

Dr. Godbole - a friend



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My Dear Usha,

You have obliged me by mentioning about a milestone in your illustrious father's life. He will complete 1000 moons of his life in the near future. I wish to join you in the celebrations. May he cross the century ! He is lucky to have his mother present for the occasion.

Dr Nagam H Attthreya is my Guru. He has been my mentor since 1967. I met him for the first time in one of the training programmes organised by Indo American Society. I remember that first session very well. It is etched deep in my mind.

At the beginning of that session after introduction of all the participants he enquired about our young children. Many of us affirmed that they had their young ones at home, and he asked a question. Have you promised your child a toffee or a chocolate in the evening? On our confirmation he said, please go out of the hall, buy the toffee and then we will start the session.

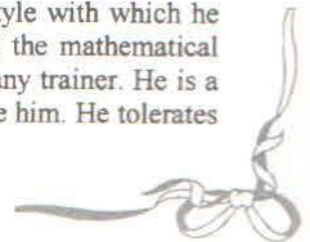
Some of us acted on his advice. He gave the logic for his suggestion. He said that during the day you would be busy with this session. Then you will rush home and in all probability forget the promise you made in the morning to your child. The child will not forget the promise. Child will ask for the toffee. You will have to make yourself small in the eyes of the child if you do not have the toffee.

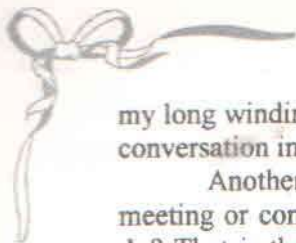
A good manager should never forget the promise that he makes to his juniors. It was the first lesson in my development as a manager. I was a sceptical participant. I had a luggage on my mind of seven years' fairly successful teaching career in the school and college. That smugness vanished at that very moment. This test checking of ground realities before spinning the theories, is essential for any manager to succeed. It helped me tremendously in my career as well as in personal life.

Sensitivity Training, Management by Objective, Value Engineering, Time Management, Rapid Reading, the list of ideas that he introduced is endless. My Guru has been instrumental in bringing these ideas to us as part of continuous education programmes. He brought the masters in the management field to India and introduced us to these management ideas which are now a part of standard kit in management institutes. He was a pioneer in India in most of those areas. He has been in the Management Development business since 1954. India was entering the Industrial age and he was updating us as managers all the time with his forays in various aspects of continuous education.

His publication Management Ideas was a digest of many thought starters for Managers. He ran it for more than three decades.

After the initial official contacts, he became a friend and Guru. In due course I have even assisted him in several of his training programmes. The grace and style with which he introduces the speakers, the way he lyrically concludes the sessions and the mathematical precision with which he uses words and phrases are all object lessons for any trainer. He is a man of few words. This appeals to me tremendously. I wish I could emulate him. He tolerates





my long winding talks and is always succinct in pinpointing the action areas at the end of the conversation in person or on phone.

Another great lesson he has taught me is that one should never end the session meeting or conversation without some conclusion in the form of action points. What will do? That is the crucial question. He insists on that. All else it is so much of gas. It is the action that produces results. Rest is only ACTIVITY. ACTION produces results. In things small and big that is his constant thrust.

His friendship has been priceless for me. It is he who insisted on my enrolling for PhD at the University of Mumbai under Prof Limaye. I was dreaming and talking of doing my PhD since 1964. Dr Athreya pushed me into action. He gave me the idea of revalidating my CV at the time of each birthday anniversary. I have been religiously doing this since then. My daughter would not have obtained her doctorate in Freiburg, Germany without a regular admission but for an audacious dash to the country itself, that was his suggestion. It worked.

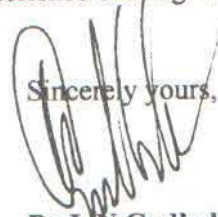
We have discussed several ideas. We were to write a book on Mahatma Gandhi as a Manager. It did not happen. Now the idea seems to be sprouting in Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad. I am not making this statement to claim any prior claim. It is one of the things on which I did not act. Still he prodded me to write on Vinoba. I am happy to have written 52 letters on 'Vinoba and his ideas' for the young students who have no much by way of reading material on Vinoba available in English. I would not have written but for his very sustained persuasion. I feel quite happy that I have written those letters. I feel proud about it.

His very Spartan habits, almost starvation diet of cup of milk or butter-milk are some of the things which I admire but have not been in a position to practice naturally at my cost and consequences. He is always a pleasant company and brimming with new ideas. I must have spiked many of them. But it is like an effort to cap the Artesian well. At every meeting new ideas continue to spring forth.

He has introduced me not only to ideas but to people as well. I treasure all those big and small things. Though I am a Maharashtrian it is he who has introduced me to late I Appa Pendse of Jnana Prabodhinee of Pune and late Divakar Bhaiya Agashe of Buldana two stalwarts from the field of education in Maharashtra. These introductions have enriched my life immensely.

He has been instrumental in keeping me reading books on management. I not only learnt ideas from him but also the methods of presentation. As an ex-teacher it has been a priceless experience. Many a times have I inflicted my presence on you people at your residence; sumptuous Idlis and hot coffee prepared by your mother were as attractive as the thoughts emerging from your father. It was a great idea on your part, dear Usha, to have asked the beneficiaries of Dr Athreya's friendship for some experience-sharing. I am happy to be one of that bunch.

Sincerely yours,



Dr L N Godbole

5 December 2001.

(1111 words)

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