

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO: EXCERPTS OF DISCUSSIONS FROM AN ONLINE COURSE ON INTEGRAL MANAGEMENT

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DEFINING LEADERSHIP

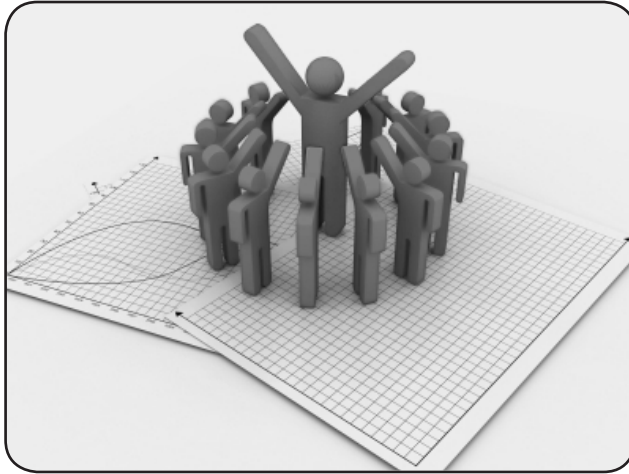
Anurag: Today we begin a new chapter titled Leadership.

What is leadership? Leading has been defined as 'the management function of influencing, motivating and directing people towards the achievement of organizational goals.' Heinz Weihrich and Harold Koontz have defined it as the art or process of influencing people so that they can strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of goals of the group. Leading is what a leader does. Leadership is a personal quality. To begin with let us look at some of the definitions of leadership given by eminent thinkers:

- Chester I. Barnard: Leadership is the quality of the behaviour of individuals whereby they guide people or their activities in organized efforts.
- Koontz and O'Donnell: Leadership is influencing the people to follow in the achievement of common goals.
- Keith Davis: Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates the members towards the goals of the organization.
- Robert Tannenbaum: Leadership is the inter-personal influence towards the attainment of a specialized goal or goals.
- Katz: Leadership is a relation involving two terms and it is impossible to study the influencing agent without studying the people being influenced.
- Warriner: Leadership is a form of relationship between persons which requires that one of several persons act in conformance with the request of another.

- P.F. Drucker: Leadership is the lifting of man's visions to higher sight, the raising of man's performance to a higher standard, the building of a man's personality beyond its normal limitations.

By referring to the definitions of leadership one can define leading as the function of developing leadership qualities and creating leaders in the organization by providing training to the employees.



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Following may be said to be some of the key features of leading/leadership:

1. It is the use of individual non-coercive influence exerted to motivate the behaviour of the employees towards the achievement of organizational goals.
2. It is a personal quality; the more qualities the leaders would possess, the more successful he would be in leading his followers.
3. It is an unbiased and group-oriented activity.
4. It is a continuous process.
5. It involves authority and responsibility, and decides the course of action.

Why is leading so important? It is important because of the following reasons. Firstly, the act of leading works as a group-motivating process which inspires the supporters to work effectively. Secondly, it develops creativity. The leader, often or sometimes, presents a problem before the subordinates and invites their suggestions regarding the solution. In such cases, the employees are motivated to ponder over the matter and come up with a variety of solutions among which the best would be chosen by the leader. Thirdly, leading facilitates motivation and confidence (which is done through the fulfillment of the employee's objectives). Employees are motivated by extrinsic

rewards like cash prizes, perks and amenities, promotion, recognition, status symbols and praise, and intrinsic rewards like satisfaction from executing a challenging task. Fourthly, with his or her experience and knowledge, the leader guides and directs the employees effectively; such guidance in turn increases the skills and knowledge of the employees. Fifthly, good leading is associated with communication, precise decision-making, cooperation, coordination, integration and creation of better work environment.

LEADERSHIP, ACCORDING TO SRI AUROBINDO

So much for the basic concept of leadership. But what do Sri Aurobindo and the Mother say about leadership? In the terminology of Integral Management, who is a leader and what kind of a leader one should be? To answer this, I would like to quote a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga* where he has written about the teacher of Integral Yoga. While discussing about the role of the teacher, he has actually pointed out the attributes of an ideal leader. And if we mentally replace the term subordinate wherever a reference is made of the disciple, we can grasp the passage more effectively. Here is what he says:

The Teacher of the Integral Yoga will follow as far as he may the method of the Teacher within us. He will lead the disciple through the nature of the discipline. Teaching, example, influence, — these are the three instruments of the Guru. But the wise Teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive minds; he will throw in only what is productive and sure as a seed which will grow under the divine fostering within. He will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will give a method as an aid, as a utilisable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine. And he will be on his guard against any turning of the means into a limitation, against the mechanising of process. His whole business is to awaken the divine light and set working the divine force of which he himself is only a means and an aid, a body or a channel. (SABCL, Volume 20, p. 60-61)

Sri Aurobindo has explained how an ideal leader should work. As mentioned in the preceding quotation, the Guru or the leader should use 'teaching', 'example' and 'influence' as his instruments. Sri Aurobindo has specifically pointed out the importance of each of these three instruments. According to him, example is much more powerful than instruction. Here, we must remember that by 'example' he didn't refer to the instances of external acts or 'personal character'. It is the 'central fact of divine realization within' that would act as a stimulant to the aspiration in others. The very life of the Teacher in its entirety and all the actions associated with it will serve as an ideal example. However, 'influence' is much more important than example.

Influence is not the external authority which an ordinary leader imposes upon his subordinates; on the contrary, it is, as defined by Sri Aurobindo, "the power of his contact, of his presence, of the nearness of his soul to the soul of another." The leader who is in possession of such a power channels it into his subordinates for their development and such an action has been termed by Sri Aurobindo as "the supreme sign of the Master". However, Sri Aurobindo has warned that the leader must not "arrogate to himself Guruhood in a humanly vain and self-exalting spirit". He should be a channel, a representative of the trust from above who should act as a man who would help and guide his brothers. He should be, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "a child leading children, a Light kindling other lights, an awakened Soul awakening souls, at highest a Power or Presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine." (ibid.)

The tasks of a leader are to lead his subordinates towards the successful accomplishment of the organizational goals, motivate them to work better by improving their morale, imposing discipline whenever and wherever required in the organization and ensuring the establishment of a perfect harmony among them. While imposing discipline, a leader should keep in mind that whatever needs to be done should be done in the right spirit. The subordinates should also realize that they are being guided by a leader who may be strict but at the same time is upright, insightful and sympathetic towards them. In his letters, Sri Aurobindo has written that efficiency and discipline—though they are indispensable for work—are dependent on the "personality of the superior, his influence on the subordinates, his firmness, tact,' and 'kindness in dealing with them." (SABCL, volume 23, p. 710)



Spiritual significance of the flower: Grouping

Source: <http://www.blossomlikeflower.com/>

Often the leader might have to face certain circumstances which are beyond his or her control. What should be done then? What should be the code of conduct if something untoward happens? Sri Aurobindo has advised that in such cases one should have the right inner attitude, one should be open to the Force and its power or else ego-resistance and ego-centric troubles may emerge and those can destroy a good creation. And with the help of this Force, all the difficulties of the untoward circumstances can be conquered and turned towards the right direction. But no matter how grave the situation becomes, one must have a sense of perfect equanimity (*samata*). Sri Aurobindo has said that the leader must make himself or herself an instrument of this invisible Force coming from above so that it could be used for the necessary purpose. Through the power of equanimity, the Force is capable of transforming not only the attitude of the individual but also the course of events and actions.

A leader who believes in the philosophy of Integral Management and practices it in day-to-day activities must not think and act like the leader of an ordinary enterprise. To such a leader, work does not become an avenue of earning money by maximizing the returns on investment. On the contrary, such a leader assumes the role of a servitor and consecrates all that he or she possesses for the success of the enterprise, which becomes a medium of sadhana. All work for the growth and development of the enterprise becomes a service to the Divine. Such a leader is truly selfless and relies entirely on the true Self and Spirit for inner guidance. There is no room for a superiority complex due to the high position enjoyed in the organizational hierarchy for it may result in ego-boosting. Such a leader must look at colleagues and subordinates as fellow-disciples and treat no work or workers as mediocre or ignorable because in Integral Management all work is looked upon as work for the Divine. Work is actually worship and the worshippers, that is, the workers, should not be discriminated.

It reminds me of an incident. Once, someone complained to the Mother that people were not working satisfactorily in a particular department. The Mother said: "People work according to their nature and capacity. If you are not getting satisfaction, do it yourself."

The leader has to have empathy and while dealing with the inter-department or inter-personal problems, he or she must see the other side of the question as well. No anger or reproach must exist for these elements tend to raise the same emotions in the people involved on the other side. And above all, the leader has to be an epitome of humility. No great work can be done if the leader is not a humble person.

Another quality that must exist in a leader is right judgment. A leader must know what is good and bad for the organization but at the same time he or she must not be judgmental towards people. No one except the Divine can make the most precise judgment and the leader, as the instrument of

the Divine's work, should only rely on the inner command about his or her course of action.

I would now request you to kindly go through the compilation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's views on leadership that has been assigned to you as this unit's reading, and ask me in case you have any queries.

Rahul: The post was excellent and so too the example about the Mother.

At this point I have a query. In the example that is given, Mother says that people work according to their nature. If the leader is not satisfied he must do it himself.

What does this mean? At this rate, the leader may have to do all the work himself. Besides, there is the danger that other co-workers might take this as an example and deliberately work below their potential.

Anurag: Rahul, it is a good point that you have raised. Let me explain this point by narrating an incident. There was a strike in some company as a result of which all work had come to a stand-still position though there were some workers who did not participate in the strike. In such a situation, some trucks arrived at the premises carrying the raw materials required by the company. But most of the workers did not make any move to unload the materials. After some time, they saw that the manager (or maybe he was the owner of the factory—I don't recall exactly) came out of the office and began to lift the sacks with the help of some of the workers and carry the load to the warehouse. Then he returned and repeated his actions. For some time the workers watched what was happening. Then some of them came forward and began to carry the load to the warehouse. Most of them forgot about the strike and began to help their employer.

The manager/owner of the factory was doing the work which none of the workers expected him to do. And they felt embarrassed when they saw their employer executing their functions. At the end of the day, it is the attainment of organizational goals that matters the most. The manager forgot about his designation and chose to work like a labourer because to him the completion of the work had the highest priority. And while he was doing it, he was subconsciously motivating his employees. Embarrassment can often become a great medium of motivation.

You have referred to the situation where the personnel might take undue advantage and work below their capacity or potential. This possibility might occur in an individual effort but it cannot happen in a collective one because if the entire group begins to under-perform, then the entire team would have to bear the consequences of non-performance. And it would be a tremendous threat to their jobs, isn't it?

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Anurag: There are several styles of leadership through which a leader influences his or her followers. Such styles are adopted by the leader by considering the operating circumstances and type and nature of the followers. The different styles of leadership are discussed briefly in the following words:

1. Authoritative Style: An authoritative leader is a 'visionary' who knows what he or she is doing and the reason for doing so. The followers also know what and why they are doing and how their work would fit into the goal or vision of the organization. Such leader defines the standard around the vision and provides negative and positive feedback (to ensure that the performance of the subordinates is in accordance with the vision of the organization). The leader determines the goals to be reached but leaves the means of achieving them to the subordinates with the liberty to innovate. According to Daniel Goleman, such style of leadership is the most effective of all leadership styles and is effective in all sorts of business situations. But there are two major drawbacks to this style of leadership. Firstly, it may not work when the leader is working with a team of experts who possess more knowledge than him or her. Secondly, such form of leadership weakens the democratic spirit of an effective team.

2. Autocratic Style: An autocratic leader centralizes all authority and decision-making powers in his or her own hands and ignores suggestions made by the subordinates. Orders are conveyed to the subordinates regarding the nature of the task and process of doing it by the leader which they are expected to follow obediently and almost blindly. There is only one-way communication and that too from top to bottom as such leaders control the flow of information. This style of leadership is considered to be the least effective of leadership styles because creative ideas of subordinates are not utilized. But at times such leadership can transform an unproductive business enterprise into a productive one. It also guides the newly recruited and inexperienced personnel.

3. Benevolent Style (Also known as the Affiliative Style): Such leaders value their followers, keep them blissful and create harmony among them. This style of leadership promotes flexibility and better communication, builds inspiration, trust, loyalty and a sense of belongingness among the followers. Since the employees are empowered with utmost freedom to do the work in ways suitable to them, work is done in the most efficient way. Such leaders are loved and liked by all the employees. Apparently such form of leadership looks the most attractive and advantageous of all styles but in reality it is not bereft of limitations. Firstly, benevolent leaders provide only positive feedback on the day-to-day efforts to his subordinates, which improves their self-esteem but in this process their limitations may also be ignored. Since negative feedback (and sometimes this could include constructive suggestions) is generally not provided, employees may not focus on self-improvement. Secondly, since job

security exists in the organization the employees feel that mediocre performance will be tolerated. Hence, they don't strive to work harder.

4. Coaching Style: Such leaders help their subordinates to identify their strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to pursue long-term developmental goals by enacting developmental plans and providing them with feedback. Such leaders delegate authority and give challenging assignments to the employees; though such actions may delay the accomplishment of the task, the leaders remain unperturbed because they believe in reaping long-term benefits at the cost of small-term difficulties or failures. Such leaders interact regularly with the employees, clearly convey what is expected of them and provide regular feedback. Thus, a 'culture of commitment' is promoted in the enterprise. But the major demerit of this form of leadership is that in reality, the leader cannot spare much time for the employees except during the induction period. Once the aspirations of the employees are aligned with their strengths and weaknesses and feedback of their performance is provided to them, the leader does not have much to do except follow-up. Also some leaders avoid this style of leadership because they don't possess the required skill or expertise to guide the subordinates.

5. Democratic Style: Such leaders generate respect and commitment among their employees and bring flexibility and responsibility into the enterprise by involving the employees in the decision-making process regarding the attainment of organizational goals. They invite ideas from the subordinates, boost their morale and look after their grievances. The vision of the leader is matched with the fresh ideas of the employees for proper execution of the functions and plans for the achievement of the goals. In a nutshell, people led by a democratic leader are realistic about what they can accomplish. But there are certain limitations associated with this style of leadership. Firstly, it might not affect the work environment as it should in a theoretical sense. Secondly, it is a time-consuming process because often no consensus is obtained even after discussing the points in numerous meetings. Thirdly, decision-making process is delayed by the leaders who wait for the right suggestion to come from the subordinates who may not be able to think of something creative or constructive or effective. Fourthly, conflicts may be generated as each employee argues to justify his or her idea.

6. Pacesetting Style: Such leaders are quite focused on what they crave and support their ambitions with concrete goals; they set high standards of performance and themselves adhere to such standards. Such leaders are passionate about improving and increasing productivity and quality and expect the subordinates to meet the desired expectations. They identify the slow-performers and under-performers, intervene when a subordinate is found to lag behind, give them a chance to improve themselves, and no change is observed they also don't hesitate to terminate such subordinates and bring in new recruits. Such form of leadership is never popular among the subordinates

who feel claustrophobic by the leader's demands for continuous improvement in performance. It de-motivates the employees whose morale begins to dwindle. Such leaders set the standard of performance but never quite explain them clearly to the subordinates. As a result, the subordinates work to please the leader instead of giving their best efforts to the work. Freedom to work in the way of one's choice is seldom given to the employees which results in the emergence of inflexibility, irresponsibility and lack of creativity. Since the employees get no chance of knowing where their efforts would fit into the gala vision of the organization their commitment towards the work tend to fall.

7. Expert Style: Such style of leadership exists when highly knowledgeable and competent people lead the group. Such leaders constantly demonstrate their expertise to the subordinates to sustain their position as the leader. However there remains an element of uncertainty on the part of both the leader and the followers because such leaders are selected during certain special situations or assignments where their specific skills are utilized but when the task is completed and it loses its relevance, the leader is replaced by some other person whose skills are required by the organization in the changed work environment. It also becomes difficult for the subordinates because they are forced to follow different leaders in different situations.

8. Manipulative Style: Such leaders manipulate the subordinates for the fulfillment of their expectations. The leader identifies the needs of the employees and lures them by promising attractive rewards for the achievement of expected targets. But when the goal is achieved, no rewards are given to them. Though such a style of leadership is successful in the short-term it is characterized by a number of drawbacks. It does not create a long-term relationship between the leader and the subordinates. It eradicates the trust the subordinate might have once had in the leader. And eventually the leader loses the respect of the subordinates.

9. Bureaucratic Style: The leader who follows the bureaucratic style of leadership formulates rigid rules, regulations and policies and abides by them and makes the subordinates do the same as well. They specify the exact way in which the assigned work should be done by the subordinates who execute the work with the least commitment. Since the employees are expected to reach only a minimum level of performance to ensure continuity of their jobs, they don't strive to work hard and put in much effort. In a way they are encouraged to work less effectively and with minimum efficiency.

10. Participative Style: Such leaders encourage employee participation in the decision-making process and delegate authority and responsibility to suitable employees. They encourage their subordinates to provide their ideas and views and allow two-way communication (upward and downward) but the ultimate decision is taken by the leaders themselves. Such type of leadership

is useful when the subordinates are competent enough to work independently with minimum supervision.

11. Laissez-faire or Free Rein Style: Such a style of leadership denotes empowering the subordinates with complete freedom; the leader allows the subordinates to formulate policies and programmes and decide upon the various lines of action to be undertaken. It is a group-oriented leadership in which the members train themselves up and provide their own motivation (they don't depend on their leader for motivation or boosting morale). The leader acts as a liaison between the group and external parties and brings information to the group for its future course of action. Passivity is an essential characteristic observed in the leader who does not give directions but acts as a role advisor and allows the subordinates to take decisions. Delegation of authority is done at the fullest level. The advantages of such a style of leadership are many. The followers are satisfied with their jobs and are motivated to work more effectively. It reaps best results if the subordinates are qualified, competent and responsible people. Productive capacity is fully utilized so there is maximum productivity. Moreover, a good relationship is established between the leader and the subordinates. But there are several demerits as well of such a style of leadership. The leader acts only as a spectator with no significant involvement in any of the processes; therefore, this cannot be an ideal role of a leader. Since decision-making process is heavily decentralized and decisions are implemented in an equally decentralized manner, hence, a lack of coordination and integration may be felt. Since laissez-faire is a liberal control system where the subordinates enjoy more freedom, managing them becomes difficult and therefore the management becomes weak.



Spiritual significance of the flower: Collective Harmony

Source: <http://www.blossomlikeaflower.com/>

Gunwant: Amongst all the leadership styles, which one did the Mother and Sri Aurobindo predominantly follow?

Personally, I feel, the Mother's style was "Coaching" type and Sri Aurobindo's was "Laissez faire". They could follow other styles also on need basis. But I feel the styles mentioned above were predominantly used. I would like your opinion on this.

Anurag: Gunwant, if you ask me, I would say that the 'Coaching Style' of leadership was followed by Sri Aurobindo while the Mother followed the 'Authoritative Style'. See, in the 'Coaching Style', the leader enables the subordinates to identify their strengths and weaknesses, helps them in their aspiration and encourages them to work for the accomplishment of their developmental aims. Sri Aurobindo's view was: 'All life is yoga', so his followers were free to choose their own methods of practicing the integral yoga. Some adopted music as a part of their sadhana, some took up painting, some took up literary activities; those who found physical work attractive worked in the Press, laundry, gardens, bakery. So we find that every individual was given the freedom to pursue his aspiration in his own way.

Laissez-faire is a group-oriented leadership in which the members train themselves up and provide their own motivation and don't depend on their leader for motivation or increasing morale. But that was not the case with Sri Aurobindo. The inmates always looked upon Sri Aurobindo for motivation and encouragement. And they used to get depressed if the response from him arrived a bit late. You will be surprised to know that many inmates left the Ashram following the physical departure of Sri Aurobindo on 5th December 1950. They could not accept the physical absence of their spiritual guide.

In the 'Laissez-faire' style, we know that delegation of authority is done at the fullest level. But neither Sri Aurobindo nor the Mother delegated absolute authority to any of the department-heads.

The leaders following the 'Coaching Style' provide regular feedback and encourage interaction with the employees; they convey to the subordinates what is expected from them. And that is what Sri Aurobindo did. He always gave directions and advice whereas the leader following 'laissez-faire' would not do so.

The Mother, on the other hand, followed the 'Authoritative Style'. As a visionary, she knew what she was doing and her followers/disciples also knew what and why they were doing and how their tasks would fit into the organizational (Ashram's) goal. To ensure that the performance of the followers were in accordance with the vision of Ashram the Mother had defined the standard around the vision, and provided feedback wherever and whenever

necessary. But after determining the goal, she would leave the means of achieving them to her followers with the freedom to bring in innovation. In the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the supreme authority rested in the hands of the Mother. Though all the assets were purchased in the name of Sri Aurobindo, it was the Mother who managed everything. It was she who took all the major decisions; it was she who saw to it that her instructions were implemented. She assigned work to the inmates and also set standards for the assigned work. No deviation or alteration in the plans of action could be incorporated without her approval. All the department-heads or managers had to report to her informing her of the progress made or difficulties faced and also for her advice regarding the concerned matter. Every detail of all the service-departments was presented to the Mother for her scrutiny and approval and the department-heads executed her orders. In certain important departments like the Atelier, even for the most trivial task her expressed approval was required. It was she who would decide what should be done and in which order. Since centralization was adopted by the Mother, we cannot say that she followed the 'Coaching Style'.

Anurag: Dear Friends, here is an interesting advice given by Sri Aurobindo about leadership.

"Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru." (SABCL, Volume 16, p. 391)

Parul: I believe that the success of one's leadership will depend on whether or not one is flexible enough to recognize the need for the different types of leadership and is willing to change gears when necessary. For that, one will have to determine what is best for each individual and each situation. And, just as we periodically evaluate each person who works for us, it is good to evaluate our own operating style as well.

LEADERSHIP AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

Parul: Thanks a lot for such an informative post. However, it is also said that true leaders are born not made. Can this statement be justified in the light of Sri Aurobindo's teachings?

From the point of view of Integral Management, I believe that 'only when you can lead yourself can you lead others'. Please also throw some light on this self-mastery or self-management, and how can we build it up as a routine in our daily lives?

Anurag: Parul, as per the general notion, true leaders are born and not made. But the practice of integral Management can groom a person and transform him or her into a good leader.

You see, there are infinite possibilities in human beings but generally we are absolutely unaware and unconscious about them. These possibilities could be developed and one can make considerable progress. Now how to bring about this much-desired progress? There are two ways, according to the Mother. The first way is through education by which the capabilities, faculties, possibilities and the varied qualities of an individual can be perfected. The second way is to go deep within oneself and approach the deeper truth. This can awaken the latent possibilities and capacities which lie asleep in our being. Through this process of thorough development, the possibilities and qualities of an individual can be multiplied. Thus, one would be able to do things which one had never dreamt of doing.

In the words of the Mother: 'There is a genius within everyone of us—we don't know it. We must find the way to make it come out—but it is there sleeping, it asks for nothing better than to manifest; we must open the door to it.' (CWM, Volume 9, p. 396)

A talented person can make good use of any situation or opportunity. For instance, you give a talented musician an instrument which is of poor quality but even then he or she would be able to play it well and create some good music. But if you give the same person an exquisite and well-tuned instrument he or she would create a masterpiece. Hence, there are two things that have to be considered. One is the consciousness and the other is the instrument through which the consciousness manifests itself. Integral Management makes one aware of the consciousness as well as provides one with the knowledge of the instrument, that is, the dormant possibilities and qualities present in oneself.

You are absolutely right when you say that 'only when you can lead yourself can you lead others.' If one cannot control oneself, how can one expect to control others? Nothing can be done with others unless and until one is able to do it with oneself. And that is why the Mother has said that one cannot control outer matter if one does not control inner matter.

About self-mastery and self-management, the first essential condition is to be conscious of yourself; you need to be awake to your movements and nature and you must also understand your motives and impulses. Once you are conscious then automatically you would be able to differentiate between right and wrong. In life we often tend to get confused while differentiating between right and wrong for these are subjective concepts: what may appear right to X might appear wrong to Y. So whom should you support? You can conquer this dilemma when you become conscious.

What follows is some guidance on self-management compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo

- “Do not allow yourself to be worried or upset by small things. Look at things from an inner point of view and try to get the benefit of all that happens. If you make a mistake, don’t get distressed because you made a mistake—rather profit by it to see the reason so as to get the right movement in future. This you can do only if you look at it quietly from the inner being without sorrow or disturbance.” (SABCL, Volume 24, p.1682)
- “Why get excited over these small things? or let them disturb you? If you remain quiet, things will go much better and, if there is any difficulty, you are more likely to find out a way in a quiet mind open to the Peace and Power. That is the secret of going on, not to allow things and happenings, not even real mistakes, to upset you, but to remain very quiet, confiding in the Power to lead you and set things more and more right. If one does that, then things do get actually more and more right for learning and steps towards progress.” (ibid., p. 102)
- “When some weakness comes up you should take it as an opportunity to know what is still to be done and call down the strength into that part. Despondency is not the right way to meet it.” (ibid., p. 1681)
- “Whatever you see, don’t get disturbed or depressed. If one sees a defect one must look at it with the utmost quietude and call down more force and light to get rid of it.” (ibid.)
- “One ought not to indulge ideas of incapacity, inability to respond, dwelling too much on defects and failures and allowing the mind to be in pain and shame on their account: for these ideas and feelings become in the end weakening things. If there are difficulties, stumblings or failures, one has to look at them quietly and call in tranquilly and persistently the Divine help for their removal, but not to allow oneself to be upset or pained or discouraged.” (SABCL, Volume 25, p. 329)

I hope these will help you.

Anurag: Dear Friends, Sri Aurobindo was not a leader who kept himself aloof from the problems and difficulties faced by his disciples. He acted as a motivator, a coach and a mentor who spent sleepless nights answering hundreds of letters addressed to him. It was like a correspondence workshop of motivation. One of his dearest disciples, Dilip Kumar Roy has written about him in his book *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (pp. 56-57):

He never minded if any of us wanted to experiment with an escalator “going in the wrong direction.” For he had never believed in hard and fast taboos...His tolerance and charity would have been incredible had it not been a fact of almost everyday experience. In the Ashram he tolerated quite a battalion of fire-eaters even when they were found out to be disloyal and

treacherous. He gave a long rope even to some insolent rebels who, from calling him names and misrepresenting his catholic views, told deliberate lies—just to do him down. Even such calumniators and traitors he not only declined to expel from the Ashram but actually forgave again and again till I had to ask him which he loved more: to encourage the faithless or discourage the faithful?

One might ponder: what was the source of this unlimited patience Sri Aurobindo had for people. The answer is simple. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo's patience was based on unbounded divine love. Human love may fail at one point of time but divine love neither fails nor falters. So a leader willing to follow the principles of Integral Management should have profound love and sympathy for his subordinates. It is only love and sympathy that can mould and transform the nature, character and personality of man. And that is the mantra of man-power management.

However, let's not forget that love and sympathy cannot always be adopted to control the subordinates. In case strict action is required, the leader practicing Integral Management must not hesitate to adopt such measures. The Mother used to follow a strict disciplinary approach whenever and wherever necessary.

So we have two ways of man-power management shown to us by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The first way is through love and patience as practiced by Sri Aurobindo and the second way is through strict disciplinary measures as practiced by the Mother. The leader, following the philosophy and practice of Integral Management, should be prepared to adopt both the measures whenever and wherever required. And this calls for the flexibility which Parul has rightly pointed out in her post.

LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Gunwant: Dear Anurag, I wish to ask an offbeat question.

Sometimes, an organization has a very noble and effective leader. Generally he/she is the founder of the organization. Once the leader passes away or leaves the organization, the succeeding leader may not be as capable and effective as the previous leader. The organization soon loses its sheen or it may stop living the ideals it was established for.

How should the succession planning be done by the leader?

Also, currently the Ashram may be run by good and effective people. But I am sure they cannot be compared with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. What is the way then to ensure that organization runs as ideally as envisaged by the founding leader?

Gunwant: One very rare method of succession planning that comes to my mind is that of Lamas by Tibet. Tibetans have a method wherein the old leader on the verge of death, gives indication about his future reincarnation. After his passing away, his reincarnation is tracked down by his followers and the reborn leader is reinstated back to his leadership position. This way it is ensured that the right leader is always leading the organization. This, of course, is a much evolved method for evolved souls.

In future, do we see a similar possibility of succession planning in business organizations too?



Spiritual significance of the flower: Organized teamwork

Source: <http://www.blossomlikeaflower.com/>

Anurag: Dear Gunwant, you have asked two excellent questions. I will first answer how succession planning is done by the leader and then answer the second query.

You have rightly pointed out that the founder of the enterprise is often succeeded by people who do not possess those qualities which the former had. In India as well as in the West, we have seen many examples of how an improper succession planning has affected a company. Let's take, for instance, the case of Colgate which was founded in 1806 and till the early 1900s, it was an excellent company. It survived the American civil war but failed to succeed in grooming right people for the right job. By the late 1920s it was so starved of top management talent that it opted to merge with Palmolive-Peet to keep a strong management in place. From 1928 to 1933 its average return on sales

reduced from 9% to 4%. Whereas, its competitor Procter and Gamble (P&G) became double the size of Colgate and four times as profitable. Between 1928 and 1933 its average return on sales increased from 11.6% to 12%. Now, how did P&G succeed while Colgate failed? This was because P&G seldom suffered the leadership gaps which plagued Colgate despite having moved away from family governance like Colgate. In India too, we have seen how J.R.D. Tata, in the 1980s, had to carefully choose his successor among the samurais of the Tata Group, that is, Russi Mody, Ratan Tata, Darbari Seth and Nani Palkiwala. Now the Tata Group once again is looking for a suitable successor for Ratan Tata.

Succession planning is never an easy task. So what should be the right process of choosing the leader?

Firstly, the whole board of Directors should be involved. There is a disastrous practice of leaving the task of selecting the future leader to the incumbent leader who often ignores the shortcomings of the candidates he has nurtured. Therefore it is advised to include the entire board so that an effective selection can be made.

Secondly, the detailed criteria for the successor should be designed by the board of Directors. Often the board will come up with attributes like strong leadership, maturity, aggressiveness and integrity but these qualities, despite being essential, do not determine whether the person concerned is fit to be the successor. The board should identify where the enterprise needs to focus more in the next 10 to 12 years and seek those skills in the prospective successor. For instance, at Hewlett-Packard, the board of Directors realized that decisiveness should be the key criterion for selecting the future CEO for the company and hence selected Carly Fiorina from Lucent.

Thirdly, the board of Directors should also take into consideration the list of outside candidates along with the insiders. Enterprises usually prefer outsiders for the position of the CEO when they are in turmoil. For instance, Larry Johnson, an outsider to Albertsons, one of America's largest retailers, was chosen as the CEO when the company had lost its focus after a merger. Similarly, Louis Gerstner, an outsider to IBM, was selected as the head of the company when it was on the verge of collapse. Not many people know that J.R.D. Tata was also considering Nusli Wadia of Bombay Dyeing as his successor. If no suitable candidates are found within the organization, the board of Directors can search for potential outside candidates who can be groomed into the position of the leader.

Fourthly, the Directors should base succession decisions on real human interactions. There are many companies which convert succession planning into a passive dull exercise which rarely yields the best future leader. Boards tend to select a good leader when they personally meet promising candidates, sometimes years before the formal proclamation for the succession planning is made.

Fifthly, the selection process should be fair and be free of any sort of politics. Only then can the right candidate be chosen. Here is a paragraph from a write-up titled 'Control your destiny or someone else will' penned by Noel M. Tichy (a longtime consultant for General Electric) and Stratford Sherman (editor of 'Fortune' magazine):

The management-succession process that placed venerable General Electric in Welch's hands exemplifies the best and most vital aspects of the old GE culture. [Prior CEO Reginald] Jones spent years selecting him from a group of candidates so highly qualified that almost all of them ended up heading major corporations... Jones insisted on a long, laborious, exactly thorough process that would carefully consider every eligible candidate, then rely on reason alone to select the best qualified. The result ranks among the finest examples of succession planning in corporate history.

And finally, succession planning should be a continuous process and the planning should begin years before the actual event occurs. For instance, the founder of Motorola, Paul Galvin, began grooming his son Bob Galvin long before he transferred power to him. Bob Galvin began working at Motorola in 1940 as a high school student and was with the company for 16 years before he became the president of the company, and for 19 years before he became the Chief Executive Officer. Paul Galvin ensured that Bob Galvin understood clearly what his company was all about and made him start as a stock clerk with no special privileges. When Bob became the CEO in 1959, he immediately commenced thinking about management development and succession planning for the next generation, 25 years before he passed on the reins to his son. In India, the Founder of the Oberoi Group Rai Bahadur Mohan Singh Oberoi had selected his younger son Prithwi Raj Singh as the heir apparent years before the demise of his eldest son Tilak Raj Singh.

Hope this answer has helped you to some extent.

Your second question was: 'What is the way then to ensure organization runs as ideally as envisaged by the founding leader?'

The founding leader can often understand the future of the organization and accordingly makes the arrangement. For instance, before his death G.D. Birla had divided the companies of the Birla Group among his sons and nephews. But there were reports of dissatisfaction; each group thought that the other got more. We all know the rift in the Birla clan regarding the holdings of Century Textiles and Piani Investments. But the founding leader can often fail to realize that the organization might be disintegrated after his or her demise. Did Dhirubhai Ambani ever think that his sons would divide the Reliance empire? So that element of risk and uncertainty would always remain.

Here, Sri Aurobindo Ashram is an ideal example of how an organization can run smoothly despite the physical absence of its founding figures, that is, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. After Sri Aurobindo left his body in December 1950, the Mother formed the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust with four senior members of the Ashram, with her as the head of the Trust. But as the managing trustee, she appointed an inmate who had wonderful legal knowledge. When the Mother too left her body, the trustees continued to work as they used to do when the Mother was physically present. The Mother was the President of some organizations associated with the Ashram. After her physical departure that post was not abolished nor did anyone succeed her. They kept the position as it was and continued to work as they used to do when the Mother was in her physical body. Sri Aurobindo had written in one of his letters that always act as if the Mother was watching you. And that's exactly what the Ashram inmates follow. Of course, there have been certain changes which one is compelled to make due to obvious reasons but otherwise there has been no major deviation. The best way to run the organization is to keep alive the ideals set by the founder and seeing to it that no deviation takes place.

Anurag: Gunwant, with reference to succession planning practised by the Buddhist monks while choosing their leader, that is, the 'Karmapa', I would say that this practice is not for the future only; such planning of succession does exist in present times as well. I have spoken about it in the sixth process of succession planning where I have referred to the case of Motorola. Let's take, for instance, the case of the Basant Kumar Birla Group. Mr. B.K. Birla has clearly declared that after his demise, his business group would be divided among his two daughters Jayashree and Manjushree and grandson Kumar Mangalam Birla. He has also declared which company would go to which person; thus, he has eradicated all prospective conflicts.

If the leader distinctly mentions who would succeed him, there would be no conflict or confusion. But if he gives the charge of finding the suitable candidate who would succeed him to the higher authorities of the management only after his demise, then there would be an element of risk for the person chosen may not be a suitable leader.

Let's take the case of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. When the Mother left her physical body in November 1973, no one succeeded her as the spiritual leader of the organization. The disciples and followers began to look up to Nolini Kanta Gupta, the Secretary of the Ashram as well as a member of the Trust Board who had been closely associated with Sri Aurobindo since the time when he was a political leader and who as a sadhak and yogi was considered a paragon of the Integral Yoga. He was not a leader in the ordinary sense but was regarded as an 'uttar-sadhak' of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. So there was no conscious succession planning and yet he was looked as the 'Karta' of the undivided spiritual family of Sri Aurobindo.

Rahul: While on the topic of grooming and succession planning, I have a query.

From the example of Motorola it was not unexpected since the person being groomed was the son of the founder. It is reasonable to expect that the son would have been groomed on the job as well as at home. He would have been privy to the inmost thoughts and values of his parents. What happens in case of an outsider? His understanding and appreciation of the founder would be restricted only to the external/visible traits of the Founder. Is it possible to expect the same quality of polish and finish in such situations?

Another question pertains to turnover of successor-designate.

The person being groomed—if an outsider—may not have the patience to wait out this duration of training and hence may move off to some other attractive position. How does the succession plan motivate the potential candidate so that he is prepared to wait out the training period?

The reason these questions came up was because I have noticed in a number of instances people with a bright future take all the training and ideas they can from one company and use it to switch over to a readymade post in another company. This leads to a waste of time and money spent on training and development.

Gunwant: I agree with Rahul's observation.

Please see the recent news on [http://www.livenewsindia.com/business/c ... ob-offers/](http://www.livenewsindia.com/business/c...ob-offers/)

Attrition is rampant in IT industry. With the news above, it is clear that leaders at the top level too are following the same route.

In some cases around me, I see family businesses thriving as there is no possibility of attrition from the management.

Anurag: Dear Rahul, you have raised some good points. See, although outsiders are preferred to insiders while considering succession planning in certain situations, the former would always lack the merits that the latter have. The insider has a good network of loyalists who help when he/she becomes the leader, whereas the outsider would have to build this network from scratch after joining the organization. Moreover, the outsider would take some time to get accustomed to his or her colleagues and the organizational culture. But the markets would not give so much time and such a person may also begin to feel isolated from the existing managers. Hence, in order to create a network of loyalists swiftly, the outsider may end up choosing the wrong persons. As per a survey, companies are also more willing to fire an outsider than an insider. According to Booz Allen (a strategic management and technology consulting firm), outsider CEOs deliver 7% higher returns than insider CEOs to their

shareholders in the first half of their term whereas in the second half the insider CEOs deliver a 5.5% higher returns than the outsider CEOs to their shareholders. Why does this happen? The reason for this huge drop in the performance of the outsider CEO in the second half is due to the fact that the outsiders who join as CEOs are often star performers in their previous assignments but when they join a failing enterprise, the expectations rise among the members of the enterprise and also among the shareholders and investors, resulting in the increase of the share prices of the company. But after some time when it becomes evident that solving the company's problems would take considerable time, markets get disillusioned and the share prices drop. That is why hiring an outsider is considered to be a risky decision.

However, a company while hiring an outsider can consider the following guidelines advised by Jim Collins, the author of 'Good to Great' and co-author of 'Built to Last.'

- Look at the earlier company run by this outsider. See how the company is performing after the outsider has left. This shows whether the outsider has compromised long-term growth for the sake of short-term growth.
- Check the track record of the head-hunting firm that is helping in the recruitment of the CEO. If the CEOs recommended by this firm have stayed with the recruiting firms only for a short duration and have been fired later, then avoid dealing with that head-hunting firm.
- Choose the CEO from the same industry or at least from a relevant industry. Research shows that a CEO's performance is significantly influenced by his background: the industry from which the person is coming, the company in which he or she has worked, and the culture in which he or she operated before.

This, I presume, has answered your first query. Coming to the second question. The possibility that the person after receiving the necessary training to boost his or her career would leave the organization for a better job in a superior company would always exist. This is one of the major disadvantages of the training and development programmes undertaken by companies. But such things happen in the first and middle levels of the hierarchy mostly and not in the higher or top level (which comprises of posts like 'CEO', 'President', 'Vice-President', 'Executive Director' and so on). For instance, if a company appoints an outsider as its CEO, the only training that would probably be rendered to him or her is induction training. This person is appointed as the CEO by the governing body for the fact that he or she happens to be the expert in the field. So the question of training does not arise.

Anurag: Dear friends, here is an email I have received recently in which a good instance of succession planning is given. The moment I read it, I had a sort of 'Eureka' moment. Hope you would find it interesting as well.

A successful businessman was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business.

Instead of choosing one of his Directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together.

He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have decided to choose one of you." The young executives were shocked, but the boss continued. "I am going to give each one of you a SEED today - one very special SEED. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO."

One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly, told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Every day, he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.

Jim kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew.

Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing.

By now, others were talking about their plants, but Jim didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure.

Six months went by—still nothing in Jim's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Jim didn't say anything to his colleagues, however, he just kept watering and fertilizing the soil—he so wanted the seed to grow.

A year finally went by and all the young executives of the company brought their plants to the CEO for inspection.

Jim told his wife that he wasn't going to take an empty pot. But she asked him to be honest about what happened. Jim felt sick to his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of his life, but he knew his wife was right. He took his empty pot to the board room. When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other executives. They were beautiful—in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him!

When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives.

Jim just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the CEO. "Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!"

All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered the Financial Director to bring him to the front. Jim was terrified. He thought, "The CEO knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!"

When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed. Jim told him the story.

The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim, and then announced to the young executives, "Behold your next Chief Executive Officer! His name is Jim!"

Jim couldn't believe it. He couldn't even grow his seed. "How could he be the new CEO?" the others said. Then the CEO said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds; they were dead — it was not possible for them to grow.

All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new Chief Executive Officer!"

Rahul: The post about Jim was great. That is exactly the quality that a leader or aspirants to higher responsibilities must have. The courage to accept failures and face them is easier said than implemented.



Digital image by jscreationzs

Source: http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1152

LEADERSHIP, MORALITY AND JUDGMENT

Gunwant: Dear Anurag, I have a question. A leader may have excellent capabilities to lead his organization. But what if he is characterless? Does his or her immoral behavior outside the organization in personal life have a negative impact on the organization? Do the wrong deeds and wrong actions of such a leader have some negative impact on the people he manages?

I would want to know the effects a leader with negative traits in personal life can have on the lives of people in the organization.

Anurag: Gunwant, you want to know whether a leader's immoral behaviour in his or her personal life will have a negative impact on the organization and that whether his or her negative characteristics can affect the lives of the people in the organization.

I would say, the answer is – 'Yes and 'No'. See, we all would agree that none of us are perfect and those imperfections are reflected either in our professional lives or personal lives. I know many persons who are in-charge of famous spiritual centres; in the eyes of their followers they are just like gods. But appearance is always different from reality; such persons misappropriate lakhs of rupees from the accounts of the centres every month. So what should we do? What should be our approach and attitude towards them?

In his 'Inspired Talks', Swami Vivekananda has said that one must obey one's Guru but must never obey blindly. The same advice I would like to give you. Appreciate the positive features in the personality of the leader and try to imbibe them within yourself. Respect him or her as a leader but do not adore him or her as a guide as far as you as an individual is concerned. One must be frank enough to call a spade a spade.

Whether the negative qualities of the leader would affect the followers depends on the personality of the followers only. There can be two approaches; first, the followers might get immensely influenced for they look upon a successful person as an ideal and they tend to accept him or her with all merits and demerits. The second approach could be that the followers may follow the leader in their professional lives but would prefer to keep themselves away from him or her the moment their working hours or assignments come to an end.

It depends on the followers only whom they would love to follow—the child of the Divine or the son of Satan! The ball would always be in their court.

Morality is a subjective concept. What might appear immoral to X might not appear the same to Y and Z, isn't it?

Anurag: Dear friends, in the introductory class on 'Leadership', I had said: "Another quality that must exist in a leader is right judgment. A leader must know what is good and bad for the organization but at the same time he or she must not be judgmental towards people. No one except the Divine can make the most precise judgment and the leader, as the instrument of the Divine's work, should only rely on the inner command about his or her course of action."

To illustrate how the Mother judged people, I am narrating an incident. Once, in the Ashram Playground, a race was organized in which each participant had to roll a wooden dumb-bell with a stick keeping to one's lane and whoever came fastest without touching the lines of the lanes or touching the dumb-bell by hand would be first. The Mother was one of the judges. While some participants ran fast cutting the lines, some straightened the dumb-bells with hand and some kept on trying since the race was actually happening on sand. The other judges took hold of the first three participants who had reached the finishing line and took them to the Mother. The Mother asked them to wait till the last participant came. The last participant happened to be a young girl. When she finally reached the finishing line, the Mother declared her first and said that though she came last she had followed the rules laid down by the Mother and had followed a straight line.

It is thus that an ideal leader should deliver his/her judgment.

LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP: SOME NEW CONCEPTS

Anurag: Today I will discuss some new leadership concepts which have been developed in recent times. While studying these concepts, we can find out which category our boss/leader belongs to and how one can deal with them.

According to Jim Collins, a noted management expert, leaders are classified into five levels. A 'Level 1' leader is a highly competent individual and plays a pivotal role in the success of his organization through his or her talent, expertise, knowledge, skills and good habits. A 'Level 2' leader is a contributing team member who is quite good at working with team members and ensures that the team successfully meets the objectives assigned to it and fulfils the core purpose. A 'Level 3' leader is a competent manager who is skilled at organizing people and resources towards the effective and efficient pursuit of the objectives of the enterprise. A 'Level 4' leader is an effective leader who sets high performance standards and motivates the people remarkably well and leads them single-mindedly towards realizing his or her vision for the enterprise. And finally, a 'Level 5' leader transforms the enterprise into a great institution.

Now, you may ask: what are the differences between the 'Level 4' and 'Level 5' leaders. Do they not share the same features?

You see, a 'Level 5' leader is very ambitious for the success of the organization and wants it to be successful irrespective of his or her presence at the helm. But a 'Level 4' leader is not quite concerned about the greatness of the enterprise once he or she is no longer in charge of it. Such a leader ensures a high level of performance during his or her tenure but does not care about the performance of the organization afterwards. He or she is more concerned about personal greatness than that of the company's.

Now, how can one identify a 'Level 5' leader? Such a leader would have the two following features.

- Fierce will: This type of leader would demonstrate a fierce will in ensuring superb results for the organization and play the most significant role in transforming the organization that were good companies to great companies.
- Compelling Humility: Such leaders would have compelling humility and shun public attention. They are never boastful and are always happy to discuss in detail about their company and the contribution of the employees, but at the same time are generally averse to discussing their role in the success of the company.

Here is another category of leaders known as 'Narcissistic Leaders'. Such leaders are obsessed with power, status, prestige and superiority and they maneuver people into strengthening their shaky self-esteem. Such leaders are not extraordinary at analysis and may not be able to break up big questions into manageable problems. But they are exceptional at envisioning the big picture. They are good orators and use a language that evokes images and symbols. They firmly believe that inspiring speeches change people. Their charisma might mislead us into thinking that they are independent leaders but in reality it is not so. They are dependent on their followers for affirmation and adulation. Their speeches generally have the hidden motive of rousing adulation which can soothe their ego and affirm their self-confidence. These narcissistic leaders get increasingly self-assured as the number of followers increases. Then they start taking spontaneous decisions without much thought and consideration. They assume that they are invincible. The increasing adulation of larger numbers of followers makes them ignore caution and advice. They continue with their unassailable logic that they were sure and right earlier when everyone else was in doubt. They do not try to persuade people who disagree and hence begin to ignore them. As a result, they get isolated from people. They are also emotionally isolated for they are uncomfortable with their own emotions and hence can hardly cope up with others' negative feelings. They view criticism as a threat to their self-image and confidence. Unless there is a really big problem, they never take feedback for fear of criticism and cannot tolerate dissent. They are tough with people and for such leaders teamwork is nothing more than working with a team of yes-men. As a result of this attitude, independent minded people either leave the company or are told to leave and this leads to a succession problem. Though

they yearn for empathy from others, they are seldom empathetic towards their followers and this lack of empathy can stifle their ability to communicate. Hence, they may have to rely entirely on their passion and conviction to lead people. They are unconcerned about any genuine feedback and believe they need not change as long as they are successful. They clearly understand who is on their side and who is not and this understanding helps them in using and exploiting their people. This explains why such leaders are disliked despite their charisma and initial success. They fail to be mentors or to be mentored themselves. While they are being mentored they aspire to control their mentors and they lack the intimacy required to be mentors. They instruct instead of coaching. Such leaders are relentless and ruthless and do not feel bothered by a conscience. For them winning is all that matters. Companies headed by such leaders have high internal competition and the employees of these companies are passionate about winning. The employees are, however, driven only by promise of glory or fear of extinction. Such leaders operate in the "Only the paranoid survive" mode and though this sort of behaviour might be useful in certain industries which are going through tumult, but in general, it harms the organization in the long term. They are workaholics and expect the subordinates to act like them. They are loyal to their organizations and their values and are also keen to take on more responsibilities so that more people are accountable to them. And finally, they are power hungry who use different ways to gain power by adopting means like manipulation, controlling communication, information and decision-making.

Gunwant: Anurag, that was a nice post. Could you give examples of each type? To me, it seems 90% leaders fall in narcissist category.

Anurag: Gunwant, an ideal example of the 'Level 5 leader' would be Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart. When he was suffering from cancer in 1992, everyone thought what would happen to Wal-Mart after him. But he wanted to prove that Wal-Mart was bigger than himself and show that the organization would be equally successful even when it was not headed by a leader like him. He selected David Glass, who was not as charismatic as Mr. Walton, as his successor but Wal-Mart continued to do well even after its founder was no longer its head.

An ideal example of the 'Level 4 leader' would be Lee Iacocca, the chairman of Chrysler. He was solely responsible for the turnaround of the company but later he became more interested in building up his own image. He penned an autobiography and made a world-tour to promote the book, participated in various talk shows, featured in 80 commercials and even thought of running for the US presidency. Due to such activities, the share price of Chrysler which performed at 2.9 times the general market in the first half of his tenure was 51% behind the general market in the second half of his tenure. After getting accustomed to exercising power associated with the posts of Chief Executive

Officer and Chairman, he was absolutely reluctant to let go off his authority and continued to postpone his retirement. When he finally decided to retire, he demanded a private jet and stock options from the board and after his retirement, he joined hands with Kirk Kerkorian, the largest individual investor of the company, and made an unsuccessful bid for Chrysler.

I agree with you that many leaders tend to be narcissistic. Even Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple Computers, is included in this category for the role he had played in the premature death of 'Apple Lisa', the model launched by Apple after its highly successful product Apple II. Steve Jobs wanted to make the aforesaid product his brainchild when it was conceived and accordingly took over as the project leader. But halfway through the product he was replaced by Jon Couch as the head of the project. This hurt Steve's ego greatly. So, when he became the project leader of Macintosh, he began to promote it as his brainchild and declared that Macintosh would be the most incredible computer in the world—it would be another Apple II. He added that though its features would be like Apple Lisa it would be available at one-fourth of its price. This caused the potential buyers to postpone their purchase of Apple Lisa and wait for Macintosh which was scheduled to hit the market within six months. Steve also declared that Macintosh would be incompatible with Apple Lisa, thus making Macintosh the standard computer in the future. Though Macintosh went on to become one of the best selling products of Apple Computers, Steve's narcissism caused the death of a promising product which had cost the company millions of dollars.

I hope this would help to some extent.

Gunwant: Thanks Anurag. The examples really helped. I was especially looking for Level 5 example. Just like we have 5 levels of leaders, do we have similar levels for followers too?

Anurag: Gunwant, I don't think there are any such classifications about followers but what I feel is that the features of the 'Level 4' and 'Level 5' are applicable to the followers as well because a person who is a follower today might become after a couple of years a leader (just as a sapling becomes a tree in the future). Moreover, if we observe carefully, we would find that some of the traits of 'Level 4' and 'Level 5' are present in the followers as well. So I personally feel that these classifications are applicable to both leaders and followers.

Rahul: Would it be correct to say that a successful leader must encompass all the 5 levels in him or her depending on the situation?

How does spiritualization tie in with these 5 levels?

Anurag: Dear Rahul, here are your answers:

1. "Would it be correct to say that a successful leader must encompass all the 5 levels in him or her depending on the situation?"

Yes, for he or she has to work according to the situation.

2. "How does spiritualization tie in with these five levels?"

Spiritualization sets in the moment you begin to look upon a particular work as a task of the Divine which you need to do as a worker or child of the Divine not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine only. In the various levels—starting from Level 1 to Level 5—you are working as an instrument of the Divine and doing the work of the Divine. No task would be considered to be trivial or insignificant once it is done as an offering to the Divine and the successful completion of each task would imply that the offering has been accepted by the Divine.

OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM OF THE LEADER

Anurag: No matter how good a leader is, he or she is also subjected to harsh criticism by the followers. In the corporate sector, we find the Chairman or Managing Director of the company being heckled at the Annual General Meetings for not giving adequate dividends to the shareholders or for some other reasons. They forget what the leader has done or is doing for the organization. The same thing happens with spiritual leaders as well. Even Jesus Christ was betrayed by his follower Judas. All such things happen because a time comes when no matter how intelligent or loyal the followers are they become a prey to some hostile power which compels them to deviate from the path. It would be an error to assume that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as leaders of the Ashram, never received any opposition from their disciples. But what is remarkable is the way they had handled the situation and brought them under control. Once, a disciple wrote a very strong letter to the Mother criticizing her. However, he didn't sign his name in the letter. The Mother, by using her occult force, came to know who the disciple was and she penned a good reply for him. But before sending the letter to the disciple, she went to Sri Aurobindo and read out both the letters, the one written by the disciple and the one written by the Mother. When the Mother asked Sri Aurobindo whether she should send the letter, he replied in just two words: "Don't reply." On another occasion, an attendant of the Mother had become hostile and was spreading slanderous insinuations against her and Sri Aurobindo. When the matter was reported to the Mother, she said: "I've spoken to Sri Aurobindo also about this and he said to me: 'You know well it is not a question of this person or that person. Sending away one person won't help us in any way. We are fighting

with the hostile force, not with the person. If you send away one person, it will catch hold of another.”

So we observe that neither the Mother nor Sri Aurobindo favoured the expulsion of the rebel-disciples from the Ashram for they knew such an act would not solve the problem. The act of expulsion could bring about a temporary solution only and what was necessary was a permanent solution. Therefore, Integral Management teaches us to identify the roots of all difficulties and work for its total elimination, and human being is the only instrument who is capable of doing so with help from the Divine.

Someone comes and insults you or says unpleasant things to you; and if you begin to vibrate in unison with this anger or this ill-will, you feel quite weak and powerless and usually you make a fool of yourself. But if you manage to keep within yourself, especially in your head, a complete immobility which refuses to receive these vibrations, then at the same time you feel a great strength, and the other person cannot disturb you. If you remain very quiet, even physically, and when violence is directed at you, you are able to remain very quiet, very silent, very still, well, that has a power not only over you but over the other person also. If you don't have all these vibrations of inner response, everywhere, this has an almost immediate effect upon the other person.

That gives you an idea of the power of immobility. And it is a very common fact that can occur every day; it is not a great event of spiritual life, it is something of the outer, material life.

There is a tremendous power in immobility: mental immobility, sensorial immobility, physical immobility. If you can remain like a wall, absolutely motionless, everything the other person sends you will immediately fall back upon him. And it has an immediate action. It can stop the arm of the assassin, you understand, it has that strength. Only, one must not just appear to be immobile and yet be boiling inside! That's not what I mean. I mean an integral immobility.

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