

Book Review

MANAGEMENT MANTRAS

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Repro India Limited, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai, Fourth Edition, 2013, pp.212+iv(PB), ISBN: 978-81-8495-309-1, Rs. 199/-.

H.H. Sri Sri Ravishankar is a well-known spiritual thinker. His book, Management Mantras, offers valuable tips for managers and leaders. If these tips are followed by them, their roles would become more effective by developing a conducive work environment, and then, both employees and the organization will add value to each other.

Sri Sri examines qualities of good leadership. Though a good manager is a good leader but he does not exhibit that he is a leader. He is a man of integrity, and is never arrogant. He is cool headed. A calm and pleasant state of mind is an essential quality in a leader so that nobody can disturb his equanimity. A leader is one who has the patience to listen to those working under him. The Gita says when your mind is at peace, your intellect becomes sharp, thus it is important for a manager to have a sharp mind.

A leader thinks of himself as a perpetual student, and he learns from everybody.

He always remembers he is a citizen of the world, and believes that there is some virtue to be learnt from every part of the world, viz. 'teamwork from Japan, precision from Germany, marketing and negotiation skills from the United States, courtesy, decency, and refinement from the British, and human values from the villages of India.' While reading this, one is reminded of the Vedic tradition which emphasizes the importance of imbibing good thoughts from every part of the world.

'A no bhadrah kratavo yantu vishwatah', i.e. 'Let noble thoughts come to us from every side' (Rigveda).

Sri Sri further wants a good leader to focus on himself turning his attention from his object by the way of yoga. Yoga is not just exercise but also meditation. It takes your mind inward that is extremely energising, and takes attention from what we have done or what we want to do to what we are. This exercise enhances our intelligence and capabilities, which are essential for good leadership, and regular meditation immensely helps in this. It gives enormous creativity, merit, inner strength, and enthusiasm, helps in maintaining our creativity in life and business, coping with uncertainty, and freeing ourselves from stress and feel life everywhere.

Today a large chunk of population is depressed. To cure depression people are taking anti-depressant drugs, and in this condition they cannot give any better result in their work. So we need to take care of not just our physical health, but also our mental health and emotional well-being. The Human Resources department is created in every company to deal with people's personal issue. In the Gita, Lord Krishna removed Arjuna's depression to enable him to fight.

Sri Sri has also given some mantras for combating corruption in society. A lack of connectedness or sense of belonging breeds corruption in the society. That is why corruption is at its lowest in the villages and much greater in the cities where there is at best, a poor sense of community and minimal interaction between people. Corruption cannot be rooted out without this connectedness.

Care and compassion are also essential for rooting out corruption. To drive this point home Sri Sri quotes an incident. In 2001, there was a huge spiritual gathering in India where 30 million people

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participated. On one particular day there were 3 millions people gathered at one place, and there was not a single robbery or act of violence. People were staying in tents and mingling with each other, but no crime occurred. It was January and bitterly cold. Sri Sri went to volunteer, to take care of people gathered there, some of whom were very poor and could not bear the cold, as they had come from warmer climates. At midnight, the volunteers were distributing blankets. The temperature was close to Zero degree Celsius. They offered a blanket to one young man in his 20s, but he declined it and said that it could be given to some elderly women who stood nearby instead, and assured them that he could handle the cold.' That's the kind of compassion Sri Sri talks about. Courage and commitment is required for people to destroy corruption.

In Nut Shell: Sri Sri tells that we are citizens of one world, thus, we should learn something from each country of the world. In key points of effective management, he also gives importance to energy as essential for all human being, sources for which are food, sleep, breath, a meditative mind, a calm, and serene mental state. Here he gives very clear vision for managers, that is motivaion should come from within and inspiration that comes from within is more effective and long lasting.

Attributes of a Good Leader: A true leader lets go of control rather he creates leaders, not followers. In this chapter Sri Sri very precisely elaborates attributes of a good leader e.g., accepts challenges, balances head and heart, has long-term vision with short-term plans, integrity, etc.

Methods of Developing Leadership Skills: Sri Sri gives emphasis on process of learning which should continue. He says that our doubts are always about something which is positive, and a leader first of all needs to create trust. We need to see our lives in context of time and space in this big universe. His another point of view is that we convey more through our presence than through our words, i.e., giving freedom at the work place, developing the right mindset, realising dreams, effective communication skills, scientific temperament, and team building.

Innovation: Innovation has to become a part of our everyday life – whether at the workplace or at home. This is a very interesting chapter where Sri Sri again sees creativity as a part of divinity. We have to invoke divinity inside us. In this chapter, Sri Sri links 'Uncertainty in Business' with spirituality where uncertainty gives strength.

Social Partnership makes Business Sense: We need to give people a vision, those who have a vision or a dream can go ahead and develop society. Here Sri Sri criticises the blame culture in this country, and states that media has to play a important role in our society. He criticises that the health of society today seems to be determined by number of beds and cells in hospitals and prisons.

Environmental Management: All the things that make our environment – the plants and the animals are sacred. His message is to preserve them, similarly the knowledge and money too are sacred. Here is a call for making a distinction between spirituality and religion. He compares religion with banana peel, and spirituality is the banana. 'Spirituality' is what keeps the enthusiasm, courage, confidence and the smile alive in our lives.

Ethics and Business: We should follow ethics in business, and for that we need to free ourselves from stress. Stress and mistrust among collegues within the organisations is a big hindrence to ethics.

Combating Corruption: In this chapter, Sri Sri explains importance of five 'C's to counter Big 'C' of Corruption i.e., 'Connectedness', 'Courage', 'Cosmology', 'Care & Compassion', and 'Commitment'.

Management and Meditation: As per respected, Sri Sri, the management profession requires dealing with diverse situations and people. To be able to deal with them justly, requires a sharp intellect patience, endurance, and presence of mind. Here comes the 'meditation', inclusive breathing exercise which inducts improvements vital for good management. This chapter deals with 'mind', 'faculties of existence', 'one world family'. For a good manager, it is important to be in the present moment with patience and poise!

There are Questions and Answers given as the concluding portion of the book. They are very useful, and of practical value.

– *R.S. Singh*