



Dynamics of Consciousness in Management

How does one apply the principles of self-development and self-mastery in the field of Management? How does one create a whole different way of working in a system entrenched in the so-called 'real world'? How does one integrate the seemingly diverse worlds of spirituality and management? The following extract from a talk by Ameeta Mehra, for the management aspirants of Miranda House, provides an insight.....

The most important aspect of management is Man, or the Human Being, and the development of the qualities of that human being or Manager.

There is a familiar saying we have all heard: 'Charity begins at home'. Likewise, Management begins with Man. (Here I use the word 'man' in the generic form, not to exclude the woman, but man as in a human being.) The President of a giant multinational replied, on being asked what he produced, built, manufactured, 'I do not manufacture automobiles, nor do I prepare shoestrings, I build only men, because my men build these things.' Management presupposes the existence of Man. In fact, man is the first syllable in the word, MAN-agement. Now, if man is the central figure in management, and as this great president of a multinational said, he builds men, then how does one build men? How does one build oneself? It is here that we come to the Dynamics of Consciousness in Management.

Firstly, let me define what is Consciousness. Those who are students of philosophy, I will give you a quick hint before I go on – it is Chit – the Chit of Sat-Chit-Ananda. For those who are management students, or from different disciplines, 'consciousness' is essentially, in the most ordinary parlance, awareness – to be conscious. But in the original sense, consciousness is actually the stuff of all existence. There isn't any existence without consciousness. Consciousness is the basis of all existence. Consciousness is whole, indivisible, and is the very nature of existence. It is consciousness that animates existence. Consciousness also exists in inanimate objects. We will come to that in a little while.

So, to go on to what is consciousness in man, we can say that the problem or the main issue here is that man or we as human beings are not fully conscious of our wholistic, indivisible consciousness. And that is one of the main problems. Now, to define consciousness in man, one can say, to make it very simple, there are five main levels of consciousness in man. There is the consciousness that exists

at the physical level, what we call our physical consciousness, defined by the body. You all are aware of your body and physical consciousness – that is the first layer of consciousness. The second is the vital consciousness which is typified by 'rajas'. The third is the mental consciousness, typified by 'sattva'. The fourth consciousness in man is the psychic consciousness or the true consciousness of enlightenment or the consciousness of the *atma* or *atmavidya* or *atmacetana*. And what is the fifth layer of consciousness? Spiritual. And that consciousness is defined as a unitary consciousness devoid of ego, indivisible and complete.

Now if there are five consciousnesses in man, in management what do most of us operate from? We all function from how we feel about things, our emotions are very dominating. All these things – ambition, power, domination, sensations – these are all vital forces. So mainly you see, especially in the arena of management, the vital is the most dominant.¹

There are three essential ways to infuse consciousness in management. The first way to infuse consciousness in management is to look upon the human being not just as a worker and producer in a huge machinery of production or business, but as a living soul. Now this is something that western management is coming around to. In fact, I have collected for your interest, some very interesting stories and surveys done in the west by many people on the essential qualities of a good manager. And it is very interesting how the eastern survey and the western survey come together, for the first time, towards the end of the 20th century. So this... to look at the human being as more than a worker or a producer in a huge machinery or business, but as a living soul is the first way of infusing consciousness in management. And this is not only management in the sense of business, but even management of a school, even as a teacher, even as a student... if we look at our students as mere minds and bodies to be stuffed with information, you can see that you

¹ Here, the speaker explained how these different consciousnesses operate in the human being and determine his attitude towards life, work and difficulties. While the physical consciousnesses makes us apathetic, resigned, mechanical, the vital introduces the element of effort for the sake of self-aggrandisement. The mental consciousness views work as a duty and service, and tries to solve problems dispassionately. The inner or the psychic consciousness sees difficulties as opportunities for progress and takes work as a means for inner growth.

A partial transcript of a Talk given by Ameeta Mehra, to the students of Miranda House, under the Gnostic Centre's series: In Search of the Soul of India - The Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of India Talks Series.



are going to be doing more harm than good. But when you look at students or at young people as living souls, growing souls who have come on earth to fulfil a *dharmā*, a particular mission, and the job of the teacher is to bring out that uniqueness, that potential in each student, then the whole business of education and educational management changes – it becomes something very, very interesting. There is now slowly coming an awakening, people are beginning to realise that the true potential in management is this aspect of allowing the person to be a full person, and growing in all its dimensions – physical, mental, vital, psychic, spiritual. Not just to cut off the body, or cut off the head and say, no, you function only with your brains or only with your arms. That is not true management.

The second quality or the second way to infuse consciousness in management is to base our relationships with others on mutual trust and love. Now, we have all heard that, but today, especially international business is coming around to it. More and more, the best businessmen, the best managers, the best multinational companies are those that are seen in the public eye to be caring, to be trustworthy, to believe in human values, to take care of the environment – and all these things that were earlier considered, ‘ah, hogwash, no we have to be bothered about the bottom line, what is the net profit of the company, how do we get ahead of our competitors’ – that being the only issue. That is no longer the only issue. Of course, profit is one of the key moti-

vators in business and to make money is one of the primary aims of business, but to what purpose? That purpose is being redefined. That purpose is being challenged all over the world. Money for what purpose? To harmonise and collaborate instead of creating divisions and discord through unhealthy competition. There are mergers going on. Today the greatest words are strategic alliances in multinational companies, and Coke has come to India – it wants to have its subsidiaries, it wants to join hands with Indian partners. Everybody wants to spread all over the world. There is no such thing as national boundaries in business today. Why is that happening? And because this is happening more and more there is a cultural diversity, cultural exchange and understanding and more and more the greatest managers and leaders are beginning to realise that the key issues are: ‘Do I trust him? Does he trust me? What is this relationship based on?’ There is no relationship in business that is not based on trust. It is not just a human value, it has now become a social and commercial value. And as young aspiring managers, in whatever area – whether it is in social work, business, education, science... because management is something that is common to life, the challenge is to build ourselves as people first. Anywhere... the core values are the same. The core bases are the same.

The third way to infuse consciousness in management – and this is very interesting, some of you may not have ever heard it – is to consider matter as



divine. Now what does this mean – to consider matter as divine? This means that even material objects, if we believe in consciousness being the very stuff of existence – Sacchidananda – Chit being the very stuff of existence – then there is even consciousness in matter. There is as much consciousness in this table as there is in me or you, but at a different level. The consciousness of this table is at the most physical, material level, while the consciousness in you and me is at the vital and mental level, and then of course, the inner level. Let me give you a very practical example so that it doesn't go over your head. You know you have all owned objects – say, a pen-knife or a very favourite fountain pen that you have been using. As long as you have been using it and taking care of it, making sure that the nib is cleaned, the ink is refilled properly – you know, it is very expensive so you look after it very well, you take a cloth and you clean it up and you put it in your bag – it is perfect. One day your father gives you another pen, which is much, much better, you know, it is the latest pen, and you find that this pen writes so much more smoothly and it has so many different nib attachments and it is so much more beautiful that you lose interest in the old pen. What happens to the old fountain pen? Have you all tried to use your old pens again? You will see what happens. Even though it was working beautifully while you were using it, once you stopped using it, it began to rust. What is this due to? It began to be a bit scratchy. What is this due to? Same with any material object. It is due to the lack of consciousness and neglect. You stopped taking care of it and it responds to care, it responds to love, it responds to attention, so it began to wither away – it is the same thing in material things. And that is a very important secret of business – if you treat things with care and consideration, they last for many, many years and you must begin to see that everything has that divinity, that consciousness. The more you take care of it, it shines more, it becomes more beautiful over time. The less you take care of it, it rusts and it slowly withers away. So, to consider matter as divine. The reason why you all have grown so beautifully and have progressed so far in your life is because of the care your parents took, and if you were denied that care – you see children who are orphans and who don't have the love of their mother, what do they become like? Physically also, they are half the size. Physically even, forget about vitally and mentally and emotionally. So, the same principle applies in management. There is no distinction. The same principle applies in education. Today great managers, great companies are beginning to realise it. And do you know where they are picking up all this from? From us. From India. From our ancient spiritual, cultural knowledge.

What are the qualities of a good manager? What is a good manager? A good manager is a good team leader. Team leader, as in cricket, Sachin Tendulkar versus Azharuddin, or a team leader... Pakistan versus India – Kargil? But a good manager is a good team leader in any sphere of life – sports, politics, business, home, education. Now, how do you as aspiring students of management prepare to become good managers? I suppose that is an important question to address here. Let us examine what one of the world's leading management experts, Warren Benice says – he is the founding chairman of the Leadership Institute of California and is a leading expert in management in the world, and I took this out from his book. He has written out five traits, after a period of 50 years that he has been working with all the top companies of the world. The five traits that he considers as the traits of emerging leaders – and, of course he puts it in the context of the 21st century, which is what really you are going to be part of – not the 20th, but the 21st – you have to look ahead. So, what are the qualities that we look for in managers in the 21st century? He said, they are the following:

1. 'They have a passion and a purpose.' Now, the question is how does one have a passion and a purpose. Do you have a passion and a purpose? Do you know the aim of your life? Some of you do, some of you don't. How do you have a passion and a purpose for anything? First of all, you must know what you want to do, and what you want to be. Secondly, you have to take interest in whatever you do. That is how you develop yourself. And thirdly, you have to find out what is your *swadharma*, because you can only have passion in something that is your special uniqueness. You cannot have passion in something that is not your *swadharma*. So find out what your *swadharma* is. Behind this simple thing – they have a passion and a purpose – and we say 'wonderful, wonderful', but what is behind? How do you get passion and a purpose? Look for something that you feel is your *swadharma*, your purpose. You will immediately be passionate about it.

2. 'They generate and sustain trust.' But, one can only inspire trust in others if one trusts others. Ask yourselves just now, how many of us trust other people? To the ability that you can trust another human being is the ability or the same proportion to which he will trust you or she will trust you. This is a law. So therefore, you have to consciously understand what is the basis of trust. These are wonderful words, but what does it really mean when you begin to look behind them. And that is what you young people must do. Don't take words at their face value. Look behind them. What does it mean, 'generate trust'? You say, 'yeah, yeah, wonderful, got a new mantra', but what does it mean? How do you



generate trust in other people? Who are the people you trust most? Ask yourself. What is it that makes you trust them so much? What quality is it in them that makes you trust them so much, and more importantly, what quality is it in you? There are some people who find it very difficult to trust other people. They are very suspicious by nature. I will tell you, it will show in their life – that suspiciousness. It will make them small, narrow. You will never be able to encompass the whole wide world in your arms, or in your scope. People who do business over continents have to depend on trust. How do they generate trust? Why should I trust him? Why should I trust this particular manager or this particular leader? How can I give him all my money? How can I give him my entire life so I can work for him? Well, there are three ways, in management... I will come to the fourth which I think is the basis of all this – that I will come to... there are three ways. If you notice the way we manage things or manage people – we can either manage them through fear, or through the carrot and stick approach – you do something good, I give you a reward, you do something bad, you get a stick. The third way is again what distinguishes good leadership, good managers from mediocre ones, and that is ‘become a gardener’. Do you know what becoming a gardener is? Have you ever seen your gardener, or if your mother works in the garden? Unconditional love. You give what everybody requires. You discipline, yes. You take out all the weeds, but all for one purpose – for the welfare of that person, for the progress of that person, not for yourself. Now, this is again very important... the more you can work with your heart, that means not emotionally, that means you can give unconditional love to your employees and to the people who you work with – as educators, to your students, and as parents, to your children – the more you will find that those who you take care of, whether they are illiterate labour, whether they are management workers, whether they are children, whoever they may be – those who you take care of will blossom like flowers. Do you know what the gardener does? He weeds, he disciplines, he nurtures, he puts the manure, the fertiliser and then what does he do? He leaves each seed to sprout into a flower or into a tree at its own time. He doesn’t push it and say, no, no, you have to do it right now. There is a season for each person, there is a season for each soul, and each being grows at its own time and period. So it is in a management concern. Each person has his own uniqueness and he will blossom at his own time. Some of the greatest failures have made the best managers. Why? Same reason. They have understood this growth pattern. The more mistakes you make, the better is your growth curve in a company. In fact, there is a very funny story of an IBM

employee who went to his boss. He had lost a couple of million dollars for the company and he was so frustrated and so scared, he went to his boss, the CEO of IBM, with his resignation letter and he said, ‘I am sorry I cost the company so much.’ Do you know what the CEO turned around and told him? He shouted at him. He said, ‘you fool, do you think we are going to let you go after we have paid so much money, we have invested so much money on your education? Now after you have learnt, do you think we are going to let you go? We have spent so much money in paying for your mistake, and now when you have become an asset to this company, you think we are about to ...?’ This is it. A whole different attitude towards life, a whole different attitude towards management. It is more in terms of taking mistakes as part of growth.



So how do you generate and sustain trust? There is just one word. Faith. Why faith? How does faith help in generating and sustaining trust? Why is faith a fundamental quality which will generate and sustain trust? You know Henry Ford of Ford Motor Cars, he once said to his employees, he addressed his company and he said one thing, ‘If you think you can, you’re right. If you think you can’t, you are also right, because you won’t be able to.’ So you are both right. If you think you can, you are right, if you think you can’t, you are right. Now what is behind this? If you think – it is the faith first – in believing. When you believe in something, when you believe that your company can be the best, if you believe that your concern can be the best, if you believe that you can be the best, in the sense of expressing your fullest potential, not best at the expense of others, but best at your fullest potential, then you can. But if you already start with this belief that I can’t, you are right, you won’t be able to.

So, faith is the quality. Develop a faith. The more faith you have in life, the more faith you have in yourself, the more faith you have in other people – it is a cycle. And of course, the basis of faith is faith in a higher destiny, potential, for after all faith in life is what, it is That.



3. 'Good managers manifest a bias for action; convert purpose and vision into action.' How do you do that? We all know that, but how do you do that? You see, good leaders, good managers, what they say, they do, they deliver the goods. When they say it is going to happen, it will happen. They don't just speak, give long talks and then over. They materialise in their life, they stand for what they say and they are an example of what they believe in. And they produce the results. How do they do that? Will power. A unified will. Not just a will that... the mind says something else, the emotions say something else, the body is saying something else – 'no, no, no, this is too much, can't get up early in the morning and do this, want to sleep.' But it is a unified will, very strong determined will towards one thing. But more important, before you can do something, you must have a vision. As I am in an educational institution, I read this morning... and I came across a beautiful story on teachers. And I think it embodies what is a vision, when they say have a vision, the most important thing is what is your vision, your vision determines your life. Or as The Mother says, on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life. If your aim is high and disinterested, well, your life will also be like that. The quality of your aim will determine the quality of your life. Everybody says, great leaders have a great vision, have a far-reaching vision. What is vision? Let's take a practical story with that one.

*Three school teachers who teach history in different schools are asked the same question: What is your present job? The first one replies, 'Oh, I don't do very much. I just teach history to school kids.' The second person thinks a little more deeply and says, 'I am in the business of education.' The third person responds to the same question – what is your present job – looks straight into the eyes of the questioner, and in an inspired voice says, 'I am shaping the destiny of the nation. I teach young minds how they can make history.'*¹

I teach young minds how they can make history. Well, this is vision. And this is the vision that all great leaders, all great people have, whatever they do. It is not what you do. It is how you do it and why you do it, that is important. In fact, those who ask me, what is spirituality. I always answer this, this is true spirituality – not what you do, but how you do it and why you do it. And this is what great leaders have.

4. The last point that Warren Benice wrote: 'they keep learning and growing' – which is a fact, continuous learning. You see, those who have to make giant strides, if you are not aware of what is happening in Asia, the emerging market trends, the kind of products that are required, if you are not aware of world politics, of world economic policies, if you

are not aware of... from the most material things to the most spiritual things, if you are not aware, you don't know, then obviously you can't keep up. You are just out of the tide of the river that passes you by. So they keep learning and growing constantly. In fact, education is not something that ends in school or college, it begins after college and that is true education. All the teachers will tell you, they have learnt most when they have taught. That is the secret. So, the same. We learn after college, we learn after school. True learning begins then. What you are doing now is preparing your instruments to learn. Not learnt anything of true value, because you learn most from life. Life is the greatest teacher.

In a survey – taking you to the Indian point of view – this is a survey conducted in the west... in a survey conducted in 12 Indian organisations of 1000 managers throughout the country, researchers found five most important attributes of a good leader and these five attributes are what each one of them identified that defined and determined what they felt was a good leader.

1. 'Dynamism.' Very close to passion and purpose, you could say.

2. 'Inspiring character.' Yes, somewhat to do with generating and sustaining trust, but more than that. Inspiring character meant someone one could look up to for values.

3. 'Vision.' And we have just spoken about what is vision and how important that is and how it can change everything.

4. 'Ethical values.'

5. 'Spiritual strength.' Now, what is spiritual strength? Let us pause here, because it is quite different from Warren Benice's analysis – he doesn't mention that. Spiritual strength basically means endurance, a fortitude, to be able to bear things, when things get tough. When your company starts losing its market share, when your supplier or your workers go on strike and they just stop working. What do you do at that time, how do you manage that situation? This is where the quality of spiritual strength comes. Because if you don't have that strength, you will buckle under. Calmness, endurance, fortitude and a sense of deep trust in the Divine Gardener.

Therefore, if one wants to become a good manager, first one must learn to manage oneself, and to master oneself, because unless one can manage oneself and master oneself, how can one manage and master circumstances? If one wants to master circumstances, one must first master oneself. So we come to the same age-old Indian principle: to be *samrat*, one first has to be a *swarat*. To be able to command somebody, one first has to command oneself.

– Ameeta Mehra

¹ Debashis Chatterjee (1998) *Leading Consciously: A Pilgrimage Toward Self-Mastery*, Viva Books Private Limited, New Delhi