

NATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR



OM SWAMI

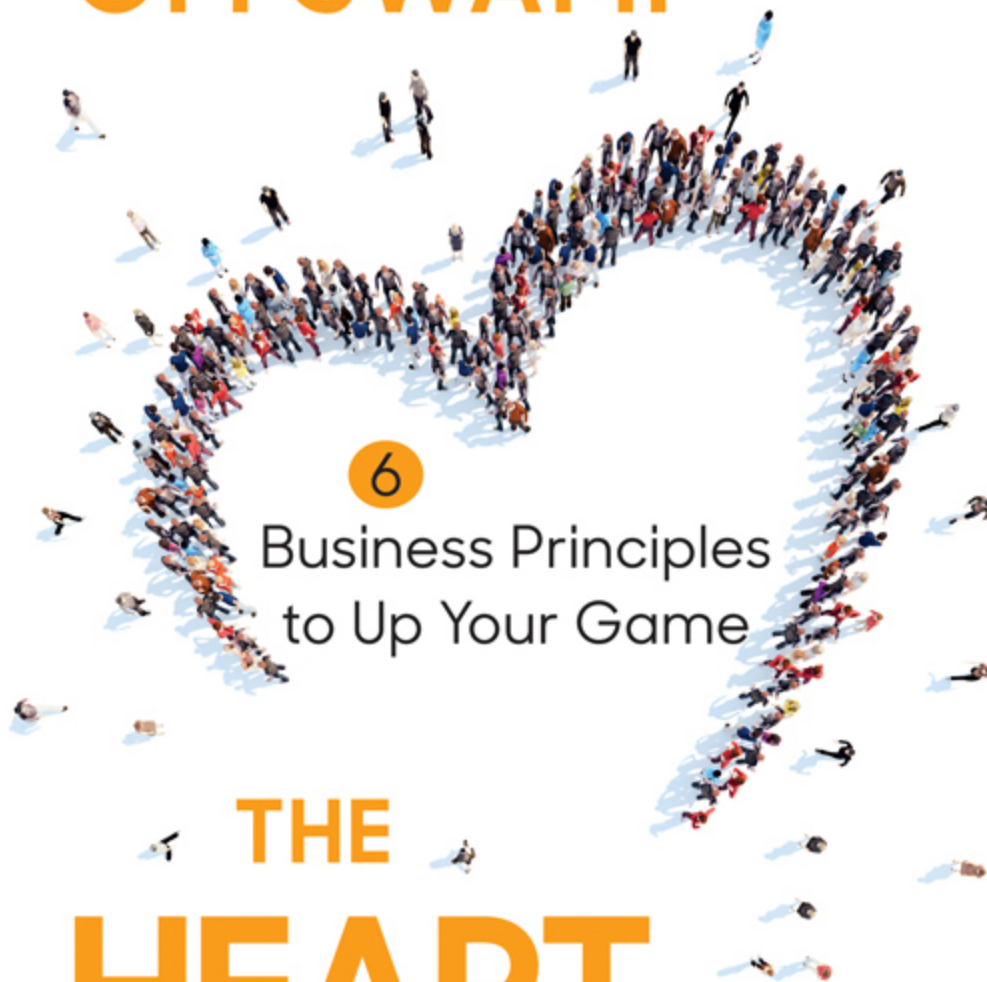
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Business Principles
to Up Your Game

THE
HEART OF
SUCCESS

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any form or by any means, electronic or
mechanical including photocopying, recording or by any
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I have always admired Bill Gates. I was 19 years old when I first read Business @ the Speed of Thought by him. I was awestruck by his giant intellect and vision. However, it's not the acquisition of wealth but the usage that really set him apart in my eyes. The more I read and heard him, the more I respected him.

This book is dedicated to Bill and Melinda Gates for being the beacons of kindness and philanthropy. Thank you for making this world a better place, for making it polio-free, for being who you are.

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THE PATH

FROM PASTA TO PUBLISHING

I 'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU . I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD write a book on attaining material success. No doubt, I've been financially independent since I was 11 and have earned millions of dollars during my career, but let's face it, it's not like I figured out the secret to building a Facebook, a Microsoft or an Apple. In other words, my success, in my eyes, has been moderate, even though it's been a rewarding and demanding journey.

So, when the soft-spoken Akash Shah (Publisher, Jaico Publishing House) asked me, during a dinner with Sandhya Iyer (former Managing Editor) and Sadhvi Vrinda Om (my unparalleled personal editor, herself a published author), if I could write a book on the principles of success, at first, I didn't see any merit in it and told them that I wasn't qualified enough to write about it. It wouldn't do justice to my readers, who pick up my books knowing that they'd find something original in them.

“But, you are an MBA and you had a stellar corporate career,” Sandhya said. “I heard your lecture at IIT Chennai and I’m sure your words will help many people who want to grow in their career.”

“Umm... it’s not like I was the CEO of Apple or Google, Sandhya,” I said. “It was a good career but not stellar-stellar, if you see what I mean.”

My pasta was getting cold. I had been speaking all day at a meditation retreat and was exhausted. This meeting was just a catch-up over dinner because that was the only time I had in my schedule. But these three intellectuals ambushed a poor, innocent and unsuspecting monk. The delectable soup and caprese salad had already whet my appetite. *Akash, shouldn’t you be the one writing a book like this? Are you reading this? Why me? Why now?*

“But, weren’t you earning \$250,000 when you were just 20 years old?” Akash said in his soft voice, with those husky overtones that make it sound like an oracle’s prophetic wisdom. “And then that multi-million dollar business you built in your mid-20s...”

I looked at the side of steamed veggies that were inviting me, my awesome gnocchi in pesto with pine nuts that was beginning to give up on me, the grated parmesan that was no longer sitting there with dignity but starting to hug the gnocchi and I scanned the faces of my tablemates. The difference between a cold pasta (or a reheated one) and a freshly-cooked one is the same as sleeping on a plush bed in the presidential suite at The Four Seasons and on the luggage berth in the general class on a long distance train journey.

“Please write *na* , Swamiji,” Sadhvi Vrinda said to me. “You have so many fascinating stories to share.”

Behind all my books is Sadhvi Vrinda. She has a bubbly and childlike way of getting a promise out of me when I’m least prepared.

“But, how will I find the time?” I tried to get out of the situation. “Both 2017 and 2018 are out for sure.” “The year after will do,” Sadhvi Vrinda said. “Yes, Swamiji, 2019 is just fine,” Akash and Sandhya agreed.

Now I had to make a choice: say yes and finish my pasta or convince them that I wasn’t keen on writing a book like this.

It was a no-brainer.

“Okay,” I said. “Now, let’s finish our meal.”

Of course, a puppy would gladly somersault if you dangled a cookie in front of him. I needed to eat my gnocchi hot. Committing to write a book seemed the easy and quick way out, a somersault I didn’t mind doing.

For the next little while, there was no sound except the clanking of the cutlery. Each one of us was hungry, plus the chef had done a fine job.

So, here I am, with a book that I hope will give you a new perspective on gaining material success. No matter who you are, an entrepreneur or an aspiring one, a management graduate on your first internship or a seasoned manager, I promise you this: by the time you finish reading this book, you will be better equipped to succeed in life as well as handle the responsibility that comes with success. The bigger your reward, the greater the responsibility.

Are you ready?

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

YOU COULD USE THIS BOOK TO REIGNITE A DYING bonfire or to cover your head if you happen to step out without an umbrella and it suddenly starts raining (don't try it if you are reading it on a digital device). *The Heart of Success* can also be a handy paperweight or be used under the leg of an unsteady table sitting in your garden. There are also some violent uses of this book (socking your enemy with it or as a shield in self-defense), but I can't recommend them to you as my path is that of non-violence (mostly). I have even seen people using my books as portable meditation mats or door stoppers.

The cutest one was someone safekeeping a 10-year-old flower his first crush had given him (who later crushed him and married someone else, by the way) or another reader who kept the leaf of a certain tree saying

it's a *vidya-parhai* (scholarship and studies) leaf and that he would become increasingly wise by keeping that leaf in my book.

All of these, however, are the secondary uses of my works. With the current book, there is something far more powerful you can do. Wonder what that is? Here:

Read it and internalize it.

At first, I thought I would share with you the basic tenets of success—those qualities that are found in all the materially successful people in the world. Just like you can learn how to sing and paint, you can master the craft of success. It has been proven time and again by numerous serial entrepreneurs. But that in its own right would be incomplete, I felt. For, we right here in *Bharatvarsha* have access to the timeless wisdom of the infallible Vedas.

Like Sri Krishna in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* distilled the essence of the Vedas and presented us with the eternal knowledge about life, death, living and beyond, I've made a humble attempt to crystalize the learning from three sources:

1. The lessons life handed me while working various jobs and running different businesses. This includes going from 0 to \$250,000 in two years (or \$500,000 if adjusted for inflation in today's terms) and building businesses with practically no startup capital.
2. Learnings I got from interacting with ultra-successful people. These include highly successful politicians, entrepreneurs, executives and spiritual people. Plus, the more than 800 books I have read on the subject before, during and after my MBA.
3. Above all, the pristine word uttered by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* and wisdom from our *Upanishads*, which take you way beyond the temporary tinkling of material success.

There's no religion in here (for that I've written other books), only applied spirituality; no teachings or preaching, only a way of thinking.

Throughout my life, I've gained immensely from the ever-youthful wisdom of the *Gita* and hence all that I have scribbled in this book more or less pivots on that.

Lastly, I've very carefully chosen the title *The Heart of Success* because no matter who you are or what you do, if you reflect on what I've written herein, you will gain a new perspective on what makes someone successful. And this is certainly not because I am saying so but is based on the lives of numerous successful people who made a difference to our world.

This book is divided into five sections. Each section has at least two chapters. Each chapter is an independent bite and yet a part of a sumptuous meal called success. Yes, the taste of success is unlike any other delicacy.

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, before plunging into the great Mahabharata war, Arjuna faced all sorts of questions and emotions. What was this struggle about? Why a war? What would it accomplish anyway? What was the highest dharma of an individual or what was his duty? Was this success warranted even if it meant killing his own cousins?

Arjuna trembled with fear, he perspired heavily. He tossed in the ocean of indecisiveness; he didn't know what to do. He was looking for some direction, if not the final word. But, his worries were baseless for his charioteer was none other than the wisest of the wise: Krishna.

Of the many things Krishna said to him, three particular verses stand out and form the basis of this book:

*pañcaīitani maha-baho karanani nibodha me,
sankhye krtante proktani siddhaye sarva-karmanam.*

*adhīsthanam tatha karta karanam ca prthag-vidham,
vividhas ca prthak cesta daivam caivatra pañcamam.*

*sarira-van-manobhir yat karma prarabhate narah,
nyayyam va viparitam va pañcaite tasya hetavah* ¹

O valiant one, according to the Samkhya ² philosophy, there are five elements in play towards the attainment of any outcome. They are:

Your approach (adhisthana), mindset or doership (karta), resources (karnam), along with your efforts (chestha) and destiny (devam or bhagya) remain the basis of any outcome.

Whatever, favorable or unfavorable, happens in your life, all that you experience and do with your actions, speech and thoughts, affects and is under the influence of these five aspects. ³

In other words, these are the five ingredients of success, no matter what your path.

The choices we make today directly and decidedly influence our tomorrow.

If you read somewhere that man is the maker of his own destiny then you read it wrong, because a woman is the maker of a man's destiny... just joking. Yes, we write our own destiny with our choices, wisdom and actions. No, I'm not suggesting that everything is in our control or that the outcome of everything we undertake will always be favorable. All said and done, I can tell you with absolute certainty that it is possible to vastly increase the probability of your success, particularly if you get a handle on these five aspects of success. Bringing them together and adding one more, I call it the SACRED Principle. That is:

S elf {karta}

A pproach {adhisthana}

C ompetence {kaushala}

R esources {karnam}

E fforts *{chestha}*

D estiny *{bhagya}*

Without further ado, let's march into the greatness that's waiting to happen in your life.

SELF
{Karta}

THE NOTION OF SELF

IN INDIAN VILLAGES, EVEN TODAY, WHEN AN ELEPHANT passes through a village, all the elders gather and fold their hands in reverence. They also nudge the children to do the same and bow to the majestic pachyderm. “This is Lord Ganesha,” they say. And the kids quickly bring their hands together in reverence and holler, “*Ganapati Bappa Morya !*” and so on. The women step out of their homes to offer sweetmeats, lentils, flour, fruits and veggies to the mahout. Some feed the elephant bananas and sugarcane.

It’s remarkable how the wisdom flowing from the Vedic era propels you to look at the sacredness of all that there is around you.

While this procession is on the move, a fascinating, though unsettling, thing happens: all the stray dogs of the village, puppies included, start following the elephant, barking and growling relentlessly.

What problem could the dogs possibly have with the elephant? It's not like they are a match in any way. What competition could the hounds and pooches pose to the mighty tusker?

I'm sure if someone could ask the dogs the reason for their incessant barking, they would answer, "We have no problem with the elephant per se. It's these people folding hands and offering all that food to the elephant that bothers us."

But, the dogs don't have the nerve to jump in front of the elephant or block his way. They will never come in front and will never stop barking from the back.

And so is the way of the world—the more the number of those who look up to you and stand in front with gifts, the greater the number of those who will bark behind you. ⁴

The elephant, however, never stops to shoo away the dogs or to tackle them. It keeps on walking, indifferent to the uncouth and clownish behavior of the dogs. But what makes the elephant truly unique and masterful is not just that it doesn't stop for the dogs. It's something more profound.

If the elephant doesn't stop for the dogs, it doesn't halt for the ones bowing in reverence either.

It remains unmoved by both the glory and the growls. Our true self is beyond praise and criticism, it is beyond disease, death and decay. It shines in its own splendor. ⁵

The emotions we experience when showered with praises or hit with criticism are temporary feelings that mostly arise when we forget how incredibly empowered and powerful we truly are.

The path of success is littered with opinions and suggestions. Everyone you meet will have some kind of an opinion and you are likely to cross paths with many who won't believe in you. They will give you a million reasons why you will fail. It's alright, that's all they know. You'll also meet some who may offer you false praise, just to attain a desired outcome. It's the way of the material world. Then you'll also meet some who are genuine and will influence your life in a phenomenal way.

Like the elephant, if you can keep your head on your shoulders and remain unmoved by such people *and* have faith in your own conviction as well as the wisdom to know when and how much to listen to someone, success is yours for the taking.

When I sat down to write this book, in fact, I should say when I stood up to write this book (because I do all my writing while walking on a treadmill desk), there was no confusion in my mind as to what I wished to say. I felt there was no need for me to reinvent the wheel. Wiser words by more brilliant people have been written before me and the same will continue after me. But, what if we could take some cues from our Vedic wisdom and approach success as a journey and not an attainment. I felt we would end up with powerful principles and insights that anyone could use in their daily life.

An understanding of the self—that you are not a product of the opinions of others but of your own thoughts, feelings and actions—is critical to attaining supreme success in any endeavor you wish to undertake.

Who, what and how you are is infinitely more important than how you plan to embark on your journey of success.

The S in Self represents the S of the Sacred Principle. But, this S could also mean many other things. Sale, for example. Just as a person cannot exist without a self, no business can survive without a profitable sale.

MY FIRST SALE

I WAS SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS OLD AND SITTING ON a neighbor's wall, watching the teenaged boys play cricket on a large block of land. This was the unofficial playground in our street. Whether you wanted to play marbles, touch-and-go, *pithoo-garam* , cricket or anything at all, this was the go-to place. In the afternoon, if the big boys were playing cricket, our group of younger ones (6–12 years old) had no chance of playing.

We played with a soft tennis ball or a rubber ball, and they played with a very heavy plastic ball. After shattering a few windowpanes with the proper leather ball, they were asked to not play in this ground. So, they negotiated with the elders and other homeowners and began playing with this heavy plastic ball that was no less a nuisance as far as windowpanes were concerned.

My friends went home and I took my comic book there to keep myself busy. After all, it's not like these guys were Virat Kohli or Sachin Tendulkar that I would step out in that sun to watch them play. I had my reasons to be there. I'd already read this comic, I still remember its name: *Mama-Bhanja and Jadui Bansuri*. It was the story of a man, his nephew and a magical flute that could produce some pretty amazing stuff. How nice it would be to have a flute like this, I always thought when I read it.

"Out!" someone screamed. "That's out!"

Soon a bitter argument ensued, as the batsman was sure he wasn't out and accused the umpire of being partial and unfair. It was a common scene—there was as much screaming and yelling as there was playing in this team. At times, they would even exchange blows because might was mostly right.

I never saw any batsman ever accept that he was run out, and LBW was out of the question. If the wicketkeeper claimed any stumping, he was deemed a traitor and a sworn enemy of the batting team. After screaming their lungs out, they would go back to playing. All in all, it was like all other street cricket teams in India. They would fight, argue, beat each other up, but once the match was over, they would be together again eating sweetmeats, back-slapping or drinking lemonade like there had never been a disagreement.

"Oye six!" someone shouted and I quickly looked up. My eyes followed the trajectory of the ball in the air.

"Catch, catch, catch, *yaar*," the bowler was screaming. In the commotion, the fielder completely forgot that there was a wall ahead and hit himself against it, bruising his hand badly. "Six!" the umpire shouted, raising both his hands up in the air. (If the ball went flying at the wall straight, it was considered a six.)

Thup! The plastic ball broke into two pieces and landed right in front of the injured fielder. Every second or third day, the gully cricket champs would break a ball. It was the cost of doing business, so to speak. I quickly jumped down, ran towards the broken ball and collected both the pieces. Exhilarated, I looked at the heavy plastic in

my hands. The outside of the split ball was gruff but the inside was shiny.

“Your little brother is very sweet, Rajan, but what’s he going to do with a broken ball?” one of the boys said to my elder brother who was playing in the team. He was not a teenager yet, but he was a good batsman and an offspinner, so he always got to play with the big boys.

I took the ball home and stashed it in a plastic bag, away from the keen eyes of Rajan, a cleanliness freak, and my father, a minimalist. If they saw this litter, it would be chucked in the bin.

Ten days later, the litter had grown to five plastic balls, all broken. That evening, I walked around with a shiny one-rupee coin that I kept in an empty matchbox. A children’s magazine cost two rupees back then, a lemonade 50 *paisa* , popsicles started from 20 *paisa* , and a packet of Maggi was less than three rupees.

“Happy, look what I have,” I opened the matchbox to show it to my childhood friend, Happy. True to his name, Happy was a very happy kid with a big heart. In fact, his elder brother, Ashu, and his entire family were some of the warmest and most hospitable people you could ever meet. Happy and I often played with our toys together or went out to picnic. He was the one with a laser gun and a remote-control car that his aunt had got him from England. Funnily enough, Happy couldn’t pronounce England back then and called it “Elgand.”

“Oh wow,” he said, “it’s one rupee.”

“Yes,” I replied with great enthusiasm. “But, I haven’t taken it from mummy or papa.”

“Then?”

I just shrugged.

“You found it!” he guessed.

I shook my head.

“You stole it from the change on your altar at home?”

“No, of course not!”

“Oh, I know! *Didi* gave it to you.”

“Nope.”

“Okay, I give up,” he said, exasperated. “Just tell me.”

“I earned it!”

“Earned? But how? From whom?”

“First, let’s party,” I said to him. And off we went to the popsicle cart and had two popsicles for 40 *paisa* . Then we went to the *aloo-tikki* cart and bought a plate of basic *tikki* for 50 *paisa* . It had two patties and we had one each. I was still left with 10 *paisa* , so we went to the provision store and bought one candy floss that we shared. Licking our sticky hands, we walked back home, two little boys in their shorts discussing my great business idea.

Three weeks earlier, I told him, I had come across a scrap dealer’s shop. Fascinated by the piles of metal, glass, paper and other kinds of scrap in his shop, I had stopped for a moment. He asked me if I wanted to buy or sell anything and I asked him what kind of things he dealt in. Other than perishable goods, wooden articles, concrete and clothes, he bought and sold everything, he told me.

“Everything!” I said.

“Yes, everything,” he replied and went back to adjusting some newspapers around him. I stood there thinking, and he added, “Basically, anything made from paper, metal and plastic.”

“Okay, that makes it easy,” I said.

Since then, I had constantly been thinking of what I could sell to this guy. We had no spare glass bottles at home and I wasn’t going to sell my precious comics. I considered selling our water bottles but I realized that wouldn’t go down too well with my family. I even scanned the kitchen to see if I could sell any jars but I knew that might land me in trouble. It had to be something that was of no use to anyone. The idea came when I overheard Rajan asking Matarani for five rupees to buy a new cricket ball. It was his turn to buy the ball, he told her.

“What happened to the old ball?”

“You know those things break or crack at a good whack.”

Voila! I had my first business idea.

For the next 10 days, I patiently sat on a wall when they played and waited for the ball to break.

When I had collected enough plastic balls, I took my little stash to the same scrap dealer. He was a nice man, and treated me as he would treat any fair customer. He checked the broken pieces of plastic, weighed them and told me he would give me one rupee for it.

I remember that feeling distinctly: triumph. It felt as if I was gliding through air. And why not? I had just earned my first rupee.

That rupee gave me confidence and taught me that there's no lack of opportunity in the world . If you are not afraid of working hard or thinking outside the box, if you don't build obstacles of hollow pride or misplaced dignity in your way, then success is just a matter of time.

Yes, there is a magic flute, there is an opportunity waiting to be grabbed, there are needs the world has that are waiting to be fulfilled, but you need to have the passion and grit to realize your dreams.

On the flute of hard work, you play the melody of utility, and magnificent rewards will walk right into your life, enchanted and spellbound.

Remember, success is not a courtesan. It is merely an eager spectator. You can't court success or benefits or be driven by them. They are the natural outcomes of good decisions and execution. Competence, on the other hand, is very much a courtesan. You pamper it and build a relationship with it.

The first aspect of the Self, in the current context, is an ever-alert mind. A mind that's not only observant but also willing to act outside the confines of what it's comfortable with.

Got something to sell? Go out and do it. Tick the S off from your list.

A recent graduate cleared all rounds of the job interview and the HR manager asked him, "How much are you expecting?"

"Somewhere around \$150,000 per annum."

"Negotiable?"

"Well, it depends on other perks and benefits."

“How about a paid six-week vacation, a stock option plan usually reserved for the executives, your own cabin, full medical and dental insurance, plus a company car, say, a BMW 7 Series?”

“Wow!” he said. “You are joking, right?”

“But you started it!”

A DREAM

I MUST BEGIN WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION that will define who you are.

Do you have a dream?

Do you?

I am not asking whether you dream or if you have dreams you wish to see fulfilled in your life but simply, do you have a dream?

There are millions of people who are doing very well in their lives without having any big dream. In other words, I'm not suggesting that you must dream big, but you've got to create something that motivates you to get out of bed every morning, something that makes your wakeful life even more beautiful than dreaming (see the paradox?).

A common misconception about having a dream is that you realize very early in your career, life or business that you are going to build the biggest company on the planet. In my view, it doesn't work that way. Often, your dream shapes itself as you progress and grow, but yes, you begin to get a feel of where you are heading.

One of the first products the founders of Hewlett-Packard (HP) made was a soap dispenser. To think that Mark Zuckerberg knew from the outset that Facebook would one day redefine the social media landscape, or that the YouTube founders knew what a mammoth of a platform it would become is nothing but ignorance.

There's a difference between being a dreamer and having a dream. Simply put, when you are insanely passionate about something, you have a dream. When you can get others to share your dream, you have a worthwhile proposition and when others are willing to pay to be a part of your dream, you have a profitable livelihood.

Having a dream is like falling in love. That's all you think about. Your dream can't be having lots of money. It just doesn't work that way. Try it, you can't fall in love with this dream. You hope for it, but you can't constantly think about having money. Try it. You are not in love with the money but the pleasures it can bring. With a dream, on the other hand, you are in love with the actual dream.

Believing in something makes you passionate about it.

I've had the privilege of interacting with the best of the best in their fields, from world-class educators and entrepreneurs to political and business leaders. Irrespective of whether they are high-flying executives or billionaires, they are incredibly passionate about what they do. If you observe an accomplished musician, for example, you'll notice that they are in it for the love of it and not because it's getting them concerts and fame.

In December 2017, I had the honor of addressing over 10,000 children gathered in one giant hall. It was the largest assembly I had addressed to date. And no, it was not the size of the audience that made my eyes well up the moment I entered the hall. Nor was it the

thunderous applause those children gave me when I entered. It was something entirely different. Read on.

In 1992, a simple man, who had grown up in abject poverty with a widowed mother and seven siblings, took an unconventional step. He was 27 years old at the time, an age when most of us are thinking about our material goals, an age when it's hard to see past our own desires, when parents are asking about our plans of getting married and settling down and all that. And yet, he quit his job as a chemistry teacher in a private college and traveled to the innermost regions of his home state, Odisha.

The idea was very simple: make quality education accessible to the poorest of the poor.

He brought back 12 tribal children with him after giving many assurances to their parents, most of whom spoke in a local dialect and did not even know Odiya, the language of the state, or any other official Indian language. He took responsibility for their safety, meals, accommodation, uniforms and education.

Fast forward to 2018. Twenty-five years later, Professor Achyuta Samanta's Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, or KISS as it's commonly known, houses 27,000 tribal children. They are educated from kindergarten all the way to post graduation. KISS provides free meals, accommodation, education, uniforms, medical facilities and everything else you can imagine, and it churns out international rugby players.

Prof. Samanta didn't just stop at that. Alongside, he built another organization called Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), where 27,000 paying students are enrolled in various courses. The campus is spread over 400 acres, there are 54,000 students combined (in KISS and KIIT) and 12,000 staff. All from one person's dream and relentless action.

"For every student enrolled in KIIT," Prof. Samanta told me, "we induct one tribal student in KISS. Income from KIIT is used to fund KISS."

Meeting Prof. Samanta was a heartwarming experience as he radiated love, wisdom and humility. To date, he lives in a two-bedroom rented

house. Never married, he has devoted his life to elevate the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.

I was amazed to see the discipline and responsiveness of the children. Throughout my speech, every time I asked them a question to ensure they were with me, they answered promptly and correctly. They understood my message, humor and stories.

“It is not your pleasure and privilege to be here but mine,” I said to the children. “The mere sight of you is inspiring me to do more for our world. I thank you, your parents and your teachers.”

“Everyone who takes birth is blessed with three basic rights,” I added. “Life may not seem fair but no one can take these three rights away from you. *The right to dream, the right to choose and the right to act.* Dream with open eyes. Make mindful choices and act responsibly.”

Successful people like Prof. Samanta are their own makers who cut through adversities like a knife through butter. It’s also true that each one of us carries within us a seed of greatness. Whether we resign ourselves to our fate or rewrite it is totally up to us.

And it all starts with a dream. A real dream is not always a grand vision from the outset. Often, the beginning is just a tiny matter you care about, something that’s close to your heart, a small seed you can’t wait to see turn into a tender sapling. As you continue to work with persistence and sincerity, your dream grows with you, within you. You begin to gain the wisdom to see what all is needed to realize your dream. Many things must come together for something to take place. Which of the following do you think is required to realize a dream?

Hard work

Destiny

Courage

Competence

All of the above

The truth is that these are merely the ingredients of success and, on their own, ingredients don’t make a great dish. It is also the recipe, portioning, presentation, ambience—whether it’s Beethoven or

Bollywood songs playing in the background—and so on. Together, they influence our overall experience and eventually contribute to how delicious a preparation might taste. In other words, I am suggesting that it's only when we create the right conditions that our dreams begin to materialize.

If you focus on creating a conducive environment, achieving the desired outcome is only a matter of time. I remember watching countless birds perch on the trees from my window. When it was spring, they came, sang, chirped and played on the tender new leaves. Butterflies and bees sat on blooming flowers. The grass was green, as were the trees. And beautiful birds with tiny wings also arrived. I did nothing special to invite those birds except, for the last two years, we had been tending to the health of the flora around my cottage. We focused on creating the right conditions and nature took care of the rest.

In a family or an organization, if you want to encourage truth and transparency, you have to create an environment that supports it . *Whatever we want to boost, we have to encourage it.* Therefore, when you are working towards your dream, all you have to do is be mindful and ask yourself, “Is this step I’m about to take moving me away from or towards my dream?”

One baby step followed by another, by another and yet another... this continues till one day you walk into your dream, when all that you dreamed is now around you in the real world. That unreal feeling you get when you climb Mount Everest, that *samadhi* a yogi attains after years of yogic discipline, that moment when a founder-CEO rings the opening bell on Wall Street to mark the IPO of her company...

APPROACH

{Adhithana}

LIFT THE GAME

THE YEAR 2004 WAS ONE OF THE DEFINING PERIODS OF my business life. I had nearly got the terms sheet from the VC firm in Silicon Valley when I got an email from my general manager in Sydney that he was resigning and that he would not honor the notice period as per his employment contract. It only hit me how grave the situation was when other members of my management team left with him to start a new company. In the preceding seven months, I had been so engrossed in and focused on getting institutional capital that I had lost touch with my customers and left the reins completely in the hands of my management team.

I was in Toronto when I got this news and by the time I reached Sydney, I was practically on the road. I put my house up for sale and decided that I needed a change and that I was done with Australia. I

wound up my company in Sydney and sold whatever little assets I had. My car, a Saab convertible, was gone along with my office and everything in it. I was left with just over \$7,000 from a balance of a few hundred thousand dollars just a few months ago.

One corporate customer, however, stood by me and agreed to continue giving me business. I told them that I still had a trimmed-down development team in India. Meanwhile, the house got sold and there was a cool-off period of 40 days. I didn't want to sit around doing nothing so, I picked up the phone and called a recruitment consultant. She took my resume and within 24 hours I was called for an interview with a large government department. I went to the interview as if I didn't need the job, with a sort of abandon and a rebellious attitude. I went in semi-business casuals in the sense that I wore jeans with a sports jacket. By jeans, I don't mean a pair of pants ripped at the knees but just smart denim. I still remember, it was a Versace jacket, Hugo Boss shirt, jeans and shoes with Montblanc cufflinks even though the recruitment consultant had told me that the dress code was formal.

You know that mode, that self-destructive mode, in which you couldn't care less. So much so that you actually want to fail. It's the state of mind in which most people give up on goodness and start to binge and crib their way through life. I was somewhat in a similar mode. Though I neither stopped playing badminton nor did I resort to binge eating.

For at least five years prior to this business failure, I had only been taking interviews and hiring people on excessive salaries left, right and center and here I was that day, giving an interview because I needed the money. That too not for the role of CEO or CIO that I had been, but just a project lead. I had learned a long time ago that to grow in life, one ought to be flexible. Besides, failure has its own rewards because it brings you either lifelong friends or lessons. Everyone could do with a bit of both.

It was a very technical interview. Too technical for my taste or role. I'd long stopped coding or architecting systems but, to my surprise, they gave me the job. It was a three-month contract, so I decided to postpone my visit to Canada by another six weeks and took up a

serviced apartment near my workplace. They would pay me \$80 per hour translating to \$640 per day. Not bad. But to put things in context, the previous year, I had on my personal billing made an average of \$2000 per day. This does not include many high-margin, fixed-priced contracts my business had won.

But, I was okay because at least I would get to make a difference somewhere. The project was in shambles and with fresh government funding of \$1.2 million, they had to fix whatever they could. It was a high-security, state-level investigations system with multiple intelligence agencies involved.

I've shared most of this story in my memoir, *If Truth Be Told*, but what I didn't mention was what transpired on this project, and I feel you need to know this because it is a very important point in the A of the Sacred Principle. That is, how you approach a desired outcome. I've changed the names of the people to maintain client confidentiality, everything else stated here is exactly how it happened.

I started on the project on a Monday and presented my findings on Thursday to Chip Baker, the project manager, who immediately requested me to present them straight to John Brooke, the CIO.

"Directly?" I asked.

"Yeah, mate," he said. "He'd love to hear it."

On Friday, I was presenting my findings to John where, along with showing a path to getting this project done, I slipped in my plan of going to Canada after my three-month contract.

Another week later, during which I'd already prepared my vision for the project and a blueprint of the delivery roadmap, they called me for another meeting and asked me what it would take to retain me for another three-month stretch. I told them truthfully that I was committed to the project but with the constraints of the government department in terms of hiring and vendor engagement, to deliver everything in six months would not be possible unless we really took this head on.

"What is more important to you?" I asked. "Delivery of the project before June 30th or cost-efficiency?"

“You mean, this project can be done in six months!” John exclaimed and Chip joined in. I was intrigued for I always assumed that I was called in to complete this project but they told me then that this was unheard of. All the agencies involved were expecting only a fraction of the work to be completed and then, as it had always been the case, the remaining funds would go back to the treasury and a new funding request would be raised for the next fiscal year.

“Of course, it can be done. But we’ll require a different strategy,” I said and then told them that we would need to hire resources whom we could pay overtime, engage a vendor to work on other modules separately and strictly follow the development methodology.

“Contractors we can engage quickly,” Chip said, “but how do we find a vendor so quickly who could delve into the giant mess of this code and start delivering from day one?”

“What do you suggest?” John asked.

Before I made any suggestions, I told them, it was important to ensure that we were on the same page. And I gave them my vision, which entailed three things:

1. A two-second response time in the web application.
2. An entirely new user interface that would allow the user to access any part of the project in less than three clicks.
3. And finally, lightning-fast search functionality that would allow them to search across all disparate systems and data warehouses from this application. Because, when you are running an investigations system, you need all kinds of patterns, information and everything else you can get.

“What is lightning fast?” John asked with a flat face.

“One-second response time.”

“You mean if I enter a search query, I’ll get a response within one second?”

“From the moment you press ‘Submit’ yes, within one second.”

They were sold and asked me if all of this could be done within the budget they had. It could be done in even less, I answered. Then came the two most important questions:

1. Which vendor would supplement the application development with the in-house team and,
2. Where to find that search product?

“I have a team in India,” I said. “They can turn this around pretty quickly. And for search, I have a product that we built over the last five years that can do all this and more.”

“We can’t buy from you,” they said to me, “because you are not a government-approved vendor.”

“That’s alright,” I said, “find someone from whom you can so we can get the job done.”

“Unless, of course,” John said, “you submitted a quote through an approved vendor and they would get the project.”

I didn’t know any government-approved vendors. I’d never worked in the Australian government prior to this project. But, many years ago, I read a brilliant book that said that every salesman has to work through eight obstacles, not nine not seven. Particularly, in corporate or organizational sales, something I was quite familiar with, sales cycles can be anywhere between 6-12 months and you have to patiently work through the hoops.

I took this as one of the hurdles and told the CIO that I would have an answer for him within 48 hours. At the same time, I apprised him that I used to have a company in Sydney but it shut down, so I only had the product now and a development team in India.

I went through the directory of approved vendors and began calling them. For some, I left messages and with others, I didn’t feel as comfortable. But there was one person who immediately clicked. He had been running a consulting firm for more than a decade and offered to see me that very afternoon. He drove down and I explained to him

the entire scenario and asked if he would like to sign a back-to-back agreement.

“So, you will do all the work?” he asked me.

“Yes.”

“You have a team?”

“Yes.”

“In India?”

“Yes.”

“What if you are unable to complete the project? The entire liability will be on me because the government will be giving my company the contract.”

“You only pay me once I get a delivery note signed from the customer.”

He was an astute businessman and saw the potential to make money without having to do anything. I had to do all the work.

One after the other, over the next 30 days, I signed (through the approved vendor) multiple contracts with the department, hired more contractors and all was looking good. Except one thing. My flagship search product that I was really looking forward to sell hit a major roadblock. It was like if you were on your way to Badrinath and the road received a massive landslide. I couldn't have cleared it on my own. To resurrect my company, I needed a big customer like this department and my product was good enough that it instantly added value to what they were trying to accomplish.

“Unfortunately,” John said, “the technology acquisitions team already shortlisted three vendors when you came in. And more importantly, they have grave concerns about ongoing maintenance and support particularly because you'll leave for Canada in a few months' time.”

“But, my moving to Canada has nothing to do with the product quality or support. I'm not the product!” I contended. “The vendor I am working through will support the product.”

“I understand,” he said, “but I can't interfere in the technical due diligence process.”

“Of course not, Mr. Brooke. At the same time, however, this department shouldn’t spend five times more money and time on something it can acquire for much less. My product is far superior than anything out there in the market. And don’t take my word for it, see it for yourself.”

At my insistence, they agreed to involve the technology acquisitions team and see a demo of my product. I had learned a long time ago that unless you can help the other person visualize the future, you can’t get them to see your perspective. And, if they can not only see but interact with the future, that’s the tipping point. So, I figured, rather than showing them what my product could do in general, I must show them what it could do for them. Specifically for them.

This would instantly give me an edge over my competitors. They had shown demos on dummy data sources but I decided to run my crawler on the test data within the department. In other words, my demo would show them a nearly finished end product. Besides, my product was actually superior to that of my competition because it was extremely modular, lean and entirely portable on any platform. You could run the server on Unix, Windows or Linux, and the client was web-based anyway. This was a huge plus.

Like a little puppy wiggles its way to a family eating their meal and looks on innocently, melting them to share their meal, I gently wiggled my way in—with patience, promise and optimism. I had entered really late in the race but they couldn’t ignore the vision I shared with them. If you can get a customer excited, the rest of the sales process is simply about being patient and ticking the boxes. I had them excited, but they were not the only end users.

I had to give a demo of the product to Michael Hanson, the police chief, because his department was one of the primary users. I say this without the slightest exaggeration that people dreaded a mere sighting of the chief. He was hand in glove with the NSW state premier, Bob Carr, and his word could get people into the limelight or be thrown into oblivion for the rest of their career. So, various managers at the customer’s end kept briefing me endlessly about how I must watch carefully for cues and that if Mike didn’t okay my product, then it

wouldn't matter what I had or who I was, there would be no sale. I had worked with numerous corporations before, so I understood fear, but this level of paranoia was unparalleled.

Finally, I put a stop to all this when I said to Chip Baker, "By any chance, is the police chief a cannibal?"

He laughed out loud and then tried to tell me stories of employees who had been fired and vendors kicked out because they couldn't win him over. What he didn't realize was that I had nothing to lose. I was a man who had already lost his business (except two customers, including this department), his home, car, assets, everything. This police chief wasn't the maker of my destiny and he certainly hadn't been paying my bills so far, so I felt no intimidation in my heart whatsoever. If there was anyone to whom I bowed, it was Lord Krishna. What mattered was the Divine in my heart and outside, not some police chief. If anything, I felt even more rebellious taking on this Goliath.

The day of the meeting with Mike Hanson came. I set up my laptop and waited with the other managers in the room. The heads of vendor sourcing, technology acquisitions, networking and infrastructure, legacy systems and central project office were all there. A few minutes later, at the exact moment of the meeting, in walked Mike with John Brooke.

I was asked to quickly get on with my presentation because I'd been briefed amply that the chief had the patience of a hungry lion in front of a tender deer. Whatever, I thought, and got on with my presentation. A mere three or four minutes into it, when I was talking about how a custom security layer in the system was absolutely essential to safeguard the investigations search system from intrusion, sniffing and abuse, Mike interrupted me and said, "Don't beat about the bush, son. Just get to the point."

This was a first for me even though I had presented before harder boardrooms equipped with much bigger egos. Everyone kind of panicked. I looked around the room—some had red ears and some, flushed cheeks. I looked at the police chief and his expressionless pale face. After all, he was the man with authority.

“You can be assured that I wouldn’t waste your time, Mr. Hanson,” I said. “You need to know about the security aspects of this solution to make an informed decision. If you still want me to skip this and get to the demo, I can.”

He looked around and everyone sat there, mummified.

“Carry on then,” he said, his voice toned down.

“Thank you,” I said and completed my presentation over the next 20 minutes.

“It’s good,” he said at the end. Other than his first remark, this was all he said. I was later told that for Mike Hanson to say as much was a big deal. The CIO was most happy and I was told that the chief said he would like to see it implemented as soon as possible.

Did I celebrate? Of course, it was a big win.

Only that it wasn’t.

A couple of days later, Chip called me and said that the three shortlisted vendors had provided a detailed feature set that they claimed could implement the same as my product. He emailed me a sheet containing features and asked me to tick those that my product also supported.

I sent back my list matching their features only to get another list a couple of days later. This tennis game went on for a good two weeks. They would send a new feature set and I was asked to match it. The issue at the core wasn’t the product itself but one particular person, Nathan McInroe, in the technology acquisitions team, who had already invested significant time in a vendor and wasn’t interested in more headache just because I was a good salesman or I had a better product.

Nathan had made up his mind that I was not going to be the vendor of choice for the enterprise search software. I got this information from everyone else because there was no other block. The CIO, the police chief, Chip Baker, the users and other agencies, all liked my product but it was a government department and an audit was around the corner. No one would risk breaching any process. If I wanted in, the head of the technology acquisitions team, who happened to be Nathan, had to give

it a green signal. But, he disliked me and my late entry in the search landscape. It added to his workload.

Every time I would come back to my cabin, I would look at a particular Post-it note that read “Don’t take it personally,” and had a smiley drawn next to it. This was my years’ old practice—writing a don’t-take-it-personally Post-it note and sticking it somewhere I could see all the time. No matter what this individual felt for me, I was determined to not take it personally or blame my failure on racism or whatever.

But, I was feeling a bit lost that day. This matching features game could go on forever. They would get the project to a point where I would have to choose between another search product or missing a deadline. In my own project, it wasn’t an issue but the mandate was to have one enterprise solution for all the investigations systems and the other system was directly handled by this person who hated me. So, even if I gained a victory on my turf, if he rejected my solution for their project, my product was a no-go. There was no way that I could make him start liking me or my product.

As I read somewhere, “It’s very hard to make a man understand something when his salary depends on not understanding it.”

It was not the first time that I was making a corporate sale. I had sold to Deloitte, News Corporation, General Motors, Dairy Farmers, Westfield and many other large and medium-sized corporations but this was the first time that an environment was so politically charged and, even worse, a key influencer in the buying team had his heart set on someone else and wanted me out.

I sat down and began drawing a chart to get a picture of who influenced whom, the key decision makers and my unique value proposition. But the diagram wasn’t telling me anything I didn’t already know.

Just then my chief data architect walked into my cabin. His name was Drake. Around 45 years old at the time, he was a brilliant data designer from Ukraine. He lived for four things in life, he told me, and they were chess, cigar, soccer and acoustics. In his spare time, he made custom

wooden speakers and he was very passionate about them. He played soccer on the weekends (with heavy cigar smoking, how he still managed to play soccer, I have no idea). He was quite loyal to me (I'd hired him on this project on behalf of the department) and we often played chess at lunch. Daily, in fact.

"What's the matter?" he asked me.

"Why, what's the matter?" I replied.

"You look a bit stressed. Is everything okay?"

I shared with him how with each passing day, the hope of getting my product in here was fading because of just one person and his partiality to another vendor. I had tried bonding with Nathan by inviting him to a working lunch or dinner. I had tried speaking to him and understanding his concerns, but it was a stonewall every time. He just didn't want to have anything to do with me. He met me only once with his team and after that, on one pretext or another, he kept me at bay, not even responding to my emails.

There was no point talking about him to anyone because the moment you, as a vendor, start complaining about any worker or manager working for the prospective customer, you make it extremely difficult for the customer to buy from you. No one has sold anything by making enemies and even if you could, the project or the product wouldn't last.

"Amit, Amit," he said in his heavy Ukrainian accent, which almost sounded Indian whenever he called my name. All his t's sounded th's. "Just play chess with them like you do with me and I know you'll win."

"What, just go and offer to play?"

"Nah... you know what I mean. Use the same brain you use in chess, how you create the illusion of victory for me and then I only realize I'm losing the game when it's already too late. Build the pressure, don't take it. But more importantly, lift the game."

"Oh Drake," I said, "your advice comes at the perfect moment. Yes... let's lift the game. How do I ever repay you?"

"Buy me a lunch and let me win a game sometime, particularly when other colleagues come around and watch us play."

“I’ll buy you lunch for a whole month, but a walkaway point in chess... I’ll think about it.”

We laughed out loud. And just like that, I was determined to lift this entire game of sales to an unprecedented level of complexity. That evening, I skipped my badminton and sat down and worked through the most compelling points of my product, specifically in the context of the value it would bring to the department.

I had a slight edge because I was already working on multiple projects and I had firsthand knowledge of their challenges and pain areas. I moved away from the feature set and once again went back to the vision. It was a dumb game, I thought, to compete on features. Companies chose products because of value, not the features, and I decided to change my strategy of approaching this sale. I had to build the offense, no more the defensive approach of yes- I-can-do-it-too.

I prepared a two-page document that highlighted four key areas around security, functionality, implementation and value-adds and handed it to Chip and copied it to Nathan too. As expected, Nathan didn’t even acknowledge the receipt of the email, but the project manager wrote back saying he was quite impressed with my offering. Now, the tables had turned. The other vendors would have to play we-can-do-it-too. Out of the three shortlisted vendors, the Australian company, Copernicus, backed out saying they could not deliver against the four key functional areas and only two vendors (plus my company) were left in the race.

But, those two were large organizations, very well known in the industry. One of them, Verity, had acquired a high-performance search business called Inktomi and certain aspects of it were far superior to my own product, which I had built from bootstrapped operations.

The other vendor, Endeca Technologies (if I recall the name correctly now... it’s been 14 years), was a strong player swimming freely in an ocean of VC money. They had recently forayed into the Australian market and they were hungry for new customers.

Both of them got back saying they could do everything that my product claimed to deliver. I sent another sheet highlighting the

complexity of multiple integration points and how my product was superior (and it actually was) in crawling legacy data and providing a single search point across all investigation systems.

This time it took them a week to get back but both said they could achieve the same functionality too. But, rather than myself, they were playing the catch-up game now saying yes-we-can-do-it-too. The barrage of features lists stopped from their end. This, however, was simply a part of my overall strategy. I really treated this sale as a game of chess, only that I was a lone player playing two parallel games with grandmasters with a lot of resources.

One thing was clear to me now that if I went ahead with any more of these sheets of vision or product, my customer would grow tired. And when your customer gets tired, it's a very bad sign because then you can forget about rationality, they'll just make a knee-jerk decision based on what they emotionally or intuitively feel is right. Besides, they had nothing to lose by buying products from companies that were publicly traded.

Support would be easier too and they wouldn't just fold up like my little company. Whereas, buying a product from me was indeed risky. As they say, "No one loses a job for hiring IBM." It's the safe thing to do when you are running mission-critical applications: buy from someone you know and someone whom others know.

"Mate," Chip Baker told me, "Nathan wants to finalize the vendor and he has decided to go ahead with Verity because they do everything that your product does."

"Are you suggesting that you want to spend \$500,000 more than you should have to? How will the auditors feel about it?"

"How do you mean?"

"I was just coming to you, Chip," I said. "I've spoken to my board in Canada and we have just launched a program for educational and governmental institutions. No license fee."

"Zero?"

"Yep. You instantly save \$500,000."

“This is big! So let me reconfirm, you’ll give away your product for free?”

“You just pay for the implementation as per the earlier proposal. And annual maintenance.”

I pretty much used my last card with this offer. Kind of. Almost. I could have offered this on day one but first I had to wear out the other contenders and wait for the right moment. You must never launch an offense in chess without backing it up with a series of equally offensive moves. The opponent must panic and be frustrated, if not give up altogether. Their hope must get a dent. But your customer must remain happy, unaffected and the beneficiary of your value. No matter what, don’t ever betray the trust of your customer.

The single most important rule of sales is to make it easy for the customer to decide. Make it complicated and they’ll run away. They are hiring you to make their lives easy, not difficult.

Rule number two: never bamboozle a business user with tech talk. You must know what they want to know.

I emailed my offer in writing to Chip Baker within the next 30 minutes, copying Nathan and John (the CIO). I looked at the two innocent Post-it notes stuck on my desk: ‘Don’t take it personally’ and ‘Lift the game.’ I had only just begun lifting the game.

Nathan had to hold off finalizing a vendor and he wrote to Chip saying that my product had no third-party verification whereas Verity and Endeca had been ranked by Gartner and Forrester research as top players.

“But, I’ve given you more than five references of my existing customers,” I said to Chip. “Nathan’s team has already called every single one of them and got stellar reviews. Isn’t that third-party?”

“I know, I know, mate,” Chip said. “But this is the government, you know, and the systems are highly sensitive. We must get an independent ranking of your product, otherwise Nathan will just go ahead with one of the other vendors.”

“Chip, let me ask you a simple question. Do you see the value in my product and do you believe that it is the best solution for our

investigation systems? You know that just in my demo, I showed more integration than the other vendors would after implementation.”

“Mate,” he said, “if it were in my hands, I would have given you the order yesterday.”

“Okay, then tell me a way to get third-party verification done.”

He asked me to give him a day and the next day, he told me that they had a corporate membership with the research firm Gartner, which meant that as part of that package, at the department’s request, Gartner was obliged to evaluate any technology product.

“So, I’ve made a request and forwarded all the material you’ve sent so far,” he said. “They want a link to the demo and administration console and they want to speak to you or any other authorized representative over the phone.”

Immediately, I sent them the links and the same afternoon, I got a call from Boston, from their research head who looked after the Enterprise Search category. We hit it off really well and he spoke to me for almost 90 minutes.

Meanwhile, the other two vendors chose not to respond to my offer of zero license fee. As if on a cue by Nathan, they were waiting to see where Gartner would rank my product. Had I failed to impress Gartner, my offer wouldn’t matter anyway because the department would have to choose from one of the two vendors. Gartner gave a glowing review of my product and prepared a magic quadrant that placed me on the top right corner. This was way more than I ever expected and certainly not at all what the technology acquisition team expected. In a way, the new report put my product ahead of Verity and Endeca.

“You’ve knocked this one out of the park, mate,” Chip said to me, handing me the report. He was elated because all this had not only been an additional headache for him but was also affecting our delivery timeframes.

I was ecstatic myself. Any moment, the contract would be signed and PO raised. But any moment didn’t mean this moment and it wasn’t.

Verity and Endeca were in it with just as much fervor and they too waived their license fee. Gartner’s report was solid armor for me but

they had a long list of customers in the Australian government and a history. Whatever, I thought, I would lift the game even further. I had set my mind on it. And let me tell you, *one of the most powerful things you can do to attain success is to set your mind on something. Not just any mind, but an open and resilient mind.*

“I’m happy to refer you to other divisions, Amit,” Chip said to me. “Even John is pleased with you. There are plenty of other projects you can do. Unfortunately, Nathan has made a persuasive case to go ahead with the vendor of his choice.”

“You know Chip, it’s not about getting projects or selling a product. I know that my Java-based solution is what’s best for the department.”

I asked him to give me one more day saying I had to get an approval for something from my board.

I was the board at the time.

The following day, I gave them in writing that I was offering them the product with zero license fee and no binding annual maintenance contract. This was almost unheard of in my industry.

“Imagine how much you would save year after year not having a binding maintenance contract with any company for this product. You will still have the support and a number to call, just nothing to bind you.”

At this stage, Endeca pulled out of the game because they didn’t see the value in having a customer that would take a free product with no maintenance contract. I think there was a fundamental difference in the way we thought. I always believed that if you have to use contracts to tie down a customer, either you are not sure of what you are selling or they are not a customer worth having.

Customers and sellers come together because of the value they gain from each other and not because of binding contracts. In fact, the day a customer has to say, “Look, it’s in the contract,” you’ve already lost a bit of that customer. I wasn’t interested in selling my product just for the sake of it. I wanted to deliver value, a massive win for Chip and John who believed in me and my product.

Nathan, for the first time, wrote to me after receiving my offer that he would think about it and let me know. Verity, however, matched my terms and in a way, we were back to square one.

Nathan submitted a written recommendation for going ahead with Verity and it was quite significant. For, if now anyone went ahead with my product and if anything ever went wrong, the CIO would lose his job and Chip would never get another project to manage within the department.

I tried to lift the game, but the game was well and truly out of my hands now. A formal recommendation of the vendor was made and the Verity sales team might have even celebrated over a bubbly that evening.

Having said that, whatever be the case, I didn't know how to give up. A salesperson can't afford to give up. Yes, we have to be practical and realistic but I was not going to give up till the contract with Verity was signed, their project commissioned and delivered and money transferred to the vendor's bank.

It was hard to lift the game, so I decided to change it altogether with one last card I still had up my sleeve. I knew Nathan was an extremely technical person and he loved all things technology. I requested a 15-minute meeting where both Chip and Nathan were present. John, the CIO, had confirmed too but that very afternoon, he was called by the NSW premier for an urgent meeting.

His PA told me that she could reschedule my meeting for another day with him, but I knew that time was running out. Truly like a game of chess, the flag would go down any moment. I may have a series of best moves well thought out but if the flag went down, it would all be over. Any more delay and Verity would have received a signed contract. Most companies don't care about what's best, but about what is amicable and works. And Nathan was sitting tight with his vendor of choice.

So, it was Nathan, his technical manager and lead, Chip and two project leads in the meeting. I wasn't expecting anyone other than Nathan and Chip but to see the small meeting room full of people, 50 percent of whom I had never met, at this stage of the sales process, was

a big red flag. In making this move, however, Nathan gave me a lot of ammunition. Now, in my mind, all I had to do was lay out some massive value adds that only my proposition had.

“No features, Amit,” I said to myself, “don’t talk about any features. These are not the users. One is the decision-maker and rest are influencers. No features, no features.”

I had to proceed with extreme clarity so that even a three-year-old could understand that the bottle of milk I had was fresher, sweeter and healthier. I had to play with that child, make him hungry, make him giggle, so he would point at the bottle and say, “I want milk.”

I thanked everyone for their time and began:

“I do think that selecting Verity as your enterprise search engine is a brilliant choice, Nathan. They really have a stellar list of customers and their K2 engine is phenomenal.”

I was careful to not use “but” and “you.” The human mind is an amazing device. The moment you use “but,” it completely ignores all that it heard before this conjunction was uttered. For example, if you say to someone, “You are doing great work, but I think...,” that appreciation or praise before “but” completely loses its meaning.

I didn’t want to say, “You made a brilliant choice,” because when you address someone directly, you also set yourself up for potential confrontation at the delivery of any news they may consider negative. Instead, I chose to look at Nathan and talk about the positives and the good aspects of his decision-making.

I went on to tell them that the rigor and thoroughness with which they have gone through the entire process was remarkable.

Nathan loosened up a bit. He had been sitting crossarmed. Now he opened his arms, leaned forward and the frown disappeared. Personally, within my heart, I had nothing against Nathan and I only spoke the truth when I told him of the good work he had been doing. I did not take his rejection of my product personally. He was just doing what he thought was best.

“I see your product does everything that Verity does,” he said, “but we feel more confident with them because of their history with other

customers. Frankly, I had never heard about you or your company before you took on the project.”

“I’m not surprised,” I said. “We haven’t had many customers in the Australian government.”

“Plus, here’s the thing,” I continued, “Verity actually does even more than what my product does. Even though we are using cutting-edge technology and our algorithms are really sophisticated, I completely agree that Verity does everything and more.”

I really had their attention now. The whole meeting was going in a positive direction. They didn’t know what the conflict was because I, a vendor, seemed so happy at their selection of my competitor. They knew I was a genuine person because I didn’t sit there and bash another vendor. I stated what I saw as the truth. I can’t stress it enough: the importance of being truthful.

“I’m not here to compete with Verity,” I said. “I simply wish to apprise you of a new development as well as the highlights of my offering. As it is, I’m grateful that you gave me this time even after selecting the vendor.”

“And, they have been informed as well,” Nathan said. But he almost sounded apologetic.

“Here are the three key things: First, no license fee. Ever. Secondly, no maintenance contract. Ever. And thirdly, native integration.”

I waited for their reaction because the technical people were instantly curious about the third point. Native integration meant that my product won’t be just a sandbox through which they would send and receive data, but a module compiled within the application code. It would give them impeccable security. In other words, I agreed to give them my product’s source code.

In plain English, imagine buying readymade furniture from a showroom versus having a designer come into your home, examine every nook and corner and custom build the furniture for you, giving better finishing and at a much lower cost.

Native integration meant instant response and complete control over the product. The technical people and other project people fired some

more questions at me. I kept my approach non-confrontational, my answers short and clear and subtly kept harping about the three key benefits.

“But how will you do native integration?” Nathan asked. “It’s not like the product is custom written for us?”

“Well, I will give you access to the product’s source code.”

I dropped this bomb in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Let me get this straight,” he said while Chip leaned on the table, “you will give us the source code so we may freely use this however we wish on this project.”

“Not just on this project, but on any in-house project within the department. Now or in the future. A perpetual, non-exclusive, source code license with no strings attached.”

Chip threw his hands up in the air and drew in a big breath.

“Mate!” he said to Nathan, “Are the Verity people also waiving license fee and maintenance forever?”

“No,” he replied, a little dejected, “only for the first two years. I could stretch it to three perhaps. But, a perpetual source code license from Amit is a big deal.”

“This program is only for educational and government institutions,” I added.

“So, we just pay you for the implementation?” Nathan clarified.

“If that’s not too much of a hassle then yes,” I joked. “A man’s got to eat.”

We all laughed. Nathan said he would get back to me within one week. I thanked him and the others for their time. But just because I had them interested or we laughed didn’t mean anything. Somewhere, sales is like a game of cricket; you just don’t know where it may turn for better or worse. My 15-minute meeting lasted nearly an hour and we finished around 11.30 am. I could wait one week, at least he had said he’d get back to me.

At around four in the afternoon, I came back from another meeting and there was an email sitting in my inbox that was copied to Chip and

John. It read:

Amit,

Thanks for your time today.

We have discussed the matter internally and I have arrived at the conclusion that in light of the information you gave us today, it is indeed in the best interest of our organization to go ahead with your product.

You are selected to be the exclusive search provider for us.

A contract will follow shortly.

Regards,

Nathan

Nathan called me soon after and invited me for lunch the next day. He went on to offer me the implementation contract not only on my project but also on one more project.

I bent over backwards to deliver a seamless integration because I wanted Nathan to know that he had bet on the right horse, that I deeply valued the trust he placed in my company and product and that I was going to make him a winner.

Within four months, I earned a revenue of \$720,000 from this client alone. And my own project, for which I was originally hired, was delivered a full four weeks ahead of time: May 31, 2005.

Meanwhile, I signed up two more clients, so I had four decently-sized customers and suddenly, the business side of things was luminous again. I was richer by more than a million dollars. I was en route to Canada. Not wanting to lose momentum and steam, I spent one week in India training a team to do outbound marketing for me. This was an outsourced team. They fared much better than I'd hoped and got me an average of eight appointments every week from medium-sized businesses. From week one of my landing, I was spending more time on the road meeting prospective customers. The result: in just three months, I signed up 13 customers, and more than half of them gave me annual development contracts.

Not only that, I got a call from this department again, the following year, asking me if I had any product upgrades. I had already permanently moved to Canada by then and was spending my time between San Francisco and Toronto. They had the budget and they wanted to buy upgrades. License was free, there was no maintenance contract, they had the source code and yet they contacted me again because the expertise was with my team.

That was almost free money in the bank. We shipped the upgrades and they paid the monies to my Australian associate, the approved vendor.

All in all, losing everything in 2004 and rebuilding everything in 2005 was a great feeling. As I wrote in my memoir, the same year, I bought a Porsche. I felt it imperative that an entrepreneur must also live his life. Particularly because the preceding few years had been relentless work with the hope to take the business to a level from where I could rest and relax more. *But, such a moment never arrives on its own in the life of an entrepreneur. It's something you have to find time for. Just like we find the time to eat, sleep, etc., we need to create the time to live our life too, to think beyond work.*

One of the primary reasons for sharing this story is simply to share with you my thought process. Ultimately, whether you are looking for a job, appearing for an interview or even an audition, or visiting a prospective customer, you are selling. Even when you propose to someone, effectively, you are selling what you own or know. We are always selling our skills, wisdom, talents, resources and so on.

In healthy selling there's always competition and two rules for beating your competition are:

1. Listen to your customer.
2. Outlast your competition with your service and patience. It's a given that you have a good product.

If you keep the other person's best interest in mind, you may lose a sale or two, but in return you'll gain something a lot more powerful and

rewarding: their trust. And when they start trusting you, more opportunities will come your way automatically.

The A for Approach in the Sacred Principle is the most important actionable aspect because it's on your approach alone that you'll base everything else.

Like S meant Self as well as Sales—for there is no sustainable business without profitable sales—I would like to share with you another meaning of A, and that is Accounting. It sounds boring but it's the dreaded truth. Don't lose sight of the numbers. The money coming into your bank account is not the net profit. Cash in, yes. Profit, no. During my early days of building and running a business, I faced a crunch on multiple occasions not because of a lack of customers but of discipline.

We can have whatever perception we like about our business, that does not mean it's the truth. Ultimately, the health of a business is best gauged from its account books. Whether it's managing your personal finance or a large business, I can't stress enough the importance of keeping your account books squeaky clean and up to date. You don't want the stress of dealing with unnecessary issues, and it's not prudent to waste your time on petty operational matters when you could be focusing on growth. A lot of firefighting can be avoided when you keep a hawk eye on the numbers.

The A for Approach in the Sacred Principle is incomplete without frank and disciplined Accounting.

It's okay to get creative with your proposal, product ideas and marketing campaigns but when a business has to start getting creative with its accounts, it's a red flag.

My approach for winning over the trust of my prospects, not only with this department but also every other customer I ever signed up, was a five-pronged method.

FIVE ASPECTS OF APPROACH

GETTING BACK TO THE SALE AT THIS DEPARTMENT : a good chess player always annotates her game or a good coder always comments through his code so, at a later date, they may know what was going through their head at the time. They can critically analyze it and others can benefit from their thought process. Similarly, it is important for you to know what I was thinking throughout this process. Otherwise, in my humble view, this little story of success may carry some inspiration but no tangible learning.

1. VISION

You must be clear and that clarity must come through in your communication. Whether it's an employer or a customer, the reason they are speaking to you is because they need help. They have some idea of what they want (if not, you help them wade through the stream of

thoughts and work with them to define what they might want), and they need someone who can deliver. If you, as a prospective employee or salesperson, are going to confuse them or not be clear about what you can do, you won't forge any formal bond with them. Take the time to identify what they want and how you can help. The moment I was handed the project, my first line of thought was to do such a good job that it would create a win-win situation for everyone—they placed their trust in me and I must value it. So, I shared with them a lofty but realizable vision of what the future could look like. Until then, the other vendors had been busy selling their products' features. Never do that, in my view. It is a given that your product can do most of what they need. Spend your time on creating a joint vision. Nothing excites us more than visualizing a grand possibility and vision is just that: a magnificent possibility worth trying.

2. VALUE

There must be value in what you are providing. Don't sell someone something just because you can. Would you like to be forcefully sold something that you will regret buying later? No. So, don't do that to your customers either. Either you build the skill and competence they require or you let them know realistically what you (or your product) can and can't do. Dishonest businesses don't go very far. If your customer (or employer) can't trust you, you really haven't gained anything of importance. Yes, you may have made some money in the short term but in the longer run, you have everything to lose. For value to be truly there, *they* must see the value and *you* must see the value. Often, you see the value but they don't. That's where the third aspect comes into play.

3. RELATIONSHIPS

If you think that organizations make rational decisions, then I urge you to think again. Companies are run by people and people are just that, people. They are like you and me. We all make emotional decisions. I read somewhere that we are not rational beings making emotional decisions but we are emotional beings who rationalize our decisions.

In a February 2019 terrorist attack, in Pulwama, Kashmir, we lost 40 soldiers. It shook the entire nation. Social media was flooded with messages of condolence and outrage, people held congregations, they protested, they prayed together. Then India retaliated with their fighter planes during which a soldier, Abhinandan Varthaman, fell behind the enemy lines. He was beaten by the locals before the Pakistani army took him as a prisoner of war. The whole country came together once again. On every person's lips was the name of this air force officer. Except for the 40 families of the soldiers, practically everyone else was over the pain of the Pulwama attack and emotionally connected with Abhinandan.

The Indian government secured his release the very next day and the country went back to being normal. Just a day after his release though, we lost our officers again in an encounter and then again over the next few days, but the media coverage for these martyred soldiers was not even a fraction of what had been Abhinandan's. And the outrage on social media? It was non-existent.

In other words, people must connect with you emotionally before they can hire you or buy from you. We connect through our right brain and we deliberate through our left. You know that feeling when you play or listen to a piece of music in rhythm? It creates a certain sense of acceptance and perfection. You could be rapping or jazzing, there may be syncopation, but you can't afford to lose the sense of rhythm. When your customer connects with you emotionally and likes your product, you create the perfect sales rhythm. Subconsciously or otherwise, they don't experience any conflict in their mind.

Therefore, endeavor to build a relationship with your customer and let me tell you that such relationships are not built by false promises but great sincerity. Be sincere, be honest and have the courage to speak the truth. It'll go a long way. Particularly when dealing with corporates. Just remember that your first sale is merely a foot in the door, the opportunities are endless. They have a lot of problems that need solutions. Sincere and patient people, armored with competency alone can provide long-lasting solutions.

As they say, “It’s not just what you know but who you know.” Plus, how you communicate what you know to those who you may or may not know makes all the difference. When someone hires you or buys from you, they are putting their neck on the line by standing up for you, by believing in you. Don’t ever let your customer down.

4. ATTITUDE

I cannot stress this point enough. By attitude, I mean your view of yourself, your service or product and your customer or employer. A certain Fortune 500 company once hired me and gave me a \$2 million contract to deliver on their project, but no one appreciated what I did there because most were stuck in their own rut of issues, and boardrooms are not usually cozy places. Initially, I was met with great criticism and resistance from all corners. Only the CIO and the COO were in my favor because I was brought in based on their recommendation.

I could have tried to fight everyone by saying or believing that the C-Level hired me directly, but that would be taking things personally. People have the right to like or dislike me. I stopped taking things personally a long time ago. So, I walked in with the attitude that my victory must bring glory to other people in the company.

As a vendor, I cared not for the glory but simply for a successful delivery. We can learn to disagree without being disagreeable. As Harry Truman once said, “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.” This has always been my mantra. Nowhere in the contract had the company said that they would pay me \$2 million and that they would give me credit. That payment was my credit, at least that’s how I looked at it.

Soon, within four weeks, people began opening up to me. They no longer saw me as a threat to their jobs or roles. Within another four months, I’d delivered on my project. But that was not the main victory, that I had to do anyway. Six other divisions within that company flooded me with orders and projects—only and only because of sincerity, competency and, above all, the right attitude.

Whenever people disagree with you or you with them, do not take it personally. Any criticism is an opportunity to examine and do better. You will be amazed how far you'll go and how quickly, if you master the art of listening to the other person patiently without judging them and not taking the criticism personally.

5. DELIVERY

None of the preceding four points mean anything if you don't deliver in the end. Everything eventually will be measured in terms of what you delivered. Did you do what you said you would? Does your product do what you claimed it will? Has it provided the value to the customer?

The fact of the matter is that if you were sincere from the outset, you would have created value and naturally moved towards delivery. If you were sincere and honest, you would not have exaggerated or made false promises. In such a case, you will have more than met their expectations automatically. And, let me tell you something, if you under-promise and over-deliver, keeping in view the five values above, expect another call from your customer soon, another project or another problem where they'll need your help. Plus, those priceless referrals.

Work with the principle that the customer is always right. Except when they are not. And in such a case, you must have the courage to tell them not that they are wrong but that they can be more right. In other words, a lot goes on in an organization and, as a vendor, you may only be thinking about your product but there are numerous other factors in play. Be positive. Even if you have to be negative, learn to deliver the news positively.

A man loved his cat so much that for years, he never went on a vacation to any place where he couldn't take his cat. Due to work, one day, he had to go for an overseas assignment for two months. He entrusted his cat to the care of his best friend. Unfortunately, the cat died of natural causes a mere three weeks later and the friend panicked and called the man in the dead of the night, a Monday night.

"I'm sorry to give you this bad news, my friend," he said, "but your cat is dead."

You could hear a pin drop at the other end, and then sighing and a bit of sobbing.

“I could have died of a heart attack, you know,” the man said. “Don’t you know how to deliver bad news? You should have waited for the weekend and then you could have gently told me that my cat hasn’t been its usual naughty self for the last couple of days. A week later, you could have said that she’s not eating like she used to and is mostly quiet. Another week later, that she’s very frail. And after one more week, you could have said that you think she’s dead. This would have helped me prepare myself, you know.”

His friend felt quite bad at his inconsiderate behavior and apologized to the man. Two weeks later, the man’s phone rang, just when he was stepping out for golf on a beautiful, sunny Sunday morning. It was his friend, who filled him in on many mundane little matters and when it was time to put the phone down, he said, “Oh, I forgot to tell you that your old mother hasn’t been her usual naughty and chirpy self. But, nothing to worry, I’m keeping a watch.”

Naturally, I’m not saying hide the bad news or delay it, but it helps to think of a solution before reporting a problem to your boss or customer. Remember, they have engaged you to provide solutions and not to report problems. They already know they have problems; don’t tell them what they already know. Tell them what they need to know to be more effective and ahead of their competition.

Lift the game, my friend. Don’t take it personally and lift the game at every opportunity. That’s the only approach worth taking.

COMPETENCE
{Kaushala}

ACTION

YOU MAY HAVE AN OSCAR-WINNING SCREENPLAY AND star-studded cast but no scene is shot without “action.” And certainly, no movie happens without shooting a series of scenes. This is usually where successful people differ from the not-so-successful; that is, their ability to take a decision and act on it. Dreamers continue to dwell but those who turn their dreams into reality do so on account of extraordinary hard work.

I had long been familiar with the famous interview Bill Gates gave on CNN’s *Larry King Live* . The principles of success could not be elaborated in fewer words. I found a script of that interview in *You are Either a Dreamer or a Millionaire* by Jake Findi. As follows:

Larry King once interviewed Bill Gates. He asked him, “What is the secret of your success?”

Bill answered, “We were at the right place at the right time.” But Larry did not seem satisfied with the answer and kindly pointed out to him that “it is not true, lots of people were at the right place at the right time. But come on, you are Microsoft, you are the biggest on the planet at this stuff. What is it that you did?” It was a very tough question. But the good news was that Bill had the answer. Every successful business owner has the answer to how he is successful while others with the same idea don’t.

At this stage Bill Gates started coming out of his shell. He said, “Well, I guess we had a vision for the future for the home computer, for the desktop PC.”

Three things named simultaneously: vision, home computer and the desktop PC. Larry King still wasn’t impressed enough with Bill Gates’ answer, so he interrupted him, “Yes, you had a vision but yours was smaller than most of the competition. So come on, Mr. Gates, please tell us really what it was that made a difference?!” If it were you, what would you have said? Keep it to yourself for now. Bill Gates thought for a moment—he wanted to give the right answer this time, so he said, “Well, I think it must have been due to the quality of our product.”

Larry King was very determined to get to the bottom of it. So he pressed Bill Gates saying, “It certainly wasn’t just that. Come on Mr. Gates!” Now Bill was getting nervous and uncomfortable in his seat. Larry kept pushing, “What is it that really made the difference? Why is Microsoft number one? Why are you the biggest on the planet so far? Why do 90% of PCs run on Microsoft?” With a feeling of great certainty, Bill Gates looked Larry King in the eye and said, “We are the ones who took massive action!” Larry King, looking satisfied, said, “Can you give me an example of that?”

Bill Gates went on to share a story about how Microsoft wanted to work with IBM. They wanted to provide operating systems for them. One day, they had a phone call to come in to IBM and show them what they had to offer. In the next four hours (which included a two-hour flight), they were there. Action! Action!! Action!!! Do it now! Tomorrow is another person’s day. If you get a chance today, grab it and make good use of it. [6](#)

In short, the following is a beautifully paraphrased version of this interview that someone shared with me many years ago. (In fact, that's how I first found out about it.)

1. I was in the right place at the right time and luck had a lot to do with. However, there were many others in the same place as I was when computers began to gain popularity.
2. I had a long-term vision of how the personal computer would revolutionize every facet of life. Once again, there were many others with the same vision I had.
3. I took massive, immediate action. This is where the rubber meets the road. If you're in the right place at the right time and have the vision to see where a new technology is going but don't take action, you'll never be successful. Without all three components in place, you're doomed.
4. Hard work is always key. Never give up and never stop trying no matter what challenges come your way.

Competence, or the C of the Sacred Principle, is not just about action though. Any action, no matter how well-intended or persistent, when performed in an unskilled manner, does not lead to the desired outcome, certainly not consistently anyway. Competence is about aligning your knowledge with the art of execution. For, can you teach a cat how to bark or dog to meow? We must understand our strengths and be honest about where we stand. After all, we can only start from where we are.

INTENTION VS SKILL

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS is skill. We all have the intention to succeed, we want to make it work—whether it be our relationships, work, health goals or anything else. Why do we fail then? Where is the gap? Intention on its own is not enough, it must be backed with skilled action and that's the only silver beam on the unpredictable path of success: building a skill is in our hands.

*I want to:
study but I can't concentrate
exercise but I end up watching TV instead
be calm but I lose my temper
forgive but I can't seem to forget or forgive
let go but I'm unable to do so
be (fill in the blank) but can't...*

and so on and so forth.

On a daily basis, I hear stories of despair and frustration, of helplessness and procrastination, where with utmost sincerity someone or the other tells me that they so want to do or be a certain way but no matter how hard they try, they keep returning to their old behavioral patterns. Why do we fail to keep our promises or why is the path to success (even in small endeavors) paved with hurdles and obstacles? I'm reminded of a short story.

An affluent farmer owned coconut plantations, a barn with tens of cows and a small poultry farm. Waking up to a glorious sunrise over the ocean and sleeping under the starlit sky, he lived a simple and content life with his wife and a pet dog.

"We need a full-time farmhand," his wife said, "someone who can stay with us." The farmer agreed as most of his staff would go back to their homes in the evening and, given that they were aging, they required someone to be with them. He sent around word in the village that a vacancy was available. Many people approached him for the job, but one young man stood out in particular for his enthusiasm and confidence.

"And why should I hire you?" the farmer asked.

"I am honest, hardworking and skilled," he replied.

"Those I presume by default. Most who apply have those qualities."

"Maybe," the young man said, "but I can sleep through a raging storm."

The philosophical reply caught the farmer's fancy and he hired him. True to his word, the farmhand worked tirelessly and managed the affairs well. Within a few months, he completely won the confidence of the couple and they started relying on him more and more.

One night, their pet dog began howling rather ominously. The farmer and his wife tried to pacify it without any success. Soon, they realized that a violent storm was building up. He leaped out of his bed and rushed to his farmhand who was fast asleep.

"Wake up!" the farmer shook him. "A massive storm is coming!"

“Go away,” he replied, squinty eyes staring into the flashlight the farmer held near his face.

“This is ridiculous! Get up!”

“I told you, I can sleep through a raging storm,” he answered in a groggy voice and turned to the other side.

“I’ll deal with you in the morning!” the farmer yelled and ran outside with his wife to secure his property. The gale-force winds were blowing and a constantly thundering sky made it hard to even hear each other.

They went to the shed first, only to find that bales of wheat and haystack were neatly bound and covered by a tarpaulin that was secured using tight guylines. The farm tools were placed in the storage shed next to it. The barn was properly locked and the cows looked calm and content with plenty of fodder and water in the trough. The door of the coop was latched properly. Everything was in its place.

“Well,” the wife said to the farmer, “he is certainly prepared to sleep through a raging storm.”

We wish to be safe from adversities, temptations and obstacles but the key is preparation. Wanting to secure yourself, desiring to be a certain way, while important, is only the beginning. In fact, it’s the easy part. Whether or not you are equipped with (or at least committed to learn) the right knowledge and experience is what determines the probability of success. I shared a small incident in my book, *The Children of Tomorrow*, which is quite relevant here: recently, on the first day of my program, our AV vendor took a double booking and put an inexperienced person in his place to handle our event. The competent core team who was handling the event and our army of devoted volunteers sensed that the quality of our PA system could be better.

“Sorry, Swami,” someone came to me afterwards and said. “We’ll ensure this doesn’t happen tomorrow.”

“Apology accepted,” I said, “but, unfortunately, that’s unlikely to fix the problem.”

“I’ll personally man the PA system tomorrow,” another pitched in.

“I appreciate it,” I replied, “but are you an expert? Please let’s aim to get the vendor back in here.”

To their credit, they took control, pulled up the vendor, made some changes and the rest of the program was smooth as fresh butter (since I’ve been talking about cows and barns, a more appropriate analogy didn’t occur to me).

I went on to explain the difference between intention and skill. It is one thing to have the intention to do something right and it is quite another to have the skill to do so. Sometimes you want to help someone or the other person wants to help you, that’s all very good but unless you possess the right skill, such intention is not going to amount to much. This gap between intention and skill is why many of us face failures in our endeavors. You may be a great artist, for example, but if your work isn’t selling, then acquire sales skills. Success in each area requires a different skill set. Perhaps that’s why learning is a lifelong process.

You want to be calm, but have you learned this skill? You want to surprise your partner by baking a cake but do you know how to bake? Plus, if the cake turns out a brick (hopefully not charcoal) and your partner doesn’t appreciate it, should you feel bad? Could you deliver in line with your intention?

We want to care, love, succeed and so on but without the appropriate skill, there’s little hope. Almost everything we know in life, we have learned it somewhere. And what we know really well is usually what we have done repeatedly, something we have championed by way of practice and training. That’s all there is to it: whatever we intend to accomplish, we need to master the skill behind it. A wise person told me once, “The only thing more expensive than hiring a professional is to hire an amateur.”

A small crowd gathered around an old man who fainted in a busy market. A man rushed to the spot where a woman was trying to revive the patient.

“Get away, woman!” he shouted. “I’m a first aid specialist. I know exactly what to do.” The woman tried to speak but he wasn’t having any

of it. Finally, she stood on the side, her arms crossed, while the first-aider made frantic efforts to resuscitate the old man. “When you get to the now-call-the-doctor part,” the lady said calmly, “I’m right here.”

Whatever it is that you want to attain, that’s what you want to *be* . To achieve that, you wish to act or work a certain way. That’s your *intention* . Whether you are able to actually work in your intended manner is a matter of *skill* . The good news is that given reasonable time, guidance and discipline, each one of us is capable of mastering just about any skill.

Intention is the easiest aspect of mastering any skill. What takes a lot more effort is your commitment to building competence.

It requires discipline, mindfulness and patience and has four stages.

BUILDING COMPETENCE

THE C FOR COMPETENCE IN THE SACRED PRINCIPLE IS something you build over time. Proficiency in any field is not something we gain overnight. The rising sun takes a few hours to reach its zenith, and becoming an expert requires persistent effort, prioritization of your time and the demands on such time.

Mark Twain once said, “Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.”

Though it’s debatable whether he actually said something like this. Nevertheless, if you can get past the visual, this little piece of advice is priceless.

Brian Tracy in his book *Eat That Frog* talks more about this proverbial croaker:

“Your ‘frog’ is your biggest, most important task, the one you are most likely to procrastinate on if you don’t do something about it. It is also the one task that can have the greatest positive impact on your life and results at the moment.

The first rule of frog eating is this: If you have to eat two frogs, eat the ugliest one first.

This is another way of saying that if you have two important tasks before you, start with the biggest, hardest and most important task first. Discipline yourself to begin immediately and then to persist until the task is complete before you go on to something else.

Think of this as a test. Treat it like a personal challenge. Resist the temptation to start with the easier task. Continually remind yourself that one of the most important decisions you make each day is what you will do immediately and what you will do later, if you do it at all.

The second rule of frog eating is this: If you have to eat a live frog at all, it doesn’t pay to sit and look at it for very long.

The key to reaching high levels of performance and productivity is to develop the lifelong habit of tackling your major task first thing each morning. You must develop the routine of “eating your frog” before you do anything else and without taking too much time to think about it.”

The single important common denominator in the lives of all successful people is this: they almost always begin their day with a productive morning.

They have a routine that they stick to, no matter what.

Most people we call gifted are usually the product of relentless discipline, dedication and hard work. When you look at a creative person, say a poet, a writer or a painter, maybe a musician or just any successful person, you may be tempted to think that there’s something special going on for them. That they wake up every morning to great flashes of brilliance or something from some other world descends upon them. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Whatever you wish to master, give it a bit of time every day and before you know it, you’ll be frolicking in the same pond of creativity and competence as the best of the best in your field. According to

psychology, moving from incompetence to competence has four stages. It is a skill anyone can acquire. I came across the hierarchy of competence in multiple works, but Graham Fitch's succinct description of it in *Practicing the Piano* is my favorite. Here are the four stages by Mr. Fitch (in italics), with some of my own commentary:

1. UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE (THE NOVICE)

We don't know that we don't know.

This might manifest in an overly confident attitude, thinking that can't be all that hard or that it won't take long to master. We are blissfully ignorant of what is really involved.

At this stage, we underestimate, if not completely deny, the usefulness of the skill and the effort required to reach that state. We take up meditation and we think that we'll master it in just a few weeks or months. Or that we won't need as much time to champion it as those before us. Or worse still, that we'll just do it for a bit of fun and that'll suffice to elevate our consciousness to unimaginable heights.

We are tempted to think that Sachin Tendulkar or Mozart were just born with those talents. Or that we are so intelligent that we can clear that prestigious entrance exam without ever opening a book and so on. The novice leaves things to chance, prays for the best and hopes for unreasonably favorable conditions to come through. Only if there's a tremendous willingness to learn, backed by a disciplined and determined effort, does this person progress to the next stage.

2. CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE (THE APPRENTICE)

We know that we don't know.

"Ah! This is much harder than I thought. I'm not sure I can accomplish this." Motivation and encouragement are often needed at this stage of learning as this is where it is easy to give up.

When most people take up anything, at first, they expect a lot to happen with a little effort. But eventually you recognize that there's a great

distance between where you are presently and where you want to be (or imagined you would be). This is the second stage; you are aware that you don't know. A decision needs to be made now. Do I continue knowing it'll take a lot of time and effort or do I give up and just rejoice in watching other masters rather than becoming one myself? An overwhelming majority of aspirants give up at this stage. But, those who don't and those who are not ashamed of making mistakes move to the third stage.

3. CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE (THE JOURNEYMAN)

We know that we know.

This is the stage that lasts the longest. It still feels difficult and awkward, and yet we believe that, after much more work, we will reach our goal. We are constantly striving for the right tools for the job, slowly chipping away at problems and challenges.

There's a clumsy effort, and sometimes external assistance, required to demonstrate your skill. You are clear about what you know and what you don't. You are able to do what you intend to do but it's not effortless. It is taxing and the person in front can see your challenges and struggles. By and large, however, you are able to accomplish the task. There's anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty coursing through your veins along with your competence. If you don't give up, you make giant strides. The journeyman (or journeywoman) soon moves to the final stage then.

4. UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE (THE MASTER)

We don't know that we know.

At this stage, we can play our piece [of piano] with no conscious thought. It feels easy, and we often wonder why we ever struggled. We are on autopilot, and can take risks or go with the flow.

By now, the skill has become second nature. There's a natural effortlessness and ease. People around you think you are gifted or talented or that you had special access to resources. You don't wait for

inspiration at this stage, you create it. Indeed, you become an inspiration yourself.

Whether you wish to master the art of happiness or meditation, build your body or lose weight, be successful in your business or job, just remember it is done by learning that skill, mastering it and putting it to use. That's how an Elon Musk builds a string of profitable companies or a J.K. Rowling writes a series of engrossing books. It all begins by having a daily discipline and sticking with it. Inspiration, motivation, etc., flow from all directions for the one who's disciplined.

A little bit every day goes very far. Be done with the boring or difficult things in the morning. The thing you wish to avoid the most, just do it. Plan your morning the night before so you are ready to jump straight into action the moment you are up. Do it, do it, just do it. Don't waste your mornings on emails, messaging and lazing around.

A rich man commissioned Mulla Nasruddin to make a portrait of his wife. "Don't worry about the cost, just paint the finest picture of her," he said. After several sittings, Mulla presented the portrait but the customer wasn't pleased.

"This doesn't look like my wife at all," he said. "This is one ugly woman." "Sir," Mulla replied politely, "if you wanted me to paint an apple, you shouldn't have handed me a pear."

Results come from actions alone. Not from daydreaming, procrastination or affirmations. Right action coupled with the right skill set yields the results we seek.

No matter how much you admire or kiss it, the frog is not going to turn into a prince. In fact, if you don't eat it, it's going to just sit there and croak all day.

In a nutshell, building competence requires:

1. Consistent and mindful action.
2. Aligning your skills with your intention.
3. Working through the various stages of competence and prioritizing your work accordingly.

4. A positive mindset so you stay on course and remain motivated while overcoming the various hurdles on the path.

The C in the Sacred Principle doesn't just stand for Competence though. Like S signified both Self and Sales; A, Approach and Accounting; C is for Competence and Customers.

Never be impatient with your customers. Sure, create a sense of urgency (otherwise, you may never get the order) but build your customer base with value and patience. Serving just one big customer is not a business. Your customers, your sales will accumulate over a period of time. You can't devote all your time and energy on going for the big kill if you are hungry and starving now. Catch a small game, fill your tummy, gain some energy and then go for a chase. Remember, you can't spend energy without having it first. Every small customer matters, continue to build on smaller wins so you can go for the big victory.

There is no business without customers. No customer without a valuable proposition and no sustainable value can be created without competence. In the same vein, a professional level of competence can't be championed without a sound approach, which, in turn, won't work in the absence of the right attitude (or self).

RESOURCES

{Karnam}

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of the Transcendental Meditation movement, conceived the idea of a university that got everyone excited. There was only one hitch: \$250 million were required to realize his vision.

“From where will we get so much money?” his PA asked.

“From wherever it is now,” he replied.

And he did go on to build that university.

YOUR GREATEST RESOURCE

WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF resources? Capital, connections, customers, support? No doubt, they are resources, but more than resources, they are the outcome of a greater power at work, something more profound.

In 2001, I was invited to be on the panel of a very prestigious financial institution, Rothschild and Co. They were considering investing in a startup by a young guy, barely out of his teens, who had developed an algorithm for predicting the stock market movements. I knew no one in Rothschild and yet through some reference and due to my own work in the financial markets with the first company I worked for, as well as my background in e-commerce, they asked me to give them my opinion. It was a one-off thing. So, I obliged.

In the meeting, I met Sean Keen (name changed). We had identical views about the product and before we left, we exchanged business cards. He was the CEO of a small company and had been a consultant. I had also started my own company and was quite busy with my contract with Deloitte and with my MBA. A few days later, I got a call from Sean saying he wanted to talk about a project and if we could do it over lunch that would be great. My office was in Sydney CBD and his was in North Sydney, seven minutes away by train or 15-20 by car (depending on the traffic). He was a seasoned business professional, as had been evident from his input in the panel meeting the other day, so I thought I must go and see him.

I went for the lunch where he talked about his project.

“I want to develop a chess software,” he said.

“A chess software?” I exclaimed.

During the meeting at Rothschild, I'd given some examples from chess to highlight the issue of relying on permutations and combinations to predict the market movements. In my view, stock markets remain a highly emotional platform, not to mention the volatility and so on. Therefore, I had contended that while algorithms could engage in High Frequency Trading (HFT), to say that someone had invented a secret sauce for predicting the price movements made me more a skeptic than a believer.

I'd forgotten all about my chess examples and logic but Sean had remembered. So, when he told me that he thought I was the best person to develop a chess software for him, I wasn't surprised. Only that I wasn't the best person and it made no business sense to me. I had never tried selling a customer something I genuinely didn't believe would deliver them value.

"But, there's Fritz," I said. "It's a very sophisticated chess engine. Plus, I'm not a mathematician and do not have the skill set or the team of chess grandmasters to develop a chess engine. It's a very niche market, I don't see how you'll ever recover the investment unless you are doing it because it's your passion."

"What if two players could play it over a network?" he asked.

"That's something you can do even today. I used to play chess occasionally on Yahoo Games. What is the value proposition?"

I told him that I saw no business value in this idea. By the end of the meeting, it seemed he had dropped the idea of developing a chess software, something he confirmed in an email the same afternoon.

Six months passed and he called me again. Once again, it was a product idea that in my view had no merit whatsoever. If an entrepreneur is not clear about exactly what pain area they are addressing, they are not ready to build a company. Spending another 90 minutes with him, which I thought was a waste of time, left me a bit flustered. Out of politeness, however, I said nothing and thought not much of it.

This thing went on for about four years—every six months or so he would call and meet me over lunch or something and talk about some

business idea. But, more often than not, he had no funding to actually build or materialize that idea and I was too busy with my own ventures and had no bandwidth to invest my time and resources in building a “nice-to-have” idea. Gradually, I started taking him less seriously and did not place as much importance on his calls as I would on other business calls. And yet, out of politeness or courtesy, I didn’t ignore him either. From 2001 to 2004, I kept meeting him on and off between my travels. All this while, I never picked up the phone and called him but whenever he did, I either took his call or called him back.

Then one day in 2005, my phone rang and it was Sean again. He wanted me to come to the city for a meeting with another person. I had not a moment to spare and I was actually very busy at the time with my other projects. This was the same time when I was busy with the sale of my search product to the government department I mentioned in ‘Lift the Game.’

“I’m sorry, Sean,” I said, “but I won’t be able to come to the city. If you can come to my side of the town, I’ll be happy to see you in the evening.”

“Please,” he said, “please, can you come to the city? I promise this is a big project.”

The conviction in his voice made me rejig my plans and I met him in a hotel lobby. He was accompanied by another acquaintance who already had a physical product in place and Sean wanted to digitize it. It was a physical card security system based on the algorithm by an academic and they had the patent for it. It was a very unique product and I shared how it could be digitized. There was just a small issue. They had no money. They wanted to know how they could go about raising capital. I shared my ideas with them but ultimately, this meeting was a waste. Or maybe not.

A week later, he called me again and pleaded with me to meet them in the city again. They had found a potential investor, he told me.

“Sean, I respect you,” I said, “but this entire week I’m busy beyond words, I can’t come to the city.”

“Please, Amit,” he said, “it’s with a potential investor. I only have faith in you for developing this project.”

“Sean, a potential investor is not an investor yet! I’m happy to meet but I can’t travel to the city. I’m spending most of my time at the client site, so you are welcome to see me here.”

Completely unexpected, the investor with his partner, along with Sean and his business partner agreed to come and see me in person. This took me by surprise. Why would an investor go through the trouble of meeting with a potential vendor?

In line with my professional courtesy, I invited them to a business dinner. The primary reason wasn’t that I wanted to treat a group of unknown people to dinner but that was the only time I had free.

The investor, however, turned out to be a heavyweight. He had been an entrepreneur himself and had sold his company for \$38 million and was sitting on a pile of cash to invest in lucrative ventures. But, this wasn’t one of them.

Within 10 minutes of the meeting, it was clear that the investor wasn’t really interested in funding their product because he wasn’t sure of their technology and when he asked my opinion, as always, I placed honesty above everything else and told him my thoughts in as polite terms as possible.

I could see that this meeting was once again a complete waste of my time, plus I would end up shelling out \$500 for a dinner that would be nothing more than gossip time.

Half an hour into the conversation, the investor said he needed help with one of his other projects and that the person running the project was the one who had accompanied him. It was almost by chance, he said, that he came to this meeting.

This was a straightforward development project and I told him I could certainly help. Sitting right there, he gave me the first order of \$90,000. Just like that. On a handshake. And that was just the beginning. The very next day, before 11 am, a deposit of \$22,500 (25% of the value) was credited in my account. It was a quick project.

That patience with Sean and all those meetings didn't go to waste after all. If I met Sean a total of eight times in five years, then, in the end, I got paid more than \$10,000 per meeting—that's how I looked at it.

The question arises, what is your greatest resource? That you are competent and skilled is a given. I am assuming that you have an iron will and that you are not somebody who will give up without trying everything first.

In my view, your greatest resource is your integrity.

Whoever you associate with, they should be able to trust you. Let your genuineness be your introduction.

If you are trustworthy and genuine, customers, employees, vendors will stay with you. Honesty forges a bond that no other quality can replicate. And when they trust you, they will warm up to you; when that happens, expect a call where they'll need your help.

Give your everything when they trust you with something. You will never regret it. It is one of the most important requirements of building a sustainable business. And, trust is not something you can build with words. Your genuineness must come through in your actions, the other person must feel that you care and it helps to actually care because a customer's or an employer's success will ultimately, directly or indirectly, contribute to your success. This is not about signing contracts and delivering on projects but building a connection at a human level.

In one of my all-time favorite books, *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, the protagonist by the same name is a young man who is extremely intelligent and, at the same time, detached from the world. He does everything as if he doesn't care whether he wins or loses. At a certain point in the book, he starts working for a merchant called Kamaswami. Kamaswami is always anxious and worried about his business deals but Siddhartha has a leisurely (though hard-working) way of approaching issues. Siddhartha connects at the level of the soul. I quote from the book:

At one time, he [Siddhartha] travelled to a village to buy a large harvest of rice there. But when he got there, the rice had already been sold to another merchant. Nevertheless, Siddhartha stayed for several days in that village, treated the farmers for a drink, gave copper coins to their children, joined in the celebration of a wedding, and returned extremely satisfied from his trip. Kamaswami held against him that he had not turned back right away, that he had wasted time and money. Siddhartha answered: "Stop scolding, dear friend! Nothing was ever achieved by scolding. If a loss has occurred, let me bear that loss. I am very satisfied with this trip. I have gotten to know many kinds of people, a Brahman has become my friend, children have sat on my knees, farmers have shown me their fields, nobody knew that I was a merchant."

"That's all very nice," exclaimed Kamaswami indignantly, "but in fact, you are a merchant after all, one ought to think! Or might you have only travelled for your amusement?"

"Surely," Siddhartha laughed, "surely I have travelled for my amusement. For what else? I have gotten to know people and places, I have received kindness and trust, I have found friendship. Look, my dear, if I had been Kamaswami, I would have travelled back, being annoyed and in a hurry, as soon as I had seen that my purchase had been rendered impossible, and time and money would indeed have been lost. But like this, I've had a few good days, I've learned, had joy, I've neither harmed myself nor others by annoyance and hastiness. And if I'll ever return there again, perhaps to buy an upcoming harvest, or for whatever purpose it might be, friendly people will receive me in a friendly and happy manner, and I will praise myself for not showing any hurry and displeasure at that time. So, leave it as it is, my friend, and don't harm yourself by scolding! If the day will come, when you will see: this Siddhartha is harming me, then speak a word and Siddhartha will go on his own path. But until then, let's be satisfied with one another." ⁷

I think it highlights a very profound business principle: human connection. People deal with people and not objects. Your employer, customer, everyone in your life is a person with emotions. What you can gain from them becomes secondary if you first gain their trust.

And, as I said earlier, trust is not gained by being superfluous or superficial but with honesty.

It doesn't matter what industry you are in, if you are consistent, competent and trustworthy, there'll be no lack of opportunity for making money or building a satisfying career.

When I started writing this section, it crossed my mind that I should talk about how resources such as human and financial capital, a conducive political and social environment, etc., play a critical role in one's success. But, I thought, you already know all that, plus a great deal of it is not in your hands. Instead, if we focused on what is in our control, we have a greater chance of attaining success and peace.

Here is integrity in a nutshell:

1. When you say something, mean it.
2. When you give your word, fulfill it.
3. See the good and positive in other people.
4. If your actions are harming someone, particularly your employer, customer or vendor, reconsider your actions.
5. Be honest.

You will go a long way then.

The R in the Sacred Principle is not just Resources though. It stands for another powerful paradigm on the path of success: Returns. Whether we spend or invest, we do it with the expectation of some return. We may spend \$500 on a lavish dinner to have our taste buds tickled and tummy filled. Or, we may invest in a million-dollar home or stocks. Even most of our non-financial decisions are often driven by the desire to generate returns. A return that is greater than the effort or investment we put in.

The interesting thing, however, is that a lot of the times, returns cannot be measured in absolute terms. More often than not, how we feel about any deal and its payoffs is all about a perception of the return

than the actual return itself. Without a doubt, in financial instruments like shares and bonds, we tend to measure our returns in absolute terms but the same cannot be said of purchases where we have made an emotional investment along with the financial. Our world is full of examples where people have paid a lot more than the actual value of the product (a common scene in most auctions) because they perceive a greater value in doing so.

The R for Returns in the Sacred Principle begs an important question then: how do you create a genuine perception of a win-win situation? How do you ensure that whatever it is that you are selling—whether that's your skills in a job interview or your product to a customer—is perceived of greater value?

What are you selling anyway? That which you can sell or something the customer needs? In fact, what you are selling is not necessarily what the customer is buying. There's a huge difference between the two, for the simple reason that no one ever buys a product, we all buy hope, a future, an experience.

"I'm sorry, John," the trainee said to the sales manager, "I tried my best but just couldn't get the customer to give us an order. He was convinced about our product but still no commitment. I devoted six months to this process. It just goes to show that you can take a horse to the water but you can't make it drink."

"Son," the manager said, "your job is not to make the horse drink water but to make it thirsty."

“I’m sorry, John,” the trainee said to the sales manager, “I tried my best but just couldn’t get the customer to give us an order. He was convinced about our product but still no commitment. I devoted six months to this process. It just goes to show that you can take a horse to the water but you can’t make it drink.”

“Son,” the manager said, “your job is not to make the horse drink water but to make it thirsty.”

WHAT ARE YOU SELLING?

I READ A STELLAR ARTICLE ON MEDIUM.COM THAT pretty much summed up the entire wisdom of sales. I wrote to Alexander Nethercutt, the author of the article and columnist on Medium, and he kindly granted me permission to share the complete article with you.

When I read it, I just couldn't get over the amazing insight it contained. Of all the books I've ever read on sales and business, this one article presented the essence of it all.

People don't buy products but a better version of themselves .

We like to imagine our future with a certain product. Here's the must-read article as is:

The year was 1957, and Pepsi—like many of the youth at that time—was dealing with an identity crisis. Despite efforts from marketers, Pepsi was being outsold by its biggest competitor and perpetual market leader—Coke—by a factor just shy of six to one, even as it was selling at half of Coke's price. It wasn't the product that was lacking, it was that Pepsi's brand ethos—indecisive and directionless—was a fragmented shell of what it would need to become to take on Coke.

At the time, Coke was unrivaled, having succeeded in convincing the American public that they'd captured everything good and wholesome about American life within the murky confines of a glass bottle. This clear transcendence of the competition was not unlike Apple's; like devotees react viscerally to a green speech bubble in iMessage, so too was it that, to anyone who embraced the deeply American traits of exceptionalism, community-mindedness and of course, Santa Claus, consuming anything other than Coke would've been considered heresy.

In 1963, Pepsi hired a young advertising executive named Alan Pottasch to address the issue. Pottasch's task was, to put it gently, difficult. He was to reinvigorate a brand competing against one of the most successful of all time, a product that not only outclassed Pepsi in every consumer-driven category, but was also—chemically—nearly identical. And so Pottasch made a decision that would later become iconic—as he put it, “...to stop talking about the product, and start talking about the user.” Here is Tim Wu in his book, *The Attention Merchants*, on the decision:

[Pottasch] thus conceived of marketing Pepsi without reference to its inherent qualities, focusing instead on an image of the people who bought it, or should be buying it.

For the first time in history, a brand decided to promote the type of user that purchased a product as opposed to the product itself. Beyond that, Pepsi promoted the idea of an entirely new generation, one free from the manipulative, consumerist messages being perpetuated by the mass media. (It was, after all, the 1960s.) This group would come to be known as “The Pepsi Generation.”

The Pepsi Generation was revolutionary because it was the first time a brand convinced people to purchase their product by focusing on the type of person that doing so made them. No generation before had ever so vocally longed to transcend themselves—to escape the consumerist mindset and achieve truly independent thought—and thus Pepsi's message, drink our product and do exactly that, reached the perfect group at the perfect moment.

Here's Wu quoting Pottasch on the success of the campaign:

“For us to name and claim a whole generation after our product was a rather courageous thing,” Pottasch would later remember, “that we weren't sure would take off.” But his intuition would prove correct. “What you drank said something about who you were. We painted an image of our consumer as active, vital, and young at heart.”

Over the next decade, Pepsi—as a result of the Pepsi Generation campaign—gained significant market share on Coke. And while the campaign was revolutionary, the recipe for its success was simple. As Wu points out, “Desire’s most natural endpoint is consumption.” In other words, the campaign simply reimagined what people desired. This generation longed to escape consumerism, and the fact that Pepsi convinced them to do so by embracing it—purchasing a Pepsi, after all, is about as consumerist as it gets—is a testament to the genius of the campaign. Those who bought in and became a part of the Pepsi generation were searching for a new way to feel, rather than a new beverage to drink. Pepsi’s genius was that it found a way to be both.

The profundity of the Pepsi Generation campaign is twofold. First, its success reinvigorated a brand on the verge of being knocked out in an early round by one of the greatest competitors of the twentieth century—Coke. Second, even decades later, it is nearly impossible to find a brand that has not used the strategy Pepsi pioneered: selling not a product, but a better version of ourselves.

Consider Apple. To be an Apple user—at least in the era of Jobs—was to “think different.” Critics might laugh at that characterization of an Apple user now, given the homogeneity and ubiquity of Apple products, especially among the wealthy. But those critics would miss what Apple didn’t: people don’t buy products because of what those products do, they buy products because of what they can do—or what they imagine they can do—with them. This idea even permeates Apple’s retail strategy. Apple employees will never show you how a product works, rather they will let you use it, forcing you to familiarize yourself with the product, yes, but more importantly, yourself in its presence. A diverse range of product options to choose from, after all, will never be as captivating as a homogenous product that turns you into a superhero—and Apple has the latter in spades.

Samsung learned this the hard way, dogmatically focusing as they did for the longest time on promoting the features of their products, as opposed to the person you could be by using them. Now they avoid talking about the speed of their processors or the depth of the blacks in their screens because 99 percent of people don’t care; what they do care

about—selfishly—is what they will become—“makers, directors, creators,” in the words of Casey Neistat—if they use a Samsung product. The message? *Be like us*. The solution? *Buy a Samsung*.

Samsung even reworked Pepsi’s initial genius, realizing that it is as powerful to portray the person people aspire to be as it is to portray the person they aspire not to be—in Samsung’s case, the brainwashed Apple user who never makes the switch. The consumer who finally does is the one Samsung shows in their commercial, “Growing Up,” the better version of the “Apple Sheep,” portrayed leaving behind those who foolishly opt for the iPhone, the clearest among them a scowling man with the iPhone X’s trademark “notch” etched into his hairline. The message? *Don’t be him*. The solution? *Buy a Samsung*.

It is far from just tech companies, though. Adidas and Nike both do it, the former with a similar line of thinking to Samsung’s, and a similar list of influencers. Starbucks does it by crafting beverages like the Unicorn Frappuccino, a drink that famously and unsurprisingly “looks better than it tastes.” While a poorly-flavored but photogenic drink wouldn’t have sold in prior generations, to this generation—our generation—it does. Why?

Similar to how Pepsi understood they would never compete with Coke on product alone, Starbucks understands that in 2018, it is less about the drink itself than it is about who the drink makes you—on Instagram, and thus in real life. And regardless of what you think about us millennials—narcissistic, selfish, vain, outspoken—one thing is abundantly clear: as a result of social media and the Internet, our generation is more conscious of how we are perceived—by friends, family, colleges, jobs, hell, even people we’ve never met—than any other generation, ever.

Social media is well-understood to be contributing to identity politics, but I’d argue it’s contributing to something deeper: identity paralysis. This condition is one in which we have a forced awareness of how everything we say and do—even the seemingly inconsequential, like the shoes we wear, or the airline we fly—reflects on us. It follows that our generation would also be uniquely drawn to brands that make us feel how we want to feel about ourselves, even as how we want to feel

about ourselves is often nothing more than how we want to be perceived externally. Like Starbucks with the Unicorn Frappuccino, we prioritize external perception over just about everything else. The social media market, where we live now, demands a focus on visible characteristics—which are, by their very nature, external—from designer drinks, yes, but from individuals, too. [⁸](#)

The article ends here.

If my customers can't perceive an attractive return, I have no sale. It's that simple. With the resources you have, whether that's your brand value or social media presence, if your sole focus is on value creation through your offerings in the lives of your customers, you will naturally generate greater returns. You've won the battle the day your customers start to see those returns too.

To sum up, your greatest resources are:

1. Your truthfulness and genuineness.
2. Your competence.
3. Your customers' or employers' vision of what they would gain if they engaged you. Don't sell a product or its feature, help them see a vision.

Successful companies and individuals are super efficient at deploying all their resources to maximize the returns. If your customer gets a higher return, eventually, your shareholders will too. That's just the way the cookie crumbles.

EFFORT
{Chestha}

Most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in 10 years.²

– Bill Gates

THE JOY OF WORKING HARD

“I HATE MONDAYS ,” SOMEONE SAID TO ME OTHER WAY . “And, if there’s anything like a Monday depression, I have it.”

This person contended that while he made a lot of money and so on, he wasn’t living his ideal life. He did everything because he had to. “If not for my responsibilities,” he said, “I could be wearing a robe like you and roaming around freely.”

“Oh!” I chuckled. “That’s the Facebook Trap.”

He looked at me quizzically and I said, “I mean, when you look at someone’s photos on social media and think they are having the time of their life.”

“But you are doing what you love!”

“I’ve learned to love what I do and you can do the same.”

“I loathe getting up in the mornings and going through five days of drudgery every week,” he said.

“What would you rather be doing?”

“Retire and be stress-free, maybe vacation more frequently, take it a bit easy. I’d love to get up or work whenever I want, maybe write a book or two and just go with the flow.”

It’s so innate in us that I wonder if it’s hardwired in our brains. Many among us feel that the current life is not the best kind, that we are working towards something else, some moment after which we won’t have to do things we don’t like. The day we reach that shore, life will be all sunshine and rainbows and we’ll spend every second of our time doing things we fancy, love or dream of. As if success and fulfillment is a certain stage where we’ll only be surrounded by people who love us

and whom we love, when there'll only be abundance, no stress, conflict or diseases, only success and bliss, only peace and happiness. Some say that's enlightenment.

If you ask me, that's not just a far-fetched idea but downright ignorant and preposterous too. I am not sure how we arrived at the conclusion that liberation means freedom from work in our daily lives or zero resistance in the pursuit of our dreams. I read a nice little story in *Celebration! Ten Principles of More Joyous Living* by Jaroldeen Edwards:

“Several years ago we were invited, along with several thousand others, to the opening of the first Great America amusement park. What an incredible experience! As we stood with our 12 children waiting to be admitted to the park, our 12-year-old son said, ‘I can’t wait for the gates to open, Mother. I think when those gates open, it will be the best thing that has ever happened in this world.’

You see, for that one night, it was going to be just like Pleasure Island in Pinocchio. Everything was to be free.

My son and his cousin, who was the same age, begged to be allowed to go at their own pace, wherever they wished. Because the amusement park was powerfully lighted and fenced, and everyone present was a guest, we gave them permission. Two happier boys have never run into a wonderland. Before them lay every ride, all the food they could eat, games, sights and splendor.

The party lasted from eight in the evening until midnight. We had arranged to meet the boys by the merry-go-round at quarter to 12. Of course, we saw them many times during the evening, always running to the next ride, their hands full of food, their eyes bright, eager and a little greedy.

At the end of the evening, as we watched tired families stream towards the exit gates, our two exhausted little boys, their faces stained with chocolate and mustard, their feet dragging, and their heads almost lolling with weariness, walked up to us. My son looked into my eyes.

‘I’ve learned something,’ he told me. “You know how I said I thought the best thing in the whole world would be when those gates opened?

Nothing but party and fun!’ He pointed toward the large gates at the entrance. I nodded. ‘Well, now,’ he said, ‘I think that the worst thing in this world would be if those gates closed and I couldn’t leave.’

It was absolutely one of the best evenings of his childhood, but he had also learned that pleasure has a timer, and when the timer rings, it ceases to be fun.

It is then time to return to those basic things that give fun its meaning. Work gives purpose and importance to life, and that sense of purpose in all that we do is what turns fun into something more meaningful—into celebration.”

Wiser words couldn’t be said in a better way. The joy of falling asleep on a soft bed after a day’s hard work is far greater than procrastinating all day and binge-watching Netflix till your eyelids droop. When you stay up late into the night, for example, doing useless things that may entertain you but do nothing to challenge you or help you grow as a person, just notice how you feel when you get up the next morning—groggy, a bit heavy headed, with that earthy and astringent taste in your mouth. You don’t wake up fresh and energetic. Instead, you find that you have even less willpower today than you did yesterday. It’s very simple: the delight of a fulfilling rest can’t be experienced without first earning it. And, you earn it by working through things you’d rather avoid, by balancing your life between have-to-dos and want-to-dos.

Dreading what we must do in our daily lives creates oppressive and negative feelings in our minds, says Jaroldeen Edwards and she goes on to narrate it beautifully further in the same chapter:

“For many of us, just opening our eyes in the morning brings an instant and oppressive realization of all the jobs that are waiting to pounce on us. Before our feet even touch the floor we are feeling overwhelmed and under the gun... Our lives feel like a too full basket of laundry we are trying to carry down a steep stairway, and things are just slipping and sliding and leaving a trail behind us.

I have found I need to do two things to control those oppressive feelings. The first is to look more consistently at what I have done than at what I have not done. No one else has to recognize what I have

accomplished—it is enough that I do. The second is to realize that I have power over my own work. It is my opportunity to decide what needs to be done, and when, and how. I am the planner and the doer—and if things need to be changed or done better or differently, I have the power to think it through, to use my own initiative and decision.”

There is no one who never worries about anything. None among us is always happy, no matter what. Optimistic, positive, hopeful, yes; without challenges, conflict or difficulties, no.

If you haven't yet found your purpose in life then let me tell you, my friend, that before that can happen, one must understand that resistance training is the foundation of building strength. The strength to take it on the chin, to find your happiness in what you must do, to be patient comes from working to your optimum potential.

My dear friend and former business partner Vivek Dhume and I went out for a meal in the afternoon during one of my travels in Canada. I've known Vivek for over 13 years and he's blessed with two wonderful sons and a talented wife. When Vivek and I finished our lunch, he asked if I had another 30 minutes as he really wanted me to watch his younger son, Raj, practicing with his coach. It was something Raj had also requested earlier and frankly, I hadn't thought much of it. But to actually see him swim his laps was a sight to behold.

What really won my heart was the degree of discipline in Raj's life: a hallmark of all successful people in any given field. He gets up at 4 am, attends school on weekdays, swims a total of five hours every day of the week, spends more than two hours on the road to go to his training and practice sessions, and devotes whatever remaining time he has to playing his piano. (To appear human, yes he sleeps too.) Raj has not missed a day of practice in the last five years. *Not a day*. I am sure there must be times he didn't want to get up when it was still dark outside, let alone jump and swim in the cold pool in harsh Canadian winters (as is required for high-performance athletes, I was told). He could have just snuggled in his bed on dreary mornings when the skies were grey or it was snowing heavily, but no, he pulled himself together, left behind the warm quilt and did what was needed to fulfill his purpose as he saw it. That's the kind of stuff champions are made of.

Oh and did I mention he's been consistently getting straight A's in school too?

Living a life of purpose is more a matter of habit that we cultivate through self-discipline and sacrifice than any chance discovery. If you care to observe, you will notice that the happiest people in the world are usually very hard-working. I don't mean that they work 18 hours every day but that you won't find them showing any laziness in what needs to be done.

Mulla Nasruddin's teacher asked him, "What do we call someone who can't hear?"

"Call him whatever you like," Mulla replied. "It's not like he can hear!"

Opportunities are knocking on your door all the time, presenting you with your purpose in life. If you choose not to hear them and instead fixate on or keep waiting for some grand unrealistic event, you'll be disappointed.

No dream ever becomes a reality without effort. Customers remain prospects, products remain ideas and goals remain hopes in the absence of effort. People who attain extraordinary proficiency in their chosen fields, or companies that become great don't do so on account of some miracle or a transformation overnight. It's often the result of years of slogging with focus, discipline and a vision.

The E for Effort in the Sacred Principle is not a giant blow followed by nothing, but many tiny repeated blows over a long period of time. It helps to bear in mind that great businesses are built over a period of time.

It was mating season. A young and an old bull were standing at the edge of a mountain from where they could see vast meadows in the plains. It had plenty of sheep and cows grazing the fields.

“Hey!” the young and impatient bull exclaimed with joy. “Let’s run down there and surround one of the cows!”

“Calm down, calm down,” the old bull spoke softly, “let’s walk down there and surround all of them.” [10](#)

THE DAFFODILS

THERE 'S A WORD IN JAPANESE AND THEY SAY , LIKE unique words in every language I suppose, that it can't be translated. *Wabi-sabi* . It's not just a word but a philosophy, a way of life. Loosely interpreted, it means to find beauty in the imperfections of life and to gracefully flow with the natural cycle of evolving and ageing.

The path of success may well be a straight road but it is going to have potholes and obstacles and hurdles. No matter how good our vehicle, we can't ever be careful enough on the road. The journey will be long and tiring but we must keep moving, avoiding what we can and fixing what we must. Some hurdles we have to jump and some we have to go around. None of this is possible if we give up.

I read a beautiful little story [set in 1998] in *Celebration!* by Jaroldeen Edwards. Quoting literatim:

Several times my daughter had telephoned to say, "Mother, you must come see the daffodils before they are over."

I wanted to go, but it was a two-hour drive from Laguna to Lake Arrowhead. "I will come next Tuesday," I promised, a little reluctantly, on her third call.

Next Tuesday dawned cold and rainy. Still, I had promised, and so I drove there. When I finally walked into Carolyn's house and hugged and greeted my grandchildren, I said, "Forget the daffodils, Carolyn! The road is invisible in the clouds and fog, and there is nothing in the world except you and these children that I want to see bad enough to drive another inch!"

My daughter smiled calmly and said, "We drive in this all the time, Mother."

“Well, you won’t get me back on the road until it clears, and then I’m heading for home!” I assured her.

“I was hoping you’d take me over to the garage to pick up my car.”

“How far will we have to drive?”

“Just a few blocks,” Carolyn said. “I’ll drive. I’m used to this.”

After several minutes, I had to ask, “Where are we going? This isn’t the way to the garage!”

“We’re going to my garage the long way,” Carolyn smiled, “by way of the daffodils.”

“Carolyn,” I said sternly, “please turn around.”

“It’s all right, Mother, I promise. You will never forgive yourself if you miss this experience.”

After about 20 minutes, we turned onto a small gravel road and I saw a small church. On the far side of the church, I saw a hand-lettered sign that read, “Daffodil Garden.” We got out of the car and each took a child’s hand, and I followed Carolyn down the path. Then, we turned a corner of the path, and I looked up and gasped.

Before me lay the most glorious sight, it looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it down over the mountain peak and slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns—great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, white, lemon, yellow, salmon pink, saffron and butter yellow. Each different-colored variety was planted as a group so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. There were five acres of flowers.

“But who has done this?” I asked Carolyn.

“It’s just one woman,” she answered. “She lives on the property. That’s her home.”

Carolyn pointed to a well-kept farmhouse that looked small and modest in the midst of all that glory. We walked up to the house.

On the patio, we saw a poster.

Answers to the questions I know you are asking was the headline.

The first answer was a simple one. “50,000 bulbs,” it read.

The second answer was, “One at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and very little brain.”

The third answer was, “Began in 1958.”

There it was, The Daffodil Principle.

For me, that moment was a life-changing experience.

I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than 40 years before, had begun—one bulb at a time—to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountain top. Still, just planting one bulb at a time, year after year, had changed the world. This unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. She had created something of ineffable (indescribable) magnificence, beauty and inspiration.

The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration.

That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time — often just one baby-step at a time — and learning to love the doing; learning to use the accumulation of time.

When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world.

The story ends here.

The willingness to go through the mundane and boring stuff with patience and persistence is downright critical for success.

I used to meditate for up to 22 hours a day in the Himalayas and following that routine day in and day out for months at a stretch was extremely tiring at times. Way more tiring and difficult than anything else I'd ever done before. Even though the desperation to attain my goal was there, yet aches, pains and tiredness would take over sometimes. The challenge wasn't just to sit still but to do so *and* keep my one-pointed concentration alive. To stick to my routine, there was only one thing I would say to myself:

“Swami, you can get up if you want but what will you do? If you sit and meditate patiently, eventually you'll be happier because that's why

you are here. The clock will continue ticking anyway.”

It always worked for me and I never broke my vow of sitting down to meditate at the exact same time for the same number of hours every day. Persistence is a commitment but patience is an attitude. And this leads me to say something very important about the latter; patience is not about sitting back and waiting for things to happen without being annoyed. That may be passive patience. Active patience is to keep trying with a calm mind. You keep walking, keep chiseling away. When I talk about efforts in the Sacred Principle, that’s what I mean. Not a heroic effort done rarely but an ordinary effort done consistently.

A seeker went to see an accomplished master who was much sought after.

“Will you initiate me?” he asked him. “I want to learn from you.”

“It will need a lot of patience,” the master replied. “You’ll have to wait.”

“I’m ready for anything! How long do I have to wait?”

“Sorry, I can’t initiate you. You may leave.”

The moment we are worried about how long we have to be patient, impatience kicks in. Impatience leads to frustration, which rouses anger. Anger never comes without its consort: ego. Their entry into our consciousness makes us blind and we lose our sense to reason, to think. And, as Krishna says, *buddhi-nāśhāt praṇaśhyati* (the *Bhagavad Gita* , 2.63); not a great deal can be salvaged from the one who has lost reason.

Simply put, efforts done with an impatient or angry mind are not your best efforts.

Maybe our plans won’t pan out. Fine. We’ll make new ones. Maybe life won’t pan out the way we expect it to (it rarely does, if ever). Fine. We’ll keep trying. Because nothing new or different will happen if the efforts stop. A stagnant pool of water needs a lot of cleaning and often becomes the breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Patiently, one bulb at a time, and before long you’ll have a garden of 50,000 daffodils. *Wabi-sabi*. Those hurdles are not bad, the

imperfections make the journey exhilarating. A roller coaster wouldn't have a fraction of the thrill it has if it was just a straight rail.

The E for Effort in the Sacred Principle is not only about effort though. Like S was for Self and Sales, A for Approach and Accounting, C for Competence and Customers, R for Resources and Returns, E is for Efforts and... Energy.

Energy, my friend, energy. Nothing is possible without energy. It's an expendable resource and it needs to be replenished. I believe we have four kinds of energy: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. We need a good diet, exercise and rest or sleep to maintain our physical and mental energy. We need love, positivity, companionship and some idle moments to regain our emotional energy. And meditation, praying or practicing kindness helps us build our spiritual energy.

Successful people are as careful, if not more, in spending their energy as they are with spending their money. Our efforts must be focused on issues of importance, our core business, because they cost energy, which is a scarce resource. I am yet to come across any successful person who doesn't lead a life of discipline because discipline helps you harness your energy and direct it on things that matter.

Bear with me to plug in the last piece of the puzzle. The D in the Sacred Principle.

DESTINY

{Bhagya}

EFFORTS MEET DESTINY

DURING THE HANDOVER PROCESS , THE OUSTED CEO OF a large aeronautical company called the new CEO to his office and handed him three envelopes.

“I’ve worked here for years and I understand the culture of this company better than anyone else,” the outgoing CEO said. “When you are in grave trouble and can’t see a way out, open the first envelope. I promise you’ll have a solution. If ever you find yourself in trouble again, open the second envelope and eventually the third when needed. Don’t tell anyone about this. You can thank me later.”

The new CEO ran the company rather well, growing its profits, markets and customer base. But, a year later, they hit a major production issue and faced a long strike by the employees that led to losses. There was shouting in the boardroom and his job was

threatened. Completely lost, he went to his cabin, closed the door behind him and opened the first envelope.

Blame it on me. That's all it read. *Blame it on me.*

In the shareholders' meeting the next day, he blamed his predecessor for the issues they were facing and explained how due to bad policies formulated and approved back then, they were suffering now.

His explanation was accepted, the board and the shareholders were pacified and his contract was extended.

The next three years went by quickly, during which he earned big bonuses for turning the company around. Just then, the global recession hit. Demand slowed down all over the world and, once again, the shareholders and the board questioned his competency because some of the competitors were still doing well. The CEO was being forced to tender his resignation. Then he recalled the other two envelopes. He opened the second envelope. It read:

Blame it on the market conditions.

Taking his cue from the advice, he prepared an elaborate statement that demonstrated how a sudden change in the market conditions was responsible for the declining sales and profits. He also pointed to the rising cost of sales for the competitors and the decreasing margins to shatter the illusion of their growth.

His contract was extended for another three years and once again he managed to secure some important wins. As luck would have it, three of their planes went down in similar crashes in different parts of the world. Panicked, their customers canceled orders for the new planes and many leased planes were grounded. The board made up its mind to sack the CEO. Once again, he ran to his cabin and opened his third lifeline, the last envelope, which read:

Now, prepare three envelopes for the new CEO.

The thing about fate is, how do we ever prove or disprove it? What I mean to say is that how can we be sure that we didn't get something because it was not meant to be or because there was a lack of effort on our part.

In my vocation, I meet people all the time who are looking for their answers in astrology, tantra and psychics. When the desired outcome is not met, they tell me that maybe someone has done black magic on them or that the stars are not in their favor and so on. I have no qualms about people believing in whatever they want to believe in, but, in my view, the moment we step into the territory of searching for answers in things we have no control over, we'll never unleash our own potential.

Once a man set out in search of livelihood and on his way to another town, he had to pass through a jungle. It so happened that he lost his way in the woods. Roaming helplessly, he came across an old banyan tree, its roots were hung low and it canopied a wide area. He saw a fox sitting under the tree. At first, he got scared. Then he was relieved, for he noticed that it was lame—an old fox, mostly disabled, unable to hunt.

What he witnessed next amazed him. He observed that birds who sat on the tree occasionally dropped pieces of meat and the fox fed on them. That was how it survived. It dawned on the man that there was no need for him to run around, that he too, like the fox, could just take up a corner somewhere and Providence would provide for him.

He managed to navigate his way out of the forest and parked himself under a tree, outside the first village he came across. He vowed to surrender to God and only live off what was offered to him. But days went by and no one offered him anything. He was starving, on the verge of collapsing. His faith shook, just short of shattering, and he wondered how God could be unfair—how come he provided for the fox and not him.

While he was engrossed in his own world, he saw a monk pass by.

“How can God be so cruel and partial?” he said to the monk and told him his entire story.

“Who told you to take on the role of the fox?” the monk asked. “Are you lame? Disabled? You should be the bird, working for yourself as well as providing for those who depend on you.”

We all want convenience and we want everything now, but we can't pick and choose our roles. There's no substitute for good effort. Destiny

is to be able to say to yourself that I did the best I could and now I must wait and see what results come out of my effort. That I've sowed the seed, now let me nurture it and see how it turns into a sapling.

An Italian seeker, an engineer by profession, once asked me, "Why is it that spirituality flourished in India? How come it is home to some of the greatest spiritual leaders in the world?"

To answer, I asked her a question in return, "Why is it that startups prosper in Silicon Valley? How come it is home to some of the finest tech companies in the world?"

When we focus on creating the right conditions, our chances of destiny favoring us go up significantly, but a chance on its own means nothing unless we materialize it with our efforts. There's a chance of the winning ticket of lotto, but we won't know till we buy one.

What I have realized is that circumstances or adversities, say destiny, can hit you hard, they can even drive you to the point of failure, but they can't make you fail forever. When it comes to material success, even destiny yields to the one who is unrelenting. The question arises, how much of what we do is in our control? All? Some? None?

FREE WILL

IT 'S A TRUE STORY. SOME 450 YEARS AGO , THERE LIVED a farmer by the name of Maluk Das in India. Growing up, he had seen his father and grandfather toil in the fields, and hard work was the only way he knew to fulfill his own and his family's needs. One day, a wandering saint stopped in his village to deliver a sermon and Maluk happened to drop in.

“The one who surrenders to the will of God,” the saint preached, “and does every act with God in his heart will never have to sleep hungry. God will always take care of such a person.”

“With due respect, *Maharaj* ,” Maluk Das interrupted, “God may be the provider but I still control my life and earn my own livelihood with my actions.”

“Maybe. Ultimately though, God's will prevails.”

“I don’t think God will just drop food in my lap unless I work for it.”

“He operates in mysterious ways,” the saint replied smilingly. “And, let me tell you, if he wants to feed you, you *will* be fed.”

Maluk vehemently disagreed and the argument went on, until they finally agreed on a wager. It was decided that if God was real then within the next 24 hours he would somehow feed Maluk no matter what he did.

“Are you saying that even if I go hide somewhere and do nothing, he will still feed me?”

“Yes.”

“Well then, if God provides me food by tomorrow sunset, I’ll become a firm believer and accept everything you say. But, if he fails, you will renounce your robe and work with me in the fields.”

“So be it,” the saint said, raising his staff. “He’ll make sure you are fed. I have faith.”

“I’m going to run off to some remote place!”

“It doesn’t matter where you hide, Maluk. God is omnipresent and he’ll feed you.”

Maluk Das waded across the river, into the woods and perched on the branch of a large tree. *No one will come here. No one even knows I’m here. The saint is sure to lose. I’ll see how God can feed me now.* Sitting on the tree, he waited patiently. A few hours later, late into the afternoon, Maluk heard some noise. A weary group of travelers was passing by and seeing the giant tree, they stopped. They spread a sheet under the shade and put down their belongings.

Tying their bag full of food on one of the branches, they went to the river to freshen up first. Maluk was stunned to see the bag hanging just a few branches beneath him. “It’s not God’s doing, just a coincidence,” he told himself. “They’ll be back any moment to take this.” Sure enough, the travelers were coming back to the tree when the fierce and loud roar of a lion reverberated through the jungle. Praying for their lives, they ran back to the river and out of the woods. Maluk was left alone with that bag of food. Still unwilling to accept God’s hand in this, he refused

to untie the bag or partake of its contents. *No one can force me to eat unless I want to.*

The bright sun turned orange, dusk arrived, twilight emerged and soon it was turning dark. Maluk was hungry but he was adamant. Birds returned to their nests, nocturnal animals began roaming about when Maluk heard the footsteps of a few horses coming nearer. It was a gang of dacoits en route to their hideout.

“Look, *Sardar* !” one of the horsemen pointed at the bag. “Perhaps someone forgot their bag here.” The bag was within arm’s reach as he was on a horse’s back. The mat on the ground with a couple of parcels of clothes that lay nearby were also brought to the chief’s notice. They guessed that either some travelers had to run away because of a wild animal or someone was here who had heard them and escaped.

“We could do with some food!” Four men tethered their horses to the neighboring trees and opened the bag. “Wait!” their leader warned. “It could be a ploy to catch us. It could be poisoned food. The king’s men must be on alert after our heist yesterday. The way the sheet is spread and the food is fresh, someone is in the vicinity.”

With the intention to scour the area, they lit their torches and spotted Maluk Das sitting on the same tree. They pointed their spears at him and he was forced to clamber down. When Maluk wouldn’t admit that it was his food or that he knew anything about the people who left it there, the chief became furious.

“Eat this food!” he ordered.

“I can’t, I won’t,” Maluk protested.

“Give him a sound beating,” the chief commanded his men. “Kill him if he refuses to eat.”

Against Maluk’s wishes, he was forced to gobble that food. Seeing him alive still, the bandits were certain that it wasn’t poisoned and they finished the rest, left Maluk behind and went their way.

Prayer, faith and gratitude sprang from Maluk’s heart and he spoke:

*Hari samana data kou nahim,
sada birajaim santanamahim.
nama bisambhara bisva jiavaim,
sanja bihana rijika pahunchavaim.*

*There's no giver as great as God. He lives in a noble heart.
The whole creation is thriving under that omnipresent and
all-pervasive God. He makes sure that everyone is fed.*

I know some will contend that if God is looking after us, why are helpless children dying from starvation in many parts of the world? The truth is, I have not cited this story to assert God's grace or his existence (something that can only ever be felt and not proved). Nor am I equating destiny with some supernatural hand. Instead, I have mentioned this story for an entirely different reason: to shed some light on destiny versus free will.

In my view, the question of destiny and free will is a philosophical problem and has little to do with our real lives. This question has no meaning to begin with. Just because we can string together some words and put an interrogative mark at the end does not mean we have formed a valid question. For one thing, we can neither prove nor disprove either destiny or free will. When you take one as the sole truth, you'll find plenty of contradictory evidence.

With destiny, we are assuming that something that is bound to happen will happen no matter what. And the concept of free will states that our life happens to us at our discretion, that we make free choices uninfluenced by anything called karma, destiny or whatever. The truth is somewhere in between. I like to classify destiny as things largely beyond our control (floods, earthquakes, an annoying co-passenger or a grumpy flight attendant, for example) and free will as things that are within our control (insurance, preparation, or my reaction to that annoying co-passenger or the cranky attendant).

When it comes to success, it's all very simple at the end of the day: keep doing the best you can and watch your destiny come around.

Let's examine some of the greatest scientific discoveries of the last 200 years. While there's no doubt that those brilliant scientists and inventors discovered many great things laboriously, the fact remains that often when deeply engrossed in working towards something, they chanced upon something totally different, a completely unexpected result. Whether that's Percy Spencer discovering the microwave or Pfizer Inc., Viagra, the truth is, you open your life to numerous possibilities if you don't give up.

Destiny is the understanding that there are many things completely outside my control. The only thing I can do is try and improve the odds. And that's all I can do: try.

Rather than worrying about the outcome of an act already committed, or blaming your failures on destiny or anything else, or vainly trying to control everything in your life, it's more sensible and rewarding to do the best you can. If you can look yourself in the mirror, put your hand on your heart and say to yourself, "I did the best I could," that's mostly what matters. Do better next time if you can.

A lady buys a new car for her husband and hires a new driver. At the end of the first day, the man complains to his wife.

"Fire this driver! He had me nearly killed three times in just one day!"

"Don't be so hasty, honey," the wife replies calmly. "Give him another chance!"

Our life is influenced by both destiny and our choices. No one asked Maluk Das to raise a wager or flee to the woods. Had he not done that one act, many subsequent ones could have been avoided. Then again, had he stayed at home, something else could have transpired. In either case, there's no way to predict the outcome. What is more important is to give our 100% to whatever we undertake. When it comes to destiny, I can tell you one thing though: if you have something to offer to the world, a skill, some talent, a gift, nature will take the work from you. Each one of us is inherently propelled to realize our full potential.

We won't know whether something can be accomplished or not till we try. And try we must. That's all we can do and that's been the basis of

the remarkable progress our race has made.

Begin with the assumption that you can transform your life, you can master yourself and you can write your future. Once you set your mind, give your everything to make it happen. Whatever be the outcome, the journey itself becomes every bit worthwhile. Why live any other way?

The D for Destiny in the Sacred Principle stands for the wisdom that we don't control everything that happens in our lives. Plus, D represents Determination. If you remain determined, destiny will knock on your door. It's only a matter of time. For the one who's determined and persistent, success is not a question of if but when.

We can only do the best we can and be open to the idea of adapting to ever-changing circumstances, but beyond that, we must have the patience to wait and watch, to see how our efforts bear fruits. I cannot change what someone says to me, but I can change how I think about it and see it.

I write when I'm inspired, and I see to it that I'm inspired at nine o'clock every morning. [11](#)

THE EPIC MODEL

“OPPORTUNITY HAS NEVER KNOCKED ON MY DOOR , Swami,” an entrepreneur said to me the other day.

“I read somewhere,” I replied, “that if opportunity doesn’t knock, create a door.”

“Well, that hasn’t worked in my case. Indeed, anything guised as opportunity has only blown away my door and knocked me down.”

I meet brilliant people all the time who could do a lot more in their life. But they feel they are stuck. Life hasn’t been fair to them or they are waiting for the right opportunity, they tell me.

Such conversations at times remind me of Prof. Sharma (my English teacher), who would always say that good people don’t sit and wait for opportunities, they create them. “No matter what stage of life you are at,

if you are up for it, you can do it,” he would contend and tell me this story.

A man built a fortune manufacturing and selling combs. When he had been growing up, combs were made of wood and ivory and couldn’t be mass produced. He figured that plastic combs could not only be made at a fraction of the cost but also they would last longer. As he grew old, he decided to hand the reins of his business to his most capable child. So, he called his children—two sons and a daughter—and assigned a task.

“There’s a Buddhist monastery in Bodh Gaya,” he said. “It has hundreds of monks. Get me a wholesale order from that monastery.”

“But, Dad!” the elder son retorted, “monks are bald. What use do they have for a comb?”

“That’s for you to find out,” the father said, giving them a fortnight. “Whoever gets me the biggest order will head my company.”

Two weeks later, they got together to report on their progress.

“I told you,” the eldest son said, “it would be a waste of time. They mocked me for asking them to buy combs. I gifted one to the head monk and he used it to scratch his back. What an embarrassment!”

“It wasn’t so bad,” the other son spoke. “I managed to sell 200 combs. I suggested they could keep one in each room of the monastery for their visitors. Many travel from far and wide and may have tangled or ruffled hair from long journeys.”

“I sold 2000 combs, father,” the daughter said. “And now hearing that the head monk used one to scratch his back, I’m thinking there may be an opportunity for a new product.”

“2000! How?” they asked in unison.

“More than 50,000 pilgrims visit that monastery every year!”

“So?”

“I told them to emboss Buddha’s image in the middle of the comb and print the four noble truths on one side and the eight moral precepts on the other. They could offer it to each one of their visitors who would be reminded of these things on a daily basis.”

“That’s incredible!” her father said.

“Plus, I found a rich merchant to sponsor 50,000 combs annually with his logo on them. So people will associate goodness and morality with his company.”

“And the abbot approved of this?”

“In fact,” she replied excitedly, “he said the merchant would spiritually merit from this kind act.”

People who create opportunities approach things differently. Really, it’s that simple.

If you say “I can’t do it,” you are right already. But if you ask, “How can I do it?” your mind will shift from denial to a thinking mode. All is possible when the human mind begins to pursue a line of thought. Our material and spiritual progress, discoveries in science and deep philosophical truths vouch for that beyond any doubt. In some way, people who succeed at anything in life are not usually sane. I say this appreciatively. There are four insanities they live and breathe. I call it the EPIC model.

INSANELY ENTHUSIASTIC

The word enthusiasm comes from the Greek word *enthousiasmos*, meaning inspiration or possession by a god. For several early centuries, it was used exclusively to refer to one’s religious fervor or a state as if one was possessed by the Holy Spirit. Even though we use enthusiasm today to denote passion or eagerness in anything, I’m alluding to a broader meaning and that is love. When you are enthusiastic about something, you are not just keen and eager, you are in love with it too. You find yourself thinking, talking, dreaming, contemplating about it all the time.

Next time, carefully observe a successful person talk about their cause, product or offering, and you will discover their eyes light up, their smile widens, body language changes and their whole persona gets flushed with positivity and inspiration. Consider yourself very lucky if you are insanely enthusiastic about something in life; half the job is done. You simply have to focus on the next important attribute then.

INSANELY PERSISTENT

They just don't quit. Yes, like everyone else, they too get frustrated and consider throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but they don't act on such misgivings. I am yet to meet anyone who made it by quitting. Besides, persistence is not giving up no matter what. There are other more appropriate terms for such blinding behavior, like stubbornness or obstinacy. Persistence is to continue working on something with an open mind while you make improvements to progressively build your chances of success. Successful people are not afraid of changing their opinion about something. There's no wisdom in sticking to something just because you said so even though you now know better. In other words, they continue to learn and improve.

INSANELY INDEPENDENT

While you are only as good as your team, I have observed on countless occasions that those who become champions in any field, be it corporate leadership, sports, arts, etc., are fiercely independent thinkers. They have mastered the delicate art of balancing others' inputs and opinions with their own goals and views. They don't go out seeking approval on every little matter nor do they need to be spoon fed. Successful leaders are not afraid of stepping out of their comfort zone and they pursue their calling with all their might. They are not afraid of being wrong and admitting it. Paradoxically, independent people make great team players and they certainly make inspirational leaders.

INSANELY CLEAR

Above all, they are very clear about what they want. They are not afraid of change (or changing their opinions) and they remain insanely clear in their minds. A confused person takes the longest path to success (material or spiritual). When you are clear, you may fail and yet, your other qualities help you make better decisions the next time, vastly improving your odds of success. In fact, I say that clarity of thought is the foremost quality of successful and happy people. It's the stuff geniuses are made of.

And this is how epic people create epic opportunities in life. Those who are afraid of taking risks play life all too safe and lack any freshness or originality. They remain trite, therefore adding an S and a T to my epic model, making it counterproductive. How? Well, epic becomes septic then.

A shepherd approached Mulla Nasruddin with an unusual problem—one of his sheep had got its head stuck in a pot's narrow passage. He had tried everything to get the head out, but the animal was already scared, bleating its lungs out.

"Hmm..." Mulla said, stroking his beard, "there's only one solution to this problem."

"And that is?" the shepherd asked anxiously.

"Cut off your sheep's head."

"There must be some other way, Mulla! I need that sheep for my livelihood."

"Sorry but there isn't. If you chop its head, it'll fall in the container and then you can take it out."

Reluctantly, the man agreed to kill the animal and exactly as Mulla had said, its head fell in the container.

"But Mulla," the shepherd said, "I still can't get its head out."

"I see," Mulla said calmly. "What kind of container is it?"

"Earthen."

"Tell you what, just break the pot and take out its head."

Sometimes, when your head is stuck in a problem, breaking the pot makes more sense than other violent options. And, if anyone offers you a solution without first fully understanding (and appreciating) your problem, almost always it'll be the wrong advice. Don't be afraid of making mistakes because wisdom often comes from lessons we learn from our wrong decisions. If you want to wake up to the glory of a beautiful dawn, you have to live through the darkness of the night. Accept and cherish your insanity because sometimes, it is the only emotion that keeps us sane and gives us the courage to pull through.

Be brave. Be epic.

IN A NUTSHELL

THE SACRED PRINCIPLE		
IN LIFE	IN BUSINESS	THE DEFINING POINT
Self	Sales	Sell a vision not a product
Approach	Accounting	Know your numbers
Competence	Customers	Never let down a customer
Resources	Returns	Always return greater value
Efforts	Energy	Put them where it matters
Destiny	Determination	Have faith

THE INSANELY EPIC MODEL	
Enthusiastic	You are ready when you can't stop talking about it
Persistent	You can't lose if you don't give up
Independent	Learn to believe in yourself and your dream
Clear	Be clear about what you want

EPILOGUE

IN JANUARY 2019, I LAUNCHED BLACK LOTUS IN Bangalore. Black Lotus is a kindness platform that helps you chalk out your spiritual path while you do good for the world. It is about seeing the miracle this life is in its ordinariness. The highlight of the launch was sharing the dais with Bhavish Aggarwal. Bhavish is the co-founder of Ola, the ride-sharing company, currently valued at \$5 billion.

Towards the end of the event, I took over from our anchor, Shelly Singh, the CEO of Black Lotus, so I could ask Bhavish a couple of questions.

“What is success according to you?” I asked him.

Bhavish could have said anything. Taking the company to IPO or creating employment for thousands of people or being a world-renowned business leader or making a difference to the world. But he

went ahead with an answer that showed how this unassuming ultra-successful entrepreneur thinks unconventionally.

“Happiness and peace,” he said.

Further, I asked him, if he had to choose between running a \$500 billion tobacco company, that even though makes addictive products has generated employment for hundreds of people, or a small NGO making a difference to a small community, what would he choose?

“I’ll pick the small NGO and make it big,” he said.

His answers really go to the heart of the matter because after all, why do we do anything at all? Usually, we anticipate happiness in the future from our actions in the present. No matter it’s a bigger house, car, position or bank balance, we pursue our goals with the intention that we’ll experience happiness and peace, even a kind of euphoria. The quest for happiness remains our primary driver.

I thought this book would be incomplete without a bit of ancient wisdom. On the path of happiness, or success I should say, often our greatest hurdle is our own mindset. It prevents us from being objective or seeing the brighter side of life.

Ramayana is a story of absolute good (Rama) versus evil (Ravana). But it’s not as straightforward because it shows how evil can have many good traits. Ravana was an able ruler who took care of his subjects, a learned man and a shrewd politician who ousted his own half-brother, Kubera, from the kingdom of Lanka.

On the one hand is Rama, who, for no fault of his, gives up his kingdom at his father’s request to honor the *maryada* (dharma) of a son and on the other hand is Ravana, who let go of his *maryada* completely to avenge his sister’s mistreatment by abducting Sita. Even in a simple premise like this, one can see the predicament. Is it wrong to kidnap a woman from another family to avenge the mistreatment of one of your own?

In other words, there is always going to be an element of confusion in our choices. Eventually, when Rama faces Ravana in battle, Rama is confident, but Vibhishana is deeply worried because Rama’s troops or resources are no match for Ravana’s mighty army. There is an esoteric

thread that runs through this beautiful scripture, as it does in all Vedic scripture, but here I'm focusing on the obvious, just the story of the *Ramayana*. Vibhishana wonders how Rama is ever going to win against Ravana given the disparity in the resources available to them.

Goswami Tulsidas, in *Tulsi Ramayana*, writes the exchange between Rama and Vibhishana as follows:

“O Master!” says Vibhishana, “You have no chariot, no armor, nor even footwear. How are you going to win against the great warrior Ravana?”

“Pay attention my friend,” Rama, the Ocean of Grace, says gently, “the chariot required to win is of a different type. Valor and perseverance are the wheels of the chariot. Truth and character comprise the pole and the winning emblem... Charity is the axe and intellect, power, while knowledge is the strong bow. Self-control and discipline are the various arrows. Mentorship of the learned is the impenetrable shield. The one who stays firm on such a chariot can even win the most formidable foe—this world (the attractions and distractions of the world).” [12](#)

Ultimately, the measure of your success, no matter what the endeavor, is not going to be your possessions but your character. It is imperative to state here that by character I am not alluding to morality but simply your principles in life. What do you stand for? The day you discover that, making all choices will become easy. There'll be no conflict in your mind or confusions in your life. Even the yardstick to measure your success can only be created once you know the answer to: What do you stand for in life?

Stand for something worthwhile. All is possible then.

What success means to you can't and ideally shouldn't come from external sources because an overwhelming majority of people around you are simply chasing success defined by others. Whether parents say become a doctor or an engineer, or family members say go for your boss's position or children's needs and demands make you think what success should look like in your own life, the truth of the matter is that what will truly give you happiness is how you see success.

The whole village was against Mulla Nasurddin's unconventional ways. Finally, he was brought before a bench of five wise people from different backgrounds who were regarded as the moral authority. They insisted that the scriptures had the final word and that Mulla should not preach his own interpretations but follow the teachings of the sages before him.

"Messrs.," Mulla said. "I'll gladly accept your judgment if the five wise ones can answer a simple question for me."

"What is bread?" he asked.

"It's a type of food," said the one who was a farmer.

"It's a mixture of flour, water and yeast," said the other, who happened to be a baker.

"Bread is a blessing from God," the preacher said.

"It is the fundamental necessity of human life," the doctor said.

"It can mean many things," said the fifth one, who was a philosopher. "There's no one clear definition."

"Now then," Mulla said, looking at the entire gathering, "if the five wisest savants can't agree on something as simple as bread, how are they to tell me the meaning of the scriptures?"

It takes deep insight to realize that you must have your own definition of success.

And it won't be possible until you are clear about your principles and values. Or, in other words, What do you stand for?

Your life will never be the same again the day you figure out the answer to this question. That's the sacredness of the Sacred Principle. The rest is commentary.

Go on now, get your dreams.

NOTES

¹ The *Bhagavad Gita* , Chapter 18, verses 13–15. The transliteration with diacritics is as follows:

pañcaītāni mahā-bāho
kāraṇāni nibodha me
sāṅkhye kṛtānte proktāni
siddhaye sarva-karmaṇām

adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā
karaṇaṁ ca pṛthag-vidham
vividhāś ca pṛthak ceṣṭā
daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam

śarīra-vān-manobhir yat
karma prārabhate naraḥ

nyāyyaṁ vā viparītaṁ vā
pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ

² *Samkhya* is one of the oldest schools of Hindu thought and philosophy. Literally, the word means countable or something that can be counted. It is believed that the Samkhya philosophy was first propounded by the sage Kapila who is also mentioned in the oldest of the four Vedas, the Rig Veda. Hindu scholars believe that Gautama, the Buddha, was influenced by the Samkhya philosophy because exactly in the manner of the Samkhya (enumeration), he gave a set of discourses that were posthumously documented and popularized as the Numerical Discourses of Buddha. Having said that, the chief difference between Hindu and Buddhist thought remains—Buddha rejected the existence of any permanent and indestructible self that the Hindus called “soul.” He was then questioned that if a soul does not exist, what takes rebirth (since Buddha believed in rebirth). “Flux of Consciousness,” he answered. That which we call the self is ever-changing and is merely consciousness. Krishna in his epic discourse, the *Bhagavad Gita*, draws heavily upon the Samkhya philosophy of sage Kapila. If you wish to know more about this school of thought, I encourage you to read *Kapila Samhita*, *Kapila Smriti* and *Kapila Panchratra*. *Kapila Gita*, also known as *Siddhantasara*, is a good text too.

³ This is my own translation. The common translation is: whatever we do (instead of “experience”) is governed by these five aspects. I have included the word experience because of the word “prarabhte” in the third verse. “Prarabdha” is ripe karma in Sanskrit, karma that has reached its maturity and will bring results any moment. What we do in the present most certainly affects our destiny.

⁴ The analogy of dogs barking at an elephant is very old but I first heard it in this manner in a discourse by Swami Rajeshwarananda. I’ve done a literal translation of what he said in Hindi: *Jitne zyada aapke aage haath jorhne vale kharhe honge, utne adhik aapke piche bhaunkane vale parhe honge*. Swami Rajeshwarananda passed away in January 2019 due to a massive heart attack.

⁵ *matra-sparsas tu kaunteya*
sitosna-sukha-duhkha-dah
agamapayino ‘nityas
tams titikshasva bharata.

This verse has been taken from the *Bhagavad Gita*, 2.14. Here’s a translation by Srila Prabhupada: *O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.*

⁶ This is a nice little self-published book I discovered while searching for the exact interview with Bill Gates. It has some good messages for aspiring entrepreneurs. There is no paperback version but you can get the Kindle edition from Amazon. I devoted ten minutes to this book; you can do the same and are likely to pick some gems along the way.

⁷ Taken from the original translation by Gunther Olesch, Anke Dreher, Amy Coulter, Stefan Langer and Semyon Chaichenets from Project Gutenberg.

⁸ This wonderful article ends here. You can read other writings by Alexander Nethercutt by going to [Medium. com/@zandercutt](https://medium.com/@zandercutt)

⁹ A similar statement was made by Matthew Kelly in *The Long View* . It read, “Most people overestimate what they can do in a day, and underestimate what they can do in a month. We overestimate what we can do in a year, and underestimate what we can accomplish in a decade.” So, there is a bit of a debate on who said it first. Either way, it’s a good piece of teaching.

¹⁰ In 2001, I had hired a senior manager for my startup. His name was Carl Coffin and he had worked for GE for over two decades. He told me this joke when I got a bit impatient pursuing a prospective customer, a large steel and mining company. Carl had an amazing way of profiling a customer using the quadrant technique he had learned in GE. It was particularly useful in making large complex sales in huge corporations where often behind one project, there were many people involved in decision-making.

¹¹ I came across this quote a few years ago and it has stayed with me ever since. At the time I read it, it was attributed to William Faulkner but when I tried to confirm the source, it seems many writers have made similar remarks. If you wish to know who first said it, I encourage you to go to <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/10/30/ inspire-nine/>.

¹² This is my own translation. The full translation and the exact verses are:

Valor and perseverance are the wheels of the chariot. Truth and character comprise the pole and the winning emblem. Strength, discerning wisdom, self-control and benefit of others are the steeds. Forgiveness, compassion and evenness are the reins. Devotional service to a noble cause is the charioteer. Indifference is the armor and contentment is the sword. Charity is the axe and intellect is the power (*śakti* —the bolt). Knowledge is the strong bow.

A still and pure mind is the quiver and self-control, control of the senses and discipline are the various arrows. Grace of the Guru

and the learned is the impenetrable shield. There is not another method of winning as powerful as this. The one who has a chariot of such dharma, let alone any worries of winning or losing, there will, in fact, be no enemies left for him to conquer. The one who stays firm on such a chariot can even win the most formidable foe —this world (the attractions and distractions of the world).

natha nahim ratha na tana pada trana,
kehi bidhi jitaba bira balavana.
sunahu sakha kahu kripa nidhana,
jehi jaya hoi so syandana ana. (1)

sauraj dhiraja te ratha chaka,
satya sila dridha dhvaja pataka.
bala bibeka dama parahita ghore,
chhama kripa samata raju jore. (2)

isa bhajanu sarathi sujana,
birati charama santosha kripana.
dana parasu buddhi sakti prachanda,
bara bigyana kathina kodanda. (3)

amala achala mana trona samana,
sama jama niyama silimukha nana.
kavacha abedha bipra guru puja,
ehi sama bijaya upaya na duja. (4)

sakha dharmamaya asa ratha jake,
jitana katahu kahum ripu nahi take. (5)

maha ajaya sansara ripu jita sake so bira.
jake asa ratha hoi dridha sunahu sakha matidhira. (6)

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SINCE 1946

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