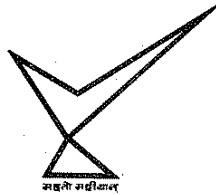


EXCELLENCE MOVEMENT IN INDIA

A Multiplier Model

Dr. N.H. Attthreya



**The Indian Centre for
Encouraging Excellence
Bombay**

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BOMBAY 400 020

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THE SECRET OF JOY IN WORK

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EXCELLENCE MOVEMENT IN INDIA
"What is honoured in a country
is cultivated there" : Plato

"The secret of joy in work
is contained in one word : Excellence " Pearl S. Buck

Light a Candle

"Don't complain about darkness. Light a candle." This saying
is attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt, the lady who influenced
positively many worthy causes, national and international.

In late 1967, a group of people, connected in one way or the other with the management of human affairs, had an after-lecture meeting, and the talk turned round to the topic of fall in quality which one observed everywhere in craftsmanship, in machine production, in academic achievement, and, in fact, in every walk of life. After condemning it, after discussing it threadbare, the group responded to the above thought. It said :

What are we doing about it?
 What should we do about it?

18 "The Indian Centre for Encouraging Excellence" is an outcome of that questioning. It is a group of like-minded people endeavouring to pursue excellence in whatever they undertake, spotting excellence and encouraging it by whatever means they can, and instilling the idea in the mind of their audience the thought "nothing but the best would do - nothing but the best from me and for me".

16 It is not an organisation in any formal sense. There is no membership; there is not even a set of rules of regulations. There is a statement of aims. All that is required is that if you feel the same way, subscribe to the aims, give the group your ideas, help it in spreading the ideal.

THE GROUP

The informal working group included M.V. KAMATH, the noted journalist, PROFESSOR C.M. SHUKLA, an educationist turned executive, K.C. SHROFF, a scientist-industrialist, DR. MANOHAR KHER, a doctor-teacher, B. KARANI, an engineer-France watcher, DR. L.N. GODBOLE, an executive-scholar, MRS. SUCHITA RAO, school teacher-social worker, and this writer, a management educator, author and consultant.

Many others soon joined and activated this group and notably, M.R. Pai, Dr. O.M. Kharbanda, R.P. Nadkarni, Shantilal Mehta, Padmabhushan A.V. Mody and Sunil Mehta.

SOME DIMENSIONS OF EXCELLENCE

Excellence is very much an attainable objective. It does not mean the ideal, which recedes farther and farther into the horizon, the nearer we try to go to it. It certainly calls for aspiration and endeavour but if both are blended earnestly together, it would be possible for anyone to attain excellence in his chosen spheres of activity, intellectual or otherwise.

A craftsman working on a small piece of ivory with all his ingenuity and skill is as much a pursuer of excellence as an artist who brings forth a memorable work of art by virtue of his genius. In their respective spheres, both of them are in search of excellence. And when they achieve it, one need not be considered higher or lower than the other as far as

the attainment is concerned. In whatever sphere one happens to be, it is possible to achieve that degree of loftiness of concept and execution which would elevate the common into the uncommon and transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Excellence is surpassing merit in anything, not necessarily superlative, but by all tokens positively good in an unusual degree. A student in his studies attains excellence by demonstrating high proficiency of knowledge in the subjects he pursues. Similarly, a teacher attains excellence when his teaching inflames his pupils with passionate zeal for greater and greater knowledge, and knowledge-based action. Excellence then is not a notional virtue or a distant mirage like ideal. It is very much a reality and it is within the reach of anyone who makes a sincere effort to attain it.

What can we do for the cause of excellence? Some of us can do more and others a little less but all of us can contribute to the common cause of excellence. Let us make a beginning, the founding group said.

WHAT DID THIS GROUP DO ?

10 This group said that the key aim of the Centre will be "To stimulate amongst all sections of the public thought and effort for the PROMOTION and DEVELOPMENT of operational excellence". It added : Especially among the young people, "Excellence is a viable alternative. There is plenty of room at the top. The congestion is only at the bottom".

ok/ The Centre started a few activities more in the form of Exploratory Pilot Projects than those of continuing Schemes. It chose to focus on two roles - playing the catalyst and providing a clearing house.

This it did partly because of the limitations of resources, material and manpower. The Centre is not a funded agency. It has been operating with the aid of a few occasional donations from well-wishers and with the continuing organisational and administrative support of the MMC School of Management.

A LECTURE SERIES

A lecture series on the theme The Pursuit of Excellence was the first formal Public Project of the Centre. Paragan Charitable Trust offered to fund it in good measure. The commencement day of the series was February 15, 1968. The opening 'batsman' was the late lamented Vijay Merchant. Shri Merchant spoke on Excellence in Sports. He was followed by Professor MGK Menon who spoke on Excellence in Science. Dr. R.K. Hazari, Dr. A.W. Airan, PC Jain and Rotarian Soli Pavri, leaders in their respective fields, were the other speakers. The crowning and concluding lecture in this series was given by Swami Ranganathananda to a packed hall. His theme was Human Excellence.

Swamiji's lecture which provided a crystal clear frame of reference was immediately brought out as the Centre's first publication.

The theme Excellence is dear to Swamiji's heart. He has referred to this theme in many of his lectures and in a way only he can.

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

We arranged once-a-month meetings. We invited men and women who we learnt are pursuing excellence in their fields of activity, even in a small way. The invitees included a liftman and a flower arrangement teacher (housewife).

PUBLICATIONS

We brought out a periodical, **EXCELLENCE** wherein we published news and notes of excellence interest - happenings in this country and in other countries. Excel Industries Ltd., adopted this publication as part of their community relations for four years.

We brought out a few publications. One title is "Trusteeship in Management : An Experiment" by Vijay Merchant. Another is Random Recollections by G. Vanmikanathan.

Another little project was a set of greeting cards carrying thoughts on Excellence.

SOME EXCELLENCE THOUGHTS

I am a great believer in LUCK
and I find
the harder I work
the more I have of it.

Stephen Leacock

The actual is limited;
the possible immense.

De Lamartine

Only he deserves power
who every day justifies it.

Dag Hammarskjöld

Nothing will ever be attempted
if all possible objections
must first be overcome.

Samuel Johnson

The whole fun of living is
trying to make something better.

Charles Kettering

a | It is a funny thing about life
 If you refuse to accept anything
 except the best
 you very often get it.

Somerset Maugham

Trifles make perfection
 and perfection is no trifle.

Michel Angelo

An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable
 than an incompetent philosopher.
 The society which scorns excellence in plumbing
 because it is a humble activity and
 tolerates shoddiness in philosophy
 because it is an exalted activity
 will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy.
 Neither its pipes nor its theories
 will hold water.

John Gardner

EXHIBITIONS

When we heard about the compassionate and creative work
 done by two "Peace Corps" volunteers from Japan, Miss Atsuko
 Kobayashi and Miss Terue Tomita, for the physically handicapped

children of Karuna Graha, Melkote, we lent a hand to them organise an exhibition of greeting cards and other paintings by the handicapped children.

SEMINARS

We organised a few seminars. A notable one is the series "Towards Executive Excellence" by the foremost management thinker of India, Dr. H.N. Nanjundiah.

Professor Nissim Ezekiel coordinated a series of talks discussions on Great Books, Great Ideas.

AN EXCELLENCE AWARD

The question for the Centre has always been : What are the humble things we can do to meet the primary aim of the Centre, namely, "to stimulate amongst all sections of the public thought and effort for the promotion and development of excellence in every sphere of human activity".

An award is news - and welcome news at that. Suppose there is one award a day, each day of the year, every year, this could mean one heart - warming news each day. So that we may not take chances, we can have even two awards a day!

Late 1972, the idea of an Excellence Award was debated.

It was argued, on the one hand, that those who pursue excellence in their chosen area of activity do so because they just enjoy doing so. Their pursuit of excellence is a matter of self propulsion. It does not depend upon encouragement or recognition from an external agency. Men and women who pursue excellence do so with a passion; and they neither seek nor care for approval or recognition.

It was argued, on the other, that the primary aim of the idea of award is to help the Centre achieve its major purpose namely, to bring the concept of human excellence to the awareness level of many, especially of the young. The award is more of paying a homage and tribute than one of standing in judgement over a person's achievement. The award function gives an opportunity for the awardee to share his conviction and enthusiasm with the immediate and remote audience.

A spartan and symbolic excellence Award function, on a periodical basis, was agreed upon.

A logical question came up: Will a citation be enough? Especially when we are not able to give a purse? Won't it be nice to give the awardee something symbolic of the spirit of excellence?

Renowned sculptor Adi Davierwalla kindly agreed to donate his talent and time in designing a bronze trophy to symbolise the spirit and pursuit of excellence.

THE "ACME" EXCELLENCE AWARD

This is an award for the pursuit of excellence in any area of human activity.

ACME is not a contraction for a long name; it is not an acronym.

ACME is just acme, height, zenith. It is symbolic of the heights of excellence people are scaling in their chosen or chance area.

The 'ACME' Award also symbolises the thrust, the upward thrust, the onward thrust, the constant moving forward, the unceasing march in human excellence. 'Mahato mahiyan' is the Upanishadic saying. "Greater than the great". As Longfellow put it, it is "Excelsior"; and as poet Shelley says, it is "higher and still higher".

It also symbolises stamina, the psychic energy that goes with the pursuit of excellence.

The sustained concern for others and the hardiness of spirit that calls for the demonstration thereof are symbolised by this ACME Excellence Award.

The ACME Excellence Award is for men and women who have convincingly demonstrated what one MAN can do.

THE AWARDEES

The first award was made on May 10, 1973 to J.N. Marshall, Professor Emeritus and long time librarian of the Bombay University.

The awards are not confined to the headline humanity. Few would have heard of the Chinchalikar couple of Malawali Village, the recipients of the third excellence award.

Whether a person is 'well known' does not figure in our decision to invite one to consider accepting this award. Nor does his area of activity figures. One area or field of activity is as good as another. It is the human excellence that counts.

The awards are not confined to this country either. Excellence is universal and the excellence movement is international. John R. Heron the recipient of the Sixth Excellence Award, was the Editor of the Monthly Letter of the Royal Bank of Canada.

In 1974, a suggestion was mooted that we should take these Excellence Award functions to cities outside Bombay and more so when the awardees are from other places. The first such function was held in Pune to honour Shri D.G. Kelkar of Raja Kelkar Museum fame. The idea was welcomed by the local admirers of the awardee. They felt that this function is as much their function as the Centre's.

THOSE WHO OBLIGED

It has not been an easy job to persuade people to consider accepting the ACME Excellence Award. With some men and women we are yet to meet with success. Fortunately for the Centre and for the cause it is serving, the following eminent men and women agreed to accept the Centre's ACME EXCELLENCE AWARD in the past few years.

- * Professor J.N. Marshall, Former Librarian, University of Bombay.
- * Shri G.M. Tamhane, Sane Guruji Katha Mala, Bombay.
- * Shri and Smt. Shriram Chinchalikar, Maval Seva Mandal, Malavali Village.

- * Shri and Smt. H.C. Mehta, Sanjivani Trust, Bombay
- * Shri John R. Heron, Editor, Royal Bank of Canada Newsletter.
- * Hon. Capt. G.S. Ahuja, Sea Cadet Corps, Bombay
- * Shri D.G. Kelkar, Raja Kelkar Museum, Pune
- * Dr. V.V. Pendse, Jnana Prabodhini, Pune
- * Shri Melville de Mello, All India Radio, New Delhi.
- * Shri V.M. Sadasivan, Modern Restaurant, Madurai
- * Professor Nissim Ezekiel, Poet, Critic, Teacher, Bombay
- * Shri Kamleshwar, Editor, Short Story Writer, TV Journalist

- * Shri Diwakar Agashe, Social Worker, Youth Leader, Teacher, Buldana
- * Shri G. Vanmikanathan, Editor, Translator, Author, Tiruchirapalli
- * Dr. Ishwar S. Pratap, Pathologist, Humanist, Bombay
- * Professor P.G. Mavalankar, former MP, Ahmedabad
- * Vidwan Sri Chakravarti Srinivasa Gopalacharya, Author Bangalore

A MULTIPLIER MODEL

The Centre is essentially a multiplier model. We at the Centre believe that every city, every town, every village, every locality can afford to have such a Centre.

What a particular organising group does can only be left to the resourcefulness and resources the group can muster. Given above are some of the projects we worked on. They may serve as thought-starters for the well-meaning. Our experience is that whatever little we do by way of looking for excellence, locating excellence, experiencing excellence, enjoying excellence, encouraging excellence and pursuing excellence is a matter of joy for all concerned. Our conviction is that participating actively in the Excellence Movement is one sure way of making our contribution to raising the quality of life.

SOME POSSIBILITY AREAS

Excellence is a journey, not a destination. In this long and lovely journey, every little thing counts.

Here are some possibility areas :

1 of 2 of The first area is our daily life. Our daily life is made up a number of activities -- at home, at the work place and elsewhere (like the public transport). Some of these activities are repetitive and some are not. May be, we can stop from time to time and look at those activities. Can we do one or more of these activities a little better, a little more pleasantly, a little more gracefully?, a little more purposefully? Perhaps we cannot. Perhaps we can. If we think of large chunks, we may not be able to. If, however, we think in terms of 'that little extra', we can.

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Effort in the first area creates an effect on others. Depending on where we are placed circumstantially, the impact is felt on a few or many. The least (in number and not quality) will

be felt at our home. The most can be a whole organisation or even a profession. Knowingly or otherwise, people follow us. Realising this, we can consciously give a lead. What we do and how we do makes more sense to them than what we talk to them.

DEMANDING THE BEST

Each of us has dealings with others in a commercial or professional fashion. We are referring to the something for something transaction. While we normally give the agreed 'price', the other man may not give the agreed product or service, whatever be the reason. If he does not, we can ask for it pleasantly but persistently. Insisting for the best from ourselves is not enough; we have to insist on the best from others too.

ENCOURAGING ACTS OF EXCELLENCE

A third area of exploration will be this. Each day we come across acts of excellence. "THE LITTLE EXTRA TYPE". Let us encourage them in every way we can. Let us talk to those that perform such acts. Let us talk about them to others. Let us give them recognition. Let us reward them. Let us facilitate their reaching newer heights.

What function a person discharges is immaterial for purposes of encouragement. All functions are important for a quality life. WE ARE NOT EMPHASISING WHAT A PERSON DOES; WE ARE EMPHASISING HOW A PERSON DISCHARGES HIS FUNCTION. Also, let us not wait for great acts to be performed, even little acts of excellence warrant an act of encouragement. What we encourage is the direction, the trend. Let us not wait for somebody else in this country or abroad to encourage an act of excellence. Let us take the lead. Let us not wait till the man arrives. Let us develop the habit of encouraging the excellence journey.

TRAINING

A fourth area is the area of training. Training is preparing a person to do a job satisfactorily. Most people in the country are told what to do but not how to do. Exposure to words is mistaken for training. Training is a matter of work habits. One to be trained for any job should know why to do, what to do, how to do and have developed the work habits. Let us train, let us guide, coach, counsel, demonstrate and do all that we can, so that any person who does any job for us is trained for the job before he takes over the job. It is best done in tiny groups.

CARING FOR CHILDREN

A fifth area is children. Let us do all that we can so that the children may learn the right attitudes and the right living and working habits. Let us provide them creative leisure

facilities. Let us expose them to the good and the graceful. Let us give them an atmosphere of support and understanding. Let us not treat them in a way which will make them develop a quarrel with life and society. Let us care for our children and our neighbours.

SHARING EXPERIENCE

Excellence is contagious. What one has done another can do. At least the unsophisticated think this way and the majority in this country belongs to this group. Let us contribute then whatever we can to the cause of excellence and let us share the joys we experience and the lessons we learned.

ASPIRATION FOR EXCELLENCE

The glory that was India is the outcome of a supreme commitment to the highest. The imperishable treasures of thought and philosophy, art and culture to which we turn with pride emerged from a state of mind which would not make compromise with

10 the common and the humdrum. If India has to have a glory in time to come, a similar state of mind, meaning thereby a craving for the best would have to underlie and inspire all our activities. The aspiration for excellence is inspired either by an act of faith and an involvement of the spirit or by competitiveness and emulation. It could be both.

QUALITY AND HIGH STANDARDS

The time has come when we will have to awaken ourselves and keep ourselves awake to the need for higher standards and higher levels of achievement and excellence. Unless the desire to do something outstanding in whatever be our field of activity develops into a habit, we would be working by fits and starts and bring about no good results. Excellence demands consistency of application and the courage to encounter odds. It should summon all our positive qualities to unite, to bring forth nothing but the best, even as it demands of us to accept nothing but the best.

This is our concept of excellence. It is neither abstract nor amorphous nor remote nor unattainable. It is sufficiently realistic to ensure its being within our reach. It is not just a subject matter for rarified speculation or a discussion for pedants. It could be of the earth, earthy, and attainable in the smallest of activities as also in the biggest.

Excellence has to be a habit of the mind and body, a demand of the spirit and a response from the sum total of our energies cumulatively for an achievable object.

A CLARION CALL

The clarion call has been well given by Swami Ranganathananda:

"Wherever we be, in any nook and corner, one query must come from the nation to the children, to the men and women -- are you pursuing excellence in your life? Is the work that you do

the thought that you think, the social relationship, the very life that you live -- is it imbued with the touch of excellence? Are you striving for it? It is always the thought of doing better and better, and keeping in mind the welfare of society in the context of which one develops one's life, that must be one's Pole Star. This interaction of man in society, this internourishment, as the Gita puts it "PARASPARAM BHAVAYANTAH SREYAH PARAMAVAPSYATHA" in the third chapter, will be able to raise the whole tone of the life of man in society. That is, mutual nourishment is an essential social process. Let us just introduce this notion, this concept, this value into the heart of India today, through thousands of media, through schools and colleges, through assemblies, etc., and we have done our work, because put the chemicals together, action will take place according to the laws. Let these ideas and values once enter the heart of man, the educable individual; let the correct idea, the correct stimulus, be given and the rest will be done by the heart itself. We cannot make him good; we can only provide the ingredients of goodness to him.

AIMS & OBJECTS OF THE INDIAN CENTRE FOR ENCOURAGING EXCELLENCE

1. To stimulate amongst all sections of the public thought and effort for the promotion and development of the excellence movement in the country.
2. To establish a network of contacts both at home and abroad to strengthen this movement.
3. To publish a journal that would serve as an organ of the Centre, communicate its ideas and ideals and keep the public informed of the achievements, possibilities and trends in this direction.
4. To bring out original writings, reprints, translations of relevant publications in India and elsewhere that would help raise standards of achievement in different walks of life.
5. To compile and maintain lists of individuals and institutions that have consistently maintained high standards and to extend such support as is possible.
6. To establish and maintain a library of visual aids, books, periodicals and papers on this subject for the benefit of the members.
7. To set up institutions like schools, colleges, studios, galleries, libraries etc. for training in excellence as a concept and activity.
8. To institute and establish fellowships, scholarships, grants rewards and prizes to encourage the excellence movement in all its facets.
9. To set up a laboratory which will objectively and systematically examine the products and services given to the public and loan them excellence seals for specific periods.
10. To found, establish, create and maintain endowments and/or grants for the purposes aforesaid.
11. To undertake all such activities as may promote the excellence movement in the country.