in sector after sector, India is young, getting more educated; and socialism and unions are on retreat. It's quite a growth-friendly basket.
- Not only the stock markets have been bullish like never before, despite recent bearish patch the businesses performance on social responsibility front is also promising.
- Our brand image abroad is sparkling and India origin expatriates are scaling new heights in the developed markets overtaking the best ones known internationally.

- Our awareness about ecology is not skin deep. It is enshrined in all Indian sciences medical, health, spiritual, rituals and the rest. It is all embedded in our DNA.

The reason for confidence in building a much better future springs from these new givens in the transformed scenario. It has changed our frame of reference. Our inherent devotional proclivity towards spirituality is our UBP—unique being proposition—that is taking the call.

Thought leaders made combinatorial use of traits, tools, methods, way of preparation and practice to give expression to their talents and convictions.

10

Cracking the Source Code

In *Thought Leaders*, I provided the source code of exceptional managers and entrepreneurs. The code was derived from my observation of the combinatorial use of traits, tools, methods, preparation, and practice that the 22 leaders made to give expression to their talents and convictions. For easy reference the findings are reproduced here:

- There are three clusters in the source code. All three interact and cohere to produce exceptional results. I call these clusters: Reflexive Search, Leveraging through Domain, and Value-Added Branding. Figure 10.1 shows the components of each cluster.
- At the heart of the reflexive search is the desire to make a difference; leveraging through domain involves thorough preparation to optimise ones skills; and value-added branding demonstrates that one stands for excellence in ones field.

Reflexive Search	Leveraging through Domain	Value-Added Branding
Conceptualisation	Focus	Stand for something
Commitment	Learning	Self-expression
Persistence	Methodology	Persuasion
Difference	Quality	Branding
Curiosity	Innovation	Positioning
Meaning	Preparation	Packaging
Reflection	Tools	Bonding

Fig. 10.1 Clusters of the Source Code

- It is the purposeful use of these clusters, which accelerates the thinking process and velocity of action in thought leaders.

TAKE-AWAYS

- Thought leaders made combinatorial use of traits, tools, methods, way of preparation and practice to give expression to their talents and convictions.
- These leaders reflexively search for adding value and making a difference to whatever they do using their domain expertise.

Reflexive search, leveraging through domain & value-added branding are the three circles that act as interacting wholes to produce synergistic action. The more they mingle, the more likely they are to produce an exceptional executive. Such Confluence (Sangam) of the tri-circles creates the individual's catchment of influence.



The Holistic Tri-circle of Influence

- **T**he manager's search to make a difference is the starting point, which encompasses a mode, a circle called reflexive search, which includes characteristics like commitment, curiosity, etc. These are not mutually exclusive traits. In fact, these traits collectively cohere to provide reflection.
- The second circle, leveraging through domain, consists similarly, of characteristics like focus and learning, which allow the executive to leverage his strengths in his domain, the primary field of engagement.
- The third circle, value-added branding, has characteristics like packaging, and positioning, which stamp the executive's value-addition with a brand name. The scheme of the interacting circles is given in Figure 11.1.
- The three circles should be seen as interacting wholes. They overlap. They are organic in character, and therefore holistic.

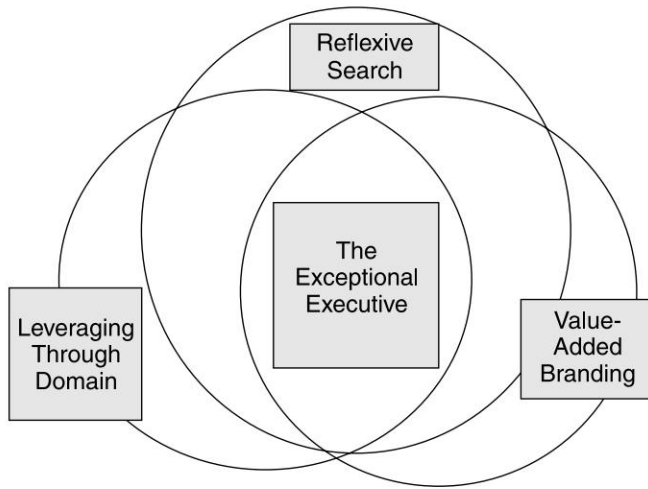


Fig. 11.1 The Tri-circle of Influence

The more they mingle, the more likely they are to produce an exceptional executive. Such confluence (*sangam*) of the tri-circles creates the individual's catchment of influence. The larger the width of confluence of design, architecture, and performance, the greater the influence. It determines whether the individual becomes a local, regional, national, or global brand.

- Each one of our exceptional managers is a brand by herself/himself—a role model of sorts. His/her influence zone depends upon what he has decided to carve out for himself. There are no zonal restrictions. All of them have accessed the source code to be where they have reached. The reach factor depends upon the vision, creativity, and the degree to which each one fine-tunes the component clusters.

These very practices, viz. reflexive search, leveraging through domain, and value-added branding, figure in the make-up of CEOs whom I had interviewed. My reflexive search helped me crack the source code only to discover that there are four additional context-invariant practices, hereafter called *assets*.

TAKE-AWAYS

- The first circle called ‘reflexive search’ is the leader’s search for making a difference through exemplary commitment and curiosity to find new solutions.
- The second circle known as “leveraging through domain” shows the leader’s focus on issues at hand and learning competency to grasp and digest little breakthroughs in every situation.
- The third circle titled ‘value-added branding’ seeks to get brand value from packaging and positioning.

The three circles act as interacting wholes to produce synergistic action.

*The in-depth taped interviews reveal a good deal of inner
thought world of the interviewee if the researcher studies
them methodically.*

*This is sure shot method of understanding the person
behind the persona.*

12

Revealing Interviews

The search was conducted through in-depth interviews, which helped me understand the persons behind the personas. I relied on my interpretative skill, which came to light when I had an interesting assignment at London School of Economics (LSE) in 1970.

Prof. Desmond Graves, who was then teaching us Organising Development (OD) at LSE, had worked on the project. He asked me to listen to the transcripts of interviews, study them, and state why their assignment was not successful. The researchers were not able to evoke the necessary degree of commitment from the Board of Management. Desmond wanted to know why?

I adopted the following method of study:

- Read the transcripts a couple of times
- Did a content and non-numerical analysis
- Recorded the salient points under heads like technological change, industrial relations, personnel policy, business strategy, and opinions/observations of some 14 board members against each topic

- Recorded recurrent responses using criteria such as DIF (Difficulty, Importance, and Frequency: in other words, what the interviewee found DIFFICULTY in explaining, or a DIFFICULT subject to comment upon, and/or mentioned it as IMPORTANT for some reasons, and/or occurred FREQUENTLY in the interview.)

While I was intently listening to the tapes, a clearer picture of the characters began to emerge in my mind from the words used, tone, and emphasis on pet themes. The profiles penned by me coincided with the assessment of the researchers who had actually taken the interviews. Desmond found it remarkable.

I could even figure out as to what disciplines they had graduated from, and their mental make-up, from the gist of what they said. I presented a model showing which character must have fought with whom and why, e.g. the operations director must have had a fight with the personnel guy, or the strategy chap with marketing director.

My main observation was that if a guy has graduated in statistics, and another in arts, and both worked only in their respective domains, they fight. In other words, core subjects lead to fights or collaboration. The personality types vectored in to make conflict worse or less damaging.

The opinions were horizontally lumped together on separate sheets of paper to find out, on which issues there was consensus or lack of consensus. I introspected deeply on all subjects and people, individually and holistically on the group. The model showed that the organisation was schizoid. There were major irreconcilable differences of opinion under the façade of consensus. Although some members of the board knew that there were conflicting undercurrents, they didn't know the origins.

I found that each one singly, and at times jointly, was greater than the team.

This study made a great impact on my mind. I realised that deep understanding of a person's thoughts culled from in-depth interviews would help to sketch reasonably reliable personality constructs, helpful in assessing the potential and correct fit for top jobs.

I thought I would use the same technique gainfully in book projects. The leaders' thoughts would take me to the core of their personalities, and they did. I was able to peep in their inner thought worlds and search for the foundation of their mental make-ups. The approach was integrative. It became clear to me that the seven integrative practices enabled them to create value, and become real assets and brands in their own domains.

To understand the meaning behind feelings, I had to keep the subjectivity of such exercise to the bare minimum. The intention was to understand the feelings (use of emotional intelligence) behind the rational answers. Therefore, the phrases used for explaining important points, the body language (because the body manifests what the mind harbours), the facial expressions, the voice, and the simple tone were all important to me.

There was not even a trace of arrogance in their demeanour. They all were transparent and affable. Their humility stood out gently and gracefully. Their sense of humour lightened the tone of discussions occasionally. They had thoughts with profound meaning to convey. I felt refreshed in their company.

I went beyond the hype and public image of these leaders to learn their drivers. I am not an aura reader but I could feel the texture of their integrity, simplicity, and creativity. Each one had a distinctive presence that symbolised his or her strength; the

ability to use a particular asset more gainfully, e.g. Prathap Reddy is effective in instituting a culture of *Tender Loving Care* at Apollo hospitals with his spiritual perspective. Likewise, Simone Tata adds to the reputation of Tata Brand through her aesthetic taste in creating the value-added products viz., Lakme and Westside.

TAKE-AWAYS

- The in-depth taped interviews reveal a good deal of inner thought world of the interviewee if the researcher studies them methodically.
- Listen intently the transcripts so that the voice, tone, and deep feelings immerse you into the inner voice, mindset and the meaning of the messages.
- Record the salient points made under different subject heads and rerun the tapes until you are sure that's the true revelation.
- Do content and non-numerical analysis.

This is sure shot method of understanding the person behind the persona.

Build a strong portfolio of personal assets, improve your performance through self-transformation, and organisational renewal, and in your own right become an exceptional leader, an inspiring CEO.

13

Discovery of Seven Assets

The four new practices together with the earlier three create a set of seven valuable assets. These seven assets have transformed organisations with conviction. That makes the people who use them inspiring leaders.

The four new assets are:

1. adversity, the driver of mindset change
2. the new leadership: spiritual perspectives
3. *Upasana*: globalisation, organisational renewal, and devotional path of significance
4. creating value, wealth, and future

The CEOs use these personal resources, i.e., assets to add to their strengths and make them durable. Their unique contributions make the difference, which multiply their assets.

The whole purpose of my search was to demystify the overemphasis on charisma and the "born leader" belief. I wanted to first analyse the elements of the alchemy, understand how it

functions, and then assemble a model for adoption. This, as you will see, has been done.

All CEOs have used the seven assets volitionally or when compelled, e.g. amidst adversity. They made virtue out of necessity by mastering adversity. They skilfully blended the assets to enhance their combinatorial use and value. The seven assets shown in Figure 13.1, alchemise leaders into inspiring CEOs.

The organic nature of these assets makes them holistic. When seen as overlapping circles or interacting wholes (Figure 13.2), the model looks like a flower. An enlightened CEO is like a lotus flower.

This circuit of seven revolving wholes renews itself constantly. It releases energy, enthusiasm, and confidence. The presence of the CEO is felt. Those working with him are inspired. When the person is stressed, tired, or sick, only rest and *upasana* help him recuperate. Leadership is difficult and taxing. That's why there is a dearth of inspiring leaders. We need more of them to create better future.

The three-year study, search, and reflection have brought me to the simple elements of a leader's chemistry. It is a rediscovery of the principal assets possessed by all leaders. It is the holistic, integrative approach to body-mind complex that becomes the knob.

Americans first took to *Hatha Yoga*. The attraction was to improve the body through physical exercise. However, they realised that the science of body, mind, soul cannot be mastered by a fragmentary approach. For balanced growth, the practice of integral yoga is essential. The objective is to keep balance but stretching is required for expansion and results. Each leader produces exemplary results through the combinatorial use of the assets. Situationally, everyone stretched one ingredient of the assets to get the desired result.

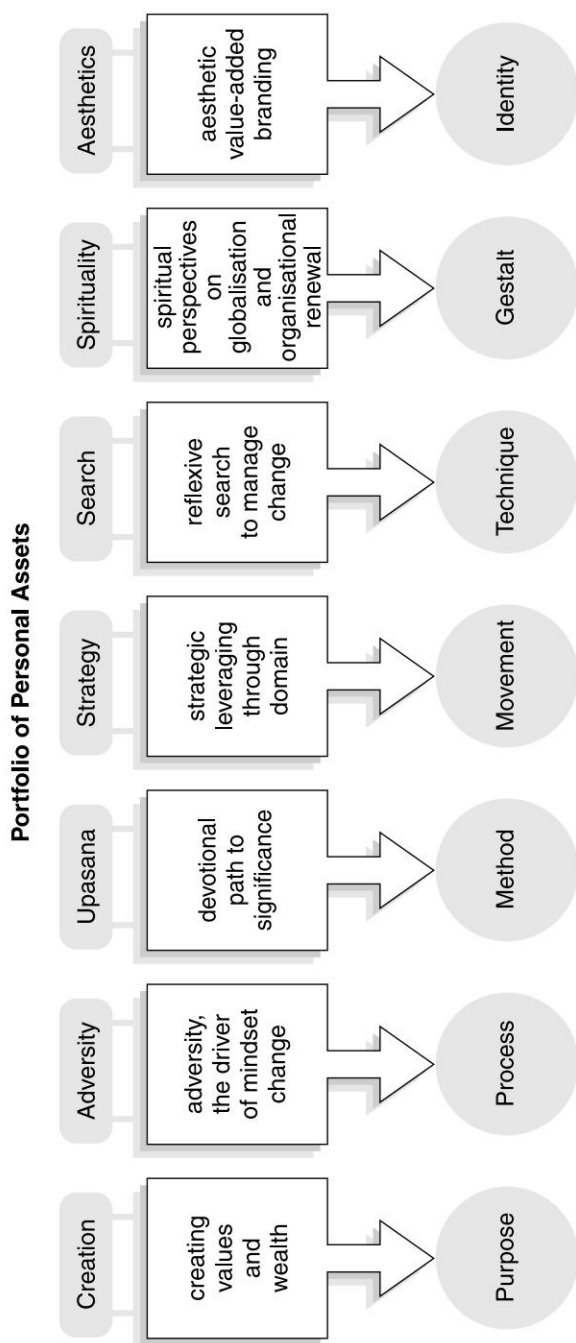


Fig. 13.1 The Seven Assets

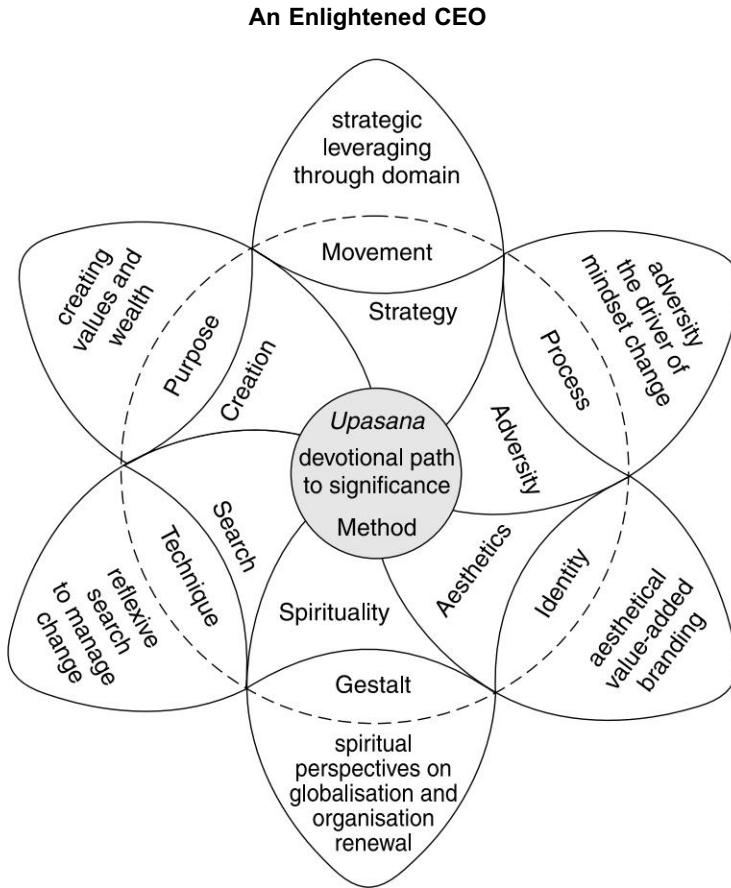


Figure 13.2 The Holistic Circuitry of Seven Assets

- Amrita Patel has taken a missionary approach to meet the demands of a new paradigm at NDDB.
- Jamshed Irani became the change agent to pilot the change movement at TISCO through reflexive search.
- Mallika Srinivasan leveraged her strength in strategy formation to lead TAFE through droughts.
- Prathap Reddy's spiritual perspective is guiding him to institutionalise a new "Tender, Loving, Care" approach towards patients at Apollo.

- Simone Tata's creativity opened up vast business space for Tata in aesthetics, through classy value-added brands.
- Vaman Kamath ensures that at the end of the day ICICI creates value-based wealth.
- Venu Srinivasan undertook the task of self-transformation through *upasana*, which qualitatively transformed TVS Motors.

What is important for individual managers from this unfolding scenario is to become effective through a process of self-renewal by the smart use of one's assets. Each asset is not measurable and even if some are, the whole is more than the mere sum of its parts. In any case, exact correlation of all assets to results cannot be established.

When management expects better results year after year, the standards and expectations rise simultaneously. One is compelled to raise the bar higher because of competition. The way to improve one's performance and tap potential is to first understand what successful leaders have done, and are doing. This book tells you precisely that. Following the role models, is a reliable age old practice.

The message of this book is:

Build a strong portfolio of personal assets, improve your performance through self-transformation, and organisational renewal, and in your own right become an exceptional leader, an inspiring CEO.

It is both simple and doable. These assets have universally yielded dividends. It is the self-cultivation of eminent leaders that stands out in the autobiographies, biographies, and other literature on them. Measurable and demonstrable achievements come from what is not measurable, the transmutation of assets. Mental chemistry defies measurement.

However, the discovery of assets and their transformation process are reliable guides for a leader's development. The best way to validate a model is to apply it first to oneself. In the last chapter I propose to do exactly the same, valuation of assets and validation of the model.

TAKE-AWAYS

- My studies lead to the discovery that there are seven assets in a leader which he skilfully uses to produce sustained exemplary results.
- These assets are capacities to:
 - Create values and wealth which fulfil the *purpose*.
 - Face the *process* of adversity for self-transformation.
 - Follow the *Upasana method* on the path of significance.
 - Adopt the strategy that plots the progress *movement*.
 - Use search *techniques* to find meaning to manage change.
 - Utilise *gestalt* skills analysing spiritual perspectives on globalisation and organisation renewal.
 - Seek *identity* through aesthetical value-added branding.

An enlightened CEO is like a lotus flower that uses these assets optimally.

The portfolio “Me Inc.” means one treats the body-mind complex as a corporation and oneself as its CEO.

14

Valuation of Personal Assets and Validation of Model

“It is the integration of a CEO's spiritualised personal assets, that create permanent values for the organisation.”

—Shrinivas Pandit

In the following chapters, I propose to do a candid valuation of the portfolio of my personal assets. The purpose of this valuation is to assess self-worth, and the applicability of the model. The model provides the criteria, and the self-evaluative process will test its validity. The model will then become usable to you.

Although organisations are becoming learning centres, in strict theory, an individual for them is the instrument, not the purpose. In the new paradigm he might become one, but as of today it is

not so. There is a view that all work should be a calling or vocation; that the wealth creation of business is as worth doing and as valuable as the health creation of a hospital. Charles Handy supports this in *The Empty Raincoat* (1995). He says:

...If I adopted a portfolio approach to life, a part of that portfolio would be the “core”, providing the essential wherewithal for life, but it would be balanced by work done purely for interest or for a cause. For “going portfolio or going plural”, you have to keep on growing your assets.

To build assets one has to keep one's skills up to date. Ultimately, the discovery of oneself is far more important than the discovery of the world. It is from this angle that I proceed to assess my core worth. The objective in making ME a test case is to provide a measure of authenticity to the model. It enhances my self-confidence in recommending the model to you. Also, I make no claims that I have succeeded in fully putting into practice all that is emphasised or recommended in this book. It is important to note that this is not my autobiography. The contribution of teams to my success is recognised fully. The exercise is sincerely carried out, and shared with humility.

Here, I treat myself as the property, the product to be evaluated. This is not a valuation of my estate, ornaments, securities, cash, etc. This is a valuation of my core ingredients in the portfolio of assets discussed so far. The portfolio, i.e. “ME Inc.” is portable and tradable if I want. Even otherwise, knowledge of true self-worth helps further enrich the quality of life. A portfolio means a loose binder or a flexible case carrying loose papers, pictures, and pamphlets.

“Me Inc.” means one treats the body-mind complex as a corporation and oneself as its CEO. The following assets matter:

- Resources in terms of integrity, attitudes, competencies, domain and transferable skills, contacts, getting things done, leadership, solution finding and experience.
- Vision, values, goals, temperament, recognising patterns and strategies for execution.
- One's worth on which people will be able to bet their money, i.e. one's performance, but more so, one's potential.

In other words, what investment does one expect friends, or a venture capitalist to make on oneself? Such a look at oneself will tell one's real worth. It is necessary to appreciate that the investor is not going to invest on one's past performance. It may be acceptable as a guide. But what he is going to look at, is the potential of one's assets. For him to make the decision that his investments are not only safe but will yield him sumptuous dividends, potential is important. He is investing on future, not on one's medals and accolades.

Having said this, the job now is to go down the memory lane, and reflect on assets built up over the years. The idea is not to give any weights and ranking, or to arrive at a final numerical score to compare against benchmarks, because there are none.

From the study of role models we have discovered that their context invariant practices are their real quality assets. It is the alchemy of assets that produces durable results. There is no mathematical formulae or standard statistical measure for evaluation. It is essentially a qualitative assessment.

Assets get built over a period of time. Visions get formed early in one's career. A reflective glance at the life provides insights on why one did what, when, and how. One is able to scoop meaning from outer and inner journeys, and the connection between the two. Also the dimensions—rational-intuitive,

luck-effort, and cerebral-mystical, become clear. Therefore, I am beginning from the start of my career. I shall be as brief as possible.

TAKE-AWAYS

- In the following chapters I shall validate the model by evaluating my personal assets against the seven assets discovered in leaders that I studied.
- While subjecting myself to evaluation I am treating me as '*Me Inc.*' Herein the body-mind complex is considered a corporation and oneself its CEO.
- In such a thought provoking self appraisal one assumes that a venture capitalist will bet his money on one's leadership assets, performance, and more his potential to realise the goals.

After validation the model becomes replicable for leaders to adopt.

When the external events synchronise with the smooth 'flow' of thoughts, which is touchy-feely you, experience your creative self. Creative people experience this conjoint 'flow' when deeply absorbed in their studies.

15

My Background

My father and grandfather were renowned lawyers in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra. Naturally they wanted me to complete graduation there and go to London to become a barrister. But I wanted to be on my own. I came to Bombay in 1954. To continue education, I enrolled in college for Intermediate Arts.

Getting a job in those days was not very difficult. I got one at the prestigious Burmah-Shell Oil Company. Attending morning and evening classes, and working at a reputed company was the in-thing then. “Earning while Learning” boosted sky high the feeling of independence. Living in the Dream City, with no concept of what a company or career meant, the mind was a fertile ground for images to make an impact. And they did.

Interests in college and company extra curricular activities kept me joyously engaged in studies and work. My eye for beauty used to keep me glued to the décor of managers’ offices, their impressively dressed personalities, and their deportment.

In about three months, I became a little acquainted with the functioning of the company, its hierarchy, what managers do, and how they are directly recruited to those exalted positions! Exalted not because I understood fully what they did, but because of the aura surrounding some officers, their styles, power, and all their attributes, as I gleaned from the active grapevine.

One thought riveted the mind continuously, viz. the power a personnel manager had in giving jobs, transferring people, giving promotions, and negotiating with unions. This position was called Staff & IR Manager. The PM (personnel manager) and other officers in the department were always at the centre of our discussions. What made an indelible impact, was the authority vested in his position to do things for people, especially giving jobs. My dream to become a PM originated in that milieu. All my thoughts were bent towards the achievement of my goals to become a PM. My visualisation about occupying the PM's chair became more deeply grounded as days passed by.

In those bizarre days, I explored constantly the qualifications I needed to become a PM. I found out which institutes held such specialised courses in India and abroad. And without hesitation, I zeroed in on the London School of Economics.

The beauty of the process was that although the vision took root in 1957–58, it took almost twelve years before I could realise it. In that period I had completed my B.A, LL.B. I was then working at Bank of India. I proactively canvassed for a posting to London so that I could study at the institute of my choice. I was posted to the London office in 1967. Taking advantage of it, I took the study leave after finishing my three-year tenure. I completed the postgraduate course in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations from LSE in 1970 and did some research work on projects of organisational change. On my return to India in 1972, I became personnel manager at Blue Star Ltd.

The purpose emanates from the vision. Behind the obsession to become a personnel manager was the desire to give jobs to people. The intention in pursuing that goal was not personal aggrandisement. It was neither completely altruistic nor totally unselfish. It was a mix. The power orientation sought was more for “giving” than “taking”.

In the twenty years that followed, I became the chief of personnel division at different companies. I was able to realise my dream of giving jobs and promotions to many. I negotiated many settlements with unions and interacted at various levels of management freely and effectively. The portfolio, “Me Inc.”, is assessed against the following ingredients of assets shown in the model.

Creating Value and Wealth

The settlements with unions were mutually satisfactory and management was happy for the costs saved in the hey-days of aggressive unionism. This value-added achievement was recognised when the rate busters were on rampage. The most reputed union leaders and shop floor representatives remained good friends. Tremendous change in the culture of organisations was seen during most phases of my tenures.

I created value through collaboration in the most turbulent adversarial ethos of the seventies and eighties. I saved some money for the company, as I won the wars without going on actual wars. I did not take confrontation and crutches of strikes, lockouts, and court battles to manage industrial relations.

Adversity, the Driver of Mindset Change

Passing through such adversity in IR and management politics I was able to make a significant breakthrough in the thinking of unions and workers, but not much in management approach or concepts.

I learnt that it was necessary to pamper the egos of some powerful managers to get them on my side. My policy of keeping distance from them was not diplomatic. They also needed a listening post, a feeling that they were not being ignored, and that their views mattered.

Reflexive Search to Manage “ME Inc.”

Searching reflectively was my obsession. It gave me good dividends in terms of successful turnarounds in IR history, with all companies that I worked. On the OD front, the creative initiatives yielded good dividends. When an outside event was unfolded at the organisation, I used to watch if there was any reflection of it inside me. My diagnosis was mostly correct but corrective measures in self-improvement were rather half-hearted at times.

Strategic Leveraging through Domain

The strategic leveraging of my assets namely, excellent drafting skills, oratory, negotiating skills, and making space by accommodating people with their differing viewpoints were very good. I was able to create space, to go out of the way to provide deserving people jobs and promotions. The HR domain is all about interpersonal relationship. I was largely successful in it. The movement in resolving tricky personnel issues was very good.

Aesthetical Value-added Branding

I provided an aesthetic angle in my professional presentations to management and unions, at seminars and conferences. I made

an impact at workers and union meetings, training sessions, and conferences. The products were the presentations, but the process was communication. Examples of beauty, neatness, grace, art, i.e., what is a pleasure to the eyes and ears, were sumptuously given at training seminars, team, and communication meetings. This aesthetic approach always received high praise.

Spiritual Perspectives and Upasana: Globalisation, Organisational Renewal, and Devotional Path of Significance

The interventions I proposed and carried out were successful in renewing the organisations. I know that I made significant contributions, and received recognition in the feedback. The spiritual thinking base and emotional appeal helped take organisations and unions towards a path of collaboration.

The spiritual perspective deepened after I retired, especially when I took to studying the lives of leaders and writing about them. That there is a spiritual meaning behind the process of globalisation, is a thought that has occupied my mind, since Gorbachev's new thinking embodied in *glasnost* and *perestroika* announcements, the dissolution of USSR, and American push to the concept in 1990.

Upasana (Devotional Practice) for Self-Renewal

My energy levels and motivation were always very high. *Upasana* for self-renewal was patchy. I did not fully internalise the messages

from the spiritual and biographical literature that I read. However, constant reading of spiritual literature and the practice of *upasana*, in constant though it was, did keep the ship on course.

Reflections on the Whole Portfolio

The Japanese inputs on raising quality consciousness had by then started showing results. The process of organisational transformations had gained some momentum. The practice of integral *yoga* as a reliable method for relieving stress and for self-rejuvenation, had gained world wide acceptance. Organisational and leadership gestalts had started working in bits and pieces.

All these environmental factors, and self-assessment, led me back to the vision I had formulated in the fifties, of becoming a personnel manager. It was realised. The purpose (giving jobs and the rest) was served. But that limited vision did not allow me to tap my full potential to create wealth. I was unaware of my potential and despite offers of positive help, I ignored them.

The CEO of Herdillia Chemicals, late Suresh Agarwala had, on a couple of occasions, said, “Pandit, you are CEO material. The potential is there. You have an excellent network of contacts. If you are interested we can work out something, I would like to help”. A similar offer came from a friend of mine who was running a company.

In addition, my mother was constantly prodding me, “You know so much Shrinivas, why don’t you start a small unit and build a company of your own. I don’t understand anything about companies but I think instead of working for others you could create something of your own”.

My son gave me some excellent ideas on manufacturing bar codes and other products after he went to US in 1978, but I threw cold water on his bubbling enthusiasm! It took me a long time to forgive myself for this disheartening response and lack of initiative.

It looks as though “non-listening” took its toll. But why did I not listen? Deep reflection led me to identify the following mental blocks:

1. The vision was not expansive or inclusive enough.
2. Obsession with HR did not permit me to look beyond.
3. The importance to creation of values was higher than to wealth creation—my hereditary DNA may have been a limiting factor.
4. I disliked arithmetic, or shall I say calculations, accounts, and financial matters, and I believed that for CEO, grip on finance was essential.
5. My desire to learn such subjects, which I did not like, was below average.
6. It appears that somewhere along the way, I had concluded that business entrepreneurship was not my cup of tea.

Said Lin Yutang, “Sometimes it is more important to discover what one cannot do, than what one can do.” I do not regret for a moment that I did not become a CEO. I had surrendered to the vocation of HR. I am completely fulfilled in having realised my ambition. The driving force was the desire to provide opportunities for others. The early conditioning was not malleable enough to cross boundaries. The vision for wealth creation was not powerful enough.

If I had ventured beyond my domain, the business world might have found an unsuitable CEO, and lost a good HR chief. This became a win-win game. The business world won because it was not saddled with an ineffective CEO. I won because I did not court failure but succeeded in what I had set my heart on. The decision to remain within my integral domain and perform the role I had originally wished for, was a rational and thoughtful choice.

My forty-plus son and daughter were reading the first draft when they came across this self-evaluation. They giggled like ten year olds, and said, “Dada, how could you have been so wise then?” I felt elated because I thought they meant, “wise at that age” to take such a thoughtful decision. But when I heard their mischievous whispers and looked back, I understood the subtle pun. They meant, so wise *then*, but not now? We burst into uncontrolled fits of laughter.

The product was good in its function, and there was scope for further development, as there always is in any vocation. Working on the battlefield is riskier than giving advice. That’s probably why we have more people like *Shrikrishna* than *Arjuna*. It appears that the central message of *Bhagavad Gita* has been lost. We do not have enough warriors, but we have more than enough advisors, author included!

The need for CEOs with a militant grit is great. The best exposition on this topic came from Venu Srinivasan:

Beyond maya, the imagined state is extremely alluring but that also is maya. Therefore, one has to break away and decide I am a warrior, this is war. My arms may be tired, and legs cribbing but I have to pick up the bow and go. I have seen Arjuna in retirement also: my grandfather, or someone in community work from our company.

The coaches are in the practice nets and pavilions. We require a team, and the likes of Tendulkar and Sehwag on the battleground, to demolish the opposition. The same is applicable to CEOs and their teams in business management. One can imagine the scope there is for leadership development.

In the on going study of my life, certain events raised my “satisfaction index” higher; they still do.

- 1950–51, when I was studying and preparing for the secondary school certificate examination.
- Preparing project reports in teams at LSE.
- Formulating strategies to handle complex problems.
- Collecting information and preparing for wage negotiations, or management meetings on critical issues.
- Interviews of *Thought Leaders* and writing the book.
- Organisational assignments on leadership development.

To my great surprise, I found common feelings enveloped me during these events:

- I was making a creative contribution to the projects at hand by using my skills.
- Ecstasy, because I was finding new meaning.
- Growth through learning.
- Building models and testing their validity by first applying the criteria to myself.
- Guiding and inspiring managers to undertake systematic personal development.

In short, collection of data, actual study, preparation, writing, focused development sessions, and “single-minded immersion”

are what I enjoy most. It is a pleasant surprise because I was never a serious student. I cannot believe that I like studying, *Eureka! Eureka!* It provided me the much needed space for quiet contemplation.

Experiencing Creativity

When I remembered all those events I felt I was sitting on the bank of a very quiet river with my feet in the water, which was silently flowing in its own given direction. The flow of water was a reflection of the smooth “flow” of thoughts. That was for me the optimal experience of the creative self.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman reports that the moods of students at a Chicago high school for sciences were analysed, when both the high and low achievers spent a great deal of time during the week being bored by activities, such as watching TV. A telling discovery emerged:

The key difference was in their experience of studying. For the high achievers, studying gave them the pleasing, absorbing challenge of flow 40 percent of the hours spent at it...the low achievers found pleasure and flow in socialising, not in studying.

While reading this, my self-esteem skyrocketed. However, I wasn't allowed to remain airborne for long. In a few minutes, my ten year old granddaughter came running in with a completed puzzle, we had tried solving earlier, and said, “Dada, you don't understand simple things!” I touched ground zero instantly.

Studying is absorbing. This concept is probably not new to scholars and academicians. But for me, indeed it was a great revelation. One has to spend a lifetime to understand simple things!

TAKE-AWAYS

My Background—The background sketch provides a peep into my very early career where the seeds of becoming a personnel manager got sown.

- It was the power and authority vested in the position of personnel manager in giving people jobs and promotions, in transfer decisions; and in negotiation with unions that impressed me most.
- The desire to give jobs to others and not personal aggrandisement was the prime mover for my resolve to qualify for that position in the first instance.
- Once in the chair it pushed me to build my portfolio of assets brick by brick.

The assessment that follows is made against ingredients noted in chapter 13.

- **Creating Value and Wealth**—I could create value through collaboration with unions in the most turbulent industrial relations ethos of seventies and eighties.
- **Adversity, the Driver of Mindset Change**—Made significant breakthrough in the thinking of unions, workers, and managers but not so much in the approach and concepts of top management.
- **Reflexive search to manage “Me Inc.”**—my ‘search’ obsession lead me to diagnose the situation accurately but self-improvement patchy.
- **Strategic Leveraging through Domain**—In influencing various constituencies, negotiations, creating space for people to express views I was quite successful.

- Aesthetical Value-added Branding—My aesthetic approach in professional presentations always added value to the brand.
- Spiritual Perspectives and *Upasana*—Made significant contributions and received recognition in organisation renewal programmes.
- A *Upasana* (Devotional Practice) for Self-Renewal—Although the spiritual practice was not regular, the reading was vast and it kept me going on the path well.
- Reflections on the Whole Portfolio—I discovered what I should not do, i.e., it was good decision not to step into the shoes of the CEO. I stuck to my knitting viz., HR, did a fairly good job; and received wide recognition as such. In the process I became an ardent student of life & living, which has always kept my ‘satisfaction index’ very high.
- Experiencing Creativity—When the external events synchronise with the smooth ‘flow’ of thoughts, which is touchy-feely you experience your creative self. Creative people experience this conjoint ‘flow’ when deeply absorbed in their studies.

*Diary writing is an excellent tool for reflecting on past life
and carving out a better future.*

*Writing diary empowers one to inculcate the necessary
discipline and commitment to a structured process of
multiplying one's assets.*

16

The Basic Tool— Diary Writing

Goleman's observations correlate with my personal experience and findings, that disciplined practice and deep reflection are anchors of superior performance. Such study is not merely an exercise in intellectual dexterity but a form of devotional engagement (*Upasana*) with the inner self and domain skills use.

The do's and don'ts of devotional practices, e.g., the fixed daily time, fixed place in the corner of a room, *asana*, silence, etc, are too well known for recapitulation over here. However, such practice did not become a habit with me.

Great men like Gandhi, Churchill, Disraeli and numerous others, have extolled the virtues of writing a diary daily. The diary of Anne Frank is world famous. Many spiritual men have written their autobiographies and diaries. Swami Rama's *Living with Himalayan Masters* is based on his diaries kept faithfully while he was growing up.

That the diary writing is an excellent tool for reflecting on past life and carving out a better future is stuck in mind from reading

such autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, and connected literature, for a long time.

However, like the New Year resolution, this practice did not find favour with me beyond the first fortnight of January each year until I chanced upon Julia Cameron's classic, *The Artist Way*, in December 1997. Says Cameron, "The way to tap the spiritual resource is through use of two basic tools, *The Morning Pages* and *The Artist Date*". I found them refined tools, made attractive by the structured approach. Her simple, confident, and persuasive style charmed me into writing morning pages regularly.

I did not ask CEOs whether they wrote diaries, but I do. I record both the mundane and the surprising. It's amazing how refreshing it is. It habituates one to look for the kink. It is a sure-fire anti-depressant, which neutralises unpleasant memories of regrets that flash into one's awareness.

These days I observe, "one constant" works wonders. And that is the daily practice of refining attitudes and skills with devotion. When it continues without a break I am able to make significant contribution to organisational and writing assignments that are simultaneously underway. The feedback from organisations, participants, readers, reviewers, friends, and family is quite inspiring.

Cameron senses the presence of something transcendent—a spiritual electricity in herself while writing the daily morning pages. This morning exercise catalyses her spiritual connections. She thinks it unfolds creativity in the blocked artist, shows that everyone has a spiritual base, and that one is not able to reach one's potential because of early conditioning.

The morning pages are three pages of longhand writing, strict stream-of-consciousness recording of the free flow of thoughts at

that time. These daily morning meanderings are not meant to be art. None, repeat, none, should be allowed to read these pages. This is daily emptying of the mind, discharging its contents—the thoughts. Whatever crosses one’s mind, at that time, in that hour, one should write. It is not thoughtful writing. It has no logic, no order, and no plan. It is not censored. It’s a free flow from the child in one.

There were times when I found the writing colourful, hopeful, sexy, eventful, and flooded with bright happenings. Whereas at other times it was negative, degrading, belittling, self-pitying, silly, funny, and fragmented. In the course of that one-hour one swings back and forth between negative, positive, neutral, and outrageous thoughts. Often I got the feeling that the diary measures one’s fresh thoughts, like a one-touch meter, which measures one’s fasting blood sugar. Both are indicators of the state of one’s health. Wonderful!

One sees peaks, valleys, deserts, water, jungles, and plateaus. One sees shades of different colours and at times a rainbow. One hears the sounds of birds, trees, animals, and children. One smells different scents and odours. One smiles, laughs, cribs, and cries. Occasionally, one is just stuck, the pen doesn’t move, one faces a drought of thoughts. At other times, one cannot stop their gushing flow. After some months, or years, one gets more order than chaos in one’s thoughts. Then the chaos-order-chaos-order cycle begins and achieves its rhythm. One gets glimpses of one’s true being, in bits and pieces. One starts savouring its transience, the me and not me!

Writing morning pages is a form of meditating. It is a sort of *aksharsadhana* where one cultivates unknowingly the habit of using appropriate words for one’s thoughts, one’s core being. One is freeing oneself of the burden of thoughts through the medium of writing. It is tantamount to a devotional study of words.

The *Artist Date* is a block of time, especially set aside every week to nurture one's creative inner artist. One:

- Spends that time in solitude, in a garden, on a beach, in a mall with one's artist "child".
- Takes the child for a stroll, gives him chocolate, buys a balloon, or whatever.
- Makes an effort to show love and affection to the child and treats him as one would treat one's little daughter (literally cuddle yourself; poke fun at your idiosyncrasies, misunderstanding, and the way you may be completely fooled).
- Thinks of magic, a circus of animals, delight, fun, no serious reflections, and no mastery .

This time-off is quite self-nurturing. One then records the thoughts.

If morning pages are prayer, then the weekly artist date brings solutions. In *Uncommon Wisdom*, Fritjof Capra (1988) says "*During these periods of relaxation after concentrated intellectual activity, the intuitive mind seems to take over and can produce the sudden clarifying insights which give so much joy and delight*".

Cameron skilfully and artistically opens up the spiritual path for us through the ancient practice of maintaining diaries. It is generally understood that a diary is meant for keeping appointments. It is not. Cameron takes us to the deeper purpose of the practice of diary writing, possibly to the very intention with which great men penned their thoughts every day.

Cameron explains the rationality and philosophy behind the practice of writing morning pages. It's a step-by-step guide to reclaiming the imprisoned child spirit in one, one's creative self.

In three months one might become addicted to the practice, as I did.

The benefits are:

- It quietens the mind.
- Circuitous thoughts give way to a more sequential arrangement.
- Precision replaces circumlocution.
- Some chapters (events, history, relationships, etc.) are closed in mind; and new ones open. (Said Ann-Wilson Schaef “You need to claim events of your life to make yourself yours”).
- Clarity of thoughts trains the mind to look for alternatives—opportunities to make a breakthrough, and move on from stuck positions—one gains momentum in life.
- Access to deeper layers of one’s personality which takes one beyond the thought waves created by outside forces—one becomes more autonomous, equipped to deal one’s real self.
- Provides the most authentic feedback about oneself, and the four dimensions of life, viz. Life/Time, Depth, Dialogue with your true self, and Meaning at the core of one’s being.
- Sudden insights into tricky issues and the confidence to tackle them.
- One becomes forgiving towards others, but also towards oneself.
- Establish some invisible spiritual link to forces that guide one’s destiny; to a GOD defined as “Good Orderly Direction”—the universe is helping one with what one is doing.

- Gradually to more order, less chaos—feel, relaxed that so many complex nagging issues of life have been sorted.
- Refine domain skills.
- Acquire a balanced view of one's tendency to over react to adversities and periods of elation.
- Put life in perspective, which deepens the level of experience.
- Sharpens discernment capability.
- Daily action, i.e. writing morning pages, and keeping the appointment with one's child—artist date—leads to measuring weekly movement, monthly progress, and quarterly results. It fits into the professional framework of measuring "organisation annual results". In effect, it becomes an online assessment of personal growth through creativity.

I feel like Cameron, in several ways:

- Once one accepts it is natural to create, one begins to accept a second voice, a higher harmonic, an uncensored flow of clear thoughts adding to and augmenting one's inner creative voice.
- Exercise is often the movement that moves us from stagnation to inspiration: action has magic, grace, and power in it. Action energises.
- Success occurs in clusters and is born in generosity and forgiveness.

The important point to note is that through disciplined use of a reliable ancient tool—now completely refined—one gets habituated to the daily practice of updating ones skills and rejuvenating oneself.

Similarly, in his book *At a Journal Workshop*, Ira Progoff (1997) has explained the “Intensive Journal Process”. This process teaches one to access the power of the unconscious and evoke one’s creative abilities. The process of regular journal entries in the prescribed formats, given in the book, empowers one to get to deeper layers of the inner self and gain a fuller perspective of life.

Covey also notes that writing is a powerful way to sharpen the mental saw. Keeping a journal of thoughts, experiences, insights, leanings, and learnings, promotes mental clarity and exactness in the particular context.

A diary is like a prism. One is able to look at the direction of one’s life from different angles. Cameron’s and Progoff’s are slightly different methods. The objective of both methods is the same: to make one aware of one’s variegated inner thought world, and induce one to change the course of one’s life. Progoff’s process is much more detailed, while Cameron’s is simple. I recommend, begin with Cameron.

Although I am personally good at working on computer, I prefer to write the diary by hand. It’s an old habit. I like to see my handwriting. The pattern of flow of thoughts through fingers and wrist movement impact the actions in a powerful way. However, if one prefers to maintain the diary on a PC, it is one’s own choice. Technically it may not be inaccurate. One has to assess the results of the exercise for oneself.

Our model shows the portfolio of assets and emphasises the need to undertake *upasana*. Dairy, is a basic tool for the practice of *upasana*. Writing diary empowers one to inculcate the necessary discipline and commitment to a structured process of multiplying one’s assets. If one feels the need to, say, improve one’s numerical or communication skills, or speed, or bodybuilding, one goes to a gym avails the services of a coach, and uses recommended

instruments and methods for practice. Similarly, the diary writing process opens up the gateway to self-renewal.

If one feels the need to improve one's thinking competency, or build positive attitudes, one would go deeper into the inner self, read relevant books, see videos, seek mentoring. One would do whatever is relevant in the field of psychology, philosophy, and spirituality, since an integral view of these subjects initiates the process of mindset change.

In both cases, i.e., improvement in skills and attitudes, the important point to note is that one must get emotionally involved in learning. It is the devotional engagement in learning that brings results; mere cerebral understanding is of little help, if any.

In an era suffocated with stress, this time-tested tool—diary writing—has potential to work wonders; try it, its culture free!

Validation of Model

This candid valuation of my assets, experience of flow, disciplined use of the basic tool diary writing, supporting conceptual evidence, and practical experience of others validates that the portfolio approach to management of personal assets makes CEOs resourceful, exceptional, and inspiring. Obviously, CEOs do not know this, but it is what my muse has collaged from the invigorating life stories narrated by them.

Delivery

I am handing over to you this sleek volume about the Alchemy of Leadership. I hope you will find it instructive and use it as

the model. It provides you with the nutrients for creative growth and fulfilment, as it did me while I studied and wrote it. The exemplars in the book will continue to be my health packs in periods of relaxation, reflection and *upasana*. Trust me, so will they be yours.

TAKE-AWAYS

- All great men have written daily diaries. There is a science behind this ancient practice of writing life-journals. It is an anti-depressant which is amazingly refreshing.
- This practice of writing journal religiously for at least half an hour every morning without fail for the last ten years has worked wonders in refining thinking skills and changing attitudes towards living in the 'NOW'. It has significantly increased my contribution in the self and others.
- This practice—*Aksharsadhana*—is in itself a kind of 'meditation'.
- The weekly time-off is for nurturing the 'child' in you which unknowingly flashes clarifying insights. They are electrifying and enlivening.
- The tool is culture-free.

Validation of Model—Sincere assessment of my assets has validated the model. In fact the model enables you to do a SWOT of the portfolio of your core competences.

Delivery—This sleek volume about the Alchemy of Leadership is now in your hands. I am confident you will find it uniquely useful as I did.

