

"SWADHYAY"
QUEST FOR HUMAN FACE OF HR
"ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH SELF-INTROSPECTION"

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The quest for self-development of human beings is as old as the origin of human species on this planet. The explosive mix of elements posed early challenges to mankind leading to the survival of fittest. The human response to these challenges was built on the solid platform of the family/ tribe/ community and a close-knit society, with safety nets of material acquisitions. However, few civilizations were blessed and nurtured through the untiring efforts of spiritual leaders. We are the fortunate descendents of such an exception. While the dark night engulfed the rest of the world, ravaged by savages, squalor and hunger, our country was a paradise of riches and intellectual pursuits. Led by enlightened intellectuals and the wise, the fragrance of our culture rooted in equity and ethical value system spread worldwide.

Our community of excellence was raised from bare rock outcrop and dust by enlightened brotherhood through care, compassion and commitment to society at large. After centuries of socio-political upheaval, shaped by conflicting forces of war and peace, we are now witnessing the rise of a tolerant modern civilization. The world is thus divided horizontally and not vertically and kings and conquerors have been displaced by revolutions in science and technology leading to evolution of a boundaryless global village, networked through knowledge exchange and understanding.

Parallely, in response to the challenges of demographic pressures, dynamic business organizations and enterprises have risen from the western commercial wave. For these forces in pursuit of commercial successes, human beings form a critical resource. These corporates and business enterprises have profound impact on the world community at large. Call it the "boiling cauldron" or a "melting pot" the players get so keenly involved in this effort that often the distinction between the subject and the object is very thin. Everything is tested against the litmus test of profit and as they say in the US " what is good for GM is good for the world." With twenty percent of the world population consuming eighty percent of the world's resources, the third world is rich with only poor people and nations are left to fend for themselves.

It is a paradox of times that all revolutions political, scientific, and technological and the present, knowledge revolution, have progressively worked to the minimization of the very soul of the exercise – the human factor. Be it automation or robotics, the focus has been centered around direct reduction of human input thereby achieving the dubious distinction of "producing more and more by less and less for the least." The criticality of the quality of human resources to achieve excellence and corporate success has once again brought the focus back to the holistic development of man as a vital tool for achieving corporate success. The journey from mechanization to robotics through automation has brought us back to the strengthening of the human factor in corporate growth and development. Welcome to this reaffirmation of the criticality of human factor in functioning of the organizations.

The challenge before the corporate professionals now is to create conditions favorable to attract, retain, promote and develop employees capable of meeting competitive challenges without compromising the professional and ethical standards of governance and delivery. It is undoubtedly a tightrope walk where the subject and the object often interact in a confused or complex manner, with a great potential to harm the environment. A vast array of tools, technologies and processes are required to bear upon the professionals so as to achieve the largest good of the largest number without compromising the deliverables to the stakeholders. This indeed is a tall order, with the HR professionals shouldering the burden.

The most important dimension of this process is Time and its demands on the industrial environment. As demographic and market pressures keep mounting, efficiency and productivity have become synonymous with downsizing and abrupt job termination. Employees and vendors, at times, are pushed and tossed from the corporate basket into oblivion to achieve the upward graph at the bourses. Staff rationalization and pruning often appear like managerial excesses instead of balanced executive decisions.

As trustees of human capital in industry the HR functionaries have to perform, nay excel, under testing conditions. While the employees look up to them for succor, relief, counsel and even hand holding at times, the employer holds them accountable for nurturing excellence at affordable costs. They have tough questions to resolve without upsetting the apple cart, some of which may be seen below:-

- How to minimize Human sacrifice to achieve a lean and thin organization?
- How to recruit, train and retain the cream of Indian youth at affordable costs?
- How can a magic mix of material and intellectual rewards through the HR magic retain smart/ committed/ disciplined workaholics?
- How to build self directed teams in the organization while nurturing flexible/ pliant but creative workhorses for profit?
- How to leverage cutthroat competitiveness to sharpen employees' responses to seek Corporate Nirvana?
- To develop HR practices which will be sensitive to absorb human failings and escort the personnel through troubled times without being branded as Corporate Evangelists?

Business Management is not by any stretch of imagination, a bloodless war waged with mission-goals-strategy designed to seek victory at all cost. It is rather a body of knowledge applied to delivery of goods and services by humans to mankind with a win-win scenario for all. Therefore, it is time to take a stock of journey thus far, not through statistical cobwebs but through self-introspection and seek enlightenment as a true reward of toils. With India galloping to the status of global economic powerhouse and universal outsourcing destination, it is time to strengthen and streamline the policies, processes and practices, which will shape the Human Resources of our country.

As torchbearers of India's quest to seek conquest of forces of global frontiers of knowledge leveraged for maximization of human happiness and minimization of pain and misery, it is our solemn task to search for answers, which lie within us. As responsible citizens of the world, blessed by the legacy of a civilization where mind rules over the matter, we have to search for answers through self-introspection and seek enlightenment.

The philosophy and practice of "SWADHYAY" is a part of one's quest in search of human face of HR. Evolved and practiced by Late Pandurang Shastri Athavale it is a feasible model to transform any society, seeking "Enlightenment through self-introspection" for self empowerment. Though its emphasis is on individuals and their micro-communities, it has the power to raise creative potentialities of man through a rational journey of self-awareness and self-development to promote social responsibility. It attempts the broadening of inner human frontier thereby strengthening the fabric of an organization to withstand challenges and therefore deserves closer study by professionals involved in the field of HR.

There are numerous such alternative approaches and philosophies propounded by spiritual leaders and wise men, providing great strength and support to our society. As the emphasis on value system and commitment grows, due to the rise of the knowledge based systems and learning organizations, we shall have to go beyond the present industry norms and practices, to reach out to our rich store house of inner strength and cultural heritage to find solutions.

The vast storehouse and repository of India's spiritual wealth has been very simply and subtly offered to us in many forms and teachings. The Swadhyay philosophy seeking holistic development of individual for societal happiness is one such storehouse of wisdom. But there are many such streams of thought from Ram Krishna Paramahans to the modern Gurus of the likes of Stephen Covey and Deepak Chopra. Guided by these lighthouses, we must make a sincere attempt to carve out the path ahead, to build and sustain dynamic organizations to shape up to the present and future challenges while contributing to the growth of our country as dreamt by Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore:

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where you three into ever widening thought and action- lead the mind forward
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake.*

We beseech the management professionals especially those burdened with the responsibility of shaping the HR function to address the above issues and enlighten the path ahead.