

HR EXCELLENCE AWARD ACCEPTANCE 23/11/05

I am most thankful to the Chairman and the members of the Award Committee of this project for selecting me for this HR Excellence Award.

I take it as an award and recognition for my entire team.

I am only the front man.

Every achievement becomes possible only with the big and understanding help of a team. And in my case, the team will consist of my colleagues and clients, masters and mentors, friends and family members. I am thankful to them all.

So many are doing great work in the HR field and I know that many of them are in this audience..

If I have been first in a few areas, it is just a happening. Somebody has to be first. Somebody may have the advantage of being born earlier. I am one such body.

If I am the first professional management consultant 1954, if I am the first to introduce professional executive selection in India 1960, if I am the first to publish the first management monthly 1963, if I am the first to organize a public training seminar on behalf of the Bombay Management Association against all forebodings, if I am the first to hold a residential program for top management 1956, if I am the first to write books on management subjects for the Indian context 1964, it is just an accident. The accident is I was born a little earlier than some others. Somebody will have to do this and that somebody happened to be this speaker. It is an accident.

Just to recall one of the firsts in management development/education.

It was 1955. I had just then returned from Australia. From what I had seen in Sydney and Melbourne, I proposed a management development seminar on TWI but a paid one. There were few volleys of protest. Who will pay and come for a seminar. We had a far seeing President in Mr. Narayan Dandekar. He said: Let us give this idea a chance. There were audible murmurs. "The promotion money is money in the drain". Grudgingly, they asked me to go ahead. It was in the then Green Hotel And 66 people signed up. The critics were astonished. They were all the more astonished, when the association made a surplus!. Those were days when the association had problems to pay even the few administrative staff. Every hundred rupee mattered then. It is all history now. Unlike today when we think and talk in terms of five and six figures.

I have been asked to share with you the motivations behind my little work.

What is keeping me going is a challenge that all of us are facing in this country - the challenge of leading people at work.

In 1959 for a short period I took a faculty assignment with the Administrative Staff College. One of the participants was from the erstwhile Imperial Tobacco Company. He was earlier in the Royal Air Force.

At one of the conversations, Mr. McClean told me this. Qualitatively the human material of your country is superb. What people elsewhere took 24 months to learn, your people learning in 6 months. During war time we took people literally from the jungle and in 6 months they became outstanding craftsmen. The real wealth of India is the quality of its men and women.

In his airforce workshop, this human potential was converted into actual.

Outside this workshop, this is only potential.

The challenge is: How to convert this potential into actual. How to reduce the gap between the potential and the actual.

This is a national opportunity. This is a national challenge. This is a leadership opportunity. This is a leadership challenge. This is a personal opportunity. This is a personal challenge.

It is this challenge that I have been addressing all these years in my humble capacity, joining hands with people who are in the thick of the struggle.

Earlier this week, I was at a book release function. The author is Professor Ketna Mehta. Ten years back, she suffered an accident when she was learning paragliding flying. She is paralysed waist down. She is in a wheel chair. What can be the actual of this person? Most people write off such cases. Not this lady. Thanks to her grit, her family support and society's understanding, she is today a research professor at the Welingkar Institute of Management. She is a successful, sought after editor of management related journals and a qualified marketing consultant.

This is the latest example I have seen of potential being converted into actual.

Another personal experience. Since 1959, I have been training people in Rapid Reading or Speeded comprehension. The theory is that we are using 20 per cent or less of our potential. I have seen hundreds of people doubling their speed of comprehension and a few quadrupling it. **AGAIN A CASE OF POTENTIAL VS ACTUAL.**

How to reduce this gap between the potential and the actual – this has been my life long search.

Also, I have been thinking in terms of having the best of both the worlds – the West and the East. The west is strong in hardware like systems and structures. The east is strong in software like holistic thinking and long term considerations. The realities – the economic and technological reality as well as the ethical and cosmic reality. The considerations of today and tomorrow.

I used to think of what the government can do, the society can do, the organization can do and so on. I noted that we need not wait for what others do. We can do many things for ourselves. We can go for what they call operation bootstrap. We can grow to our height. We can welcome help from outside but we will not wait for it.

I observed people in humble and venerable places. I noted that some of them are doing an excellent job of theirs. They are playing their role truly well. I studied them – I studied excellence at work, I studied human excellence.

One thing they do they tell themselves: Regardless of what role I play, I will play my role well. We may call it role excellence.

Another thing they do, they feel responsible. They say in action: NOTHING BUT THE BEST FROM ME.

We have the rich and nourishing tradition of the vyapatri and the craftsman, of karma yoga and Dattatreya .

The spirit of the craftsman – the Garuda story.

A third thing they do, they are continuing students – to do better, to learn to do better, they take a pride in.

It has been observed that a Ph D in the west starts learning after he gets his Ph D and in India he stops learning after his Ph D. This is probably an exaggeration to make a point. The point is that continuous learning conscious learning to do well, to do better, to do still better is an inner drive.

A fourth thing also I found. The excellent performers are sort of philosophical. To work I have the right but not to the fruits thereof. The obsession with the returns for my work is not with these excellent performers.

This led me to the spiritual dimension of work. In my considered view, that is central. In my considered view, that is our hereditary national strength. You may say, age is telling. So let it be.

I cannot resist at this stage quoting two great achievers of this century – Helen Keller and Mother Theresa. These are the known people but there are hundreds that are not known. It is this spirit behind their work that is keeping the earth solvent, I believe.

Whatever we achieve, we achieve because of the understanding and timely support of many people. This is true in my case. I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all of them.

Let me once again thank the organisers for extending this public recognition.

I thank ALL OF YOU for your gracious presence.

My prayers for you.