

Srimathi shivashakar: a learner, a grounded person, nature admirer and an ideal for young minds

She is an ideator, motivator, a biker, a traveller and always a learner. She is a distinguished alumni awardee from NIT Trichy. She is the corporate vice president of HCL technologies heading the New Vistas business. She is none other than Srimathi shivashakar, a biker, traveller and modern-art enthusiast.

Srimathi shivashakar interests lie more with the young minds. According to her, the worst thing a leader can give is a prescription. A crisis is an opportunity to get better. People grow when they understand the depth of crisis and adversity. Covid has done a lot of drastic changes. "For the first time, I saw so many birds outside my house. In short, nature is enjoying in the meantime we are locked down inside our houses." She says.

As an Indian, we inherit more inclination towards nature, its goodness. What are your opinions about this context?

SS- I grew up in a very small village. I still believe that our ethics, beauty of simplicity lies in the village itself. You learn to cope with adversities, managing large gatherings and minimalizing your usage in small-town life only.

Yin-Yang, the Chinese philosophy

In the Indian context if we take lord shiva and other goddesses. They are superior examples of masculine and feminine energy. A balanced leader knows where the energy is coming from. A feminine aspect of a company or organization says that you need a plan and then apply it to people. Whereas the masculine energy is all about compliances, standardization and rule-books. (she then explains the masculine and feminine energy go hand in hand and the symbol of yin yang). Stereotypes break when you embrace dual energies be it masculine or feminine, light or dark, ups and downs through a balanced approach.

Stereotypes break...embracing dual energies... masculine or feminine, light or dark, ups and downs through a balanced approach.

The masculine and feminine energies:

The divine masculine energy is all about giving whereas feminine energy knows receiving. Feminine energy is powerful. It knows to float in the direction wherever possible. It is dynamic, intuitive, nurturing and creative towards masculine energy. It shapes your life. All these are helping you simultaneously to take huge decisions and firm steps. There are people in the work field who give you orders to work before testing your potential. We too have people who see the forest before counting trees. This is the feminine energy.

The masculine energy knows clarity, focus, stability, protecting, analytical and logical approach. Both energies are extremely needed in coping with adversities.

Anthropology- let's go beyond the genders:

Traditionally men have always been the hunters and gatherers. They started making tools for hunting purposes. Women were traditional nurturers. Even in the workplace, we can be stereotyped. Like, all the salesman has to be men. All the front end works and customer dealing works has to be done by women.

Balanced leadership:

When adversity calls a balanced leader can only perform these characteristics.

- 1.Courage- the ability to show strength during pain or grief.
- 2.Agility- ability to think quickly and easily.
- 3.Empathy- the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.
- 4.Resilience- the ability to spring back from difficulty.

Am I courageous to ensure that I don't exclude any of the beyond business topics? Do I empathise with the security? Do I bring in a system within the company which brings agility and therefore I am building resilience towards the company? These questions with yourself will make you a perfect leader.

Leaf from grandma's book:

One of the most influential people in my life and the ambience she set through her silent domestic leadership. It is my personal belief that why should we distinguish between corporate and home – every place a person who can put the impact on an organization is doing the work of a leader. My grandmother used to give a pot full of rice to the needy and poor people the whole year. Like her, every leader has a pot in front of them. The pot we are in the pot everyday matters. You have to be softer, milder and have a letting go attitude. It will keep a balance in your masculine and feminine energy.

You have to be softer, milder and have a letting go attitude...leadership quality

Balanced leadership during adversities:

1. Focus on care- courage, agility, empathy, and resilience should reside in you to attain focus on care.
2. Balance energies- hunter-gatherer and nurturer roles.
3. Handle conflict- focus on patience and not aggression.
4. Encourage democracy- set a participative and collaborative environment.
5. Display humanity- don't hand out prescriptions without practical examples.
6. Propagate democracy- create a network to talk about the right things.
7. Handle stress- balance energies within you and redirect your stress productivity.

8. Letting go- understand when you need to let go.

9. Be authentic- mean what you say and act accordingly.

As a balanced leader, you shouldn't be worried about who is saying it, rather you should look up to what is being said.

We are at a tender age. We don't know to distinguish the profitability mentality from health concerns. Whether it be the health of yours, your colleague or any other associations. It is more important than any other profit. What are your thoughts in this context?

SS- Some companies only look for profitability, compliances. They have nothing to do with the people nor their health. Some companies also exist that look at health and profitability hand in hand. Such companies have balanced leadership. They are bound to prosper more.

Tell us some of the mantras of life that we as youngsters have now forgotten but you must have had to say us?

SS- I have three mantras and I am happy to share those with you.

Firstly, running faster and how much faster has to be decided by you. The focus should be the finishing line only. You don't need to compete with your competitors. It may give you an essence of perceptions of losing. The second thing, when you fall don't wait for someone to lend their hand and pick you up. It's always advisable to get up on your own, wipe your face off and walk straight. Thirdly, I take little affirmations. One of them is going back home after work makes me feel good. I sit. I think all positive things occurred on the same day.

Srimathi is widely admired among her peers for her unique leadership coaching abilities. She is dexterous in bringing together multiple stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to collaborate and deliver business results with unflinching integrity and values.