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Positive Thinking and Professional Excellence

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The concept of positive thinking is important in all aspects of life and for all people. It brings both external as well as internal growth. A person may be rich or poor but positive thinking makes his life enriching irrespective of his material possessions. Now, I shall try to relate the concept of positive thinking with professional excellence, the need of which has already been established. We are living in a period which can easily be called as one of the most challenging humanity has seen so far. The expectations of a civilised democratic society have grown so much that they pose a great challenge before its managers, be they in any field. In order to meet this challenge, they need to adopt a positive approach. It is my experience that a clear concept of life and its values is of great help in developing positive approach leading to excellence, contentment, satisfaction and fulfilment in life.

Today, we are at a very critical junction of human civilisation. The twentieth century has come to an end and we have fully entered the next century. The last century has seen tremendous growth in all fields of human life. The progress in the field of Science and Technology has been mind boggling. So has been the case with all Management Sciences. All professions, today, can boast of achievements unthinkable even ten years back. What to say of an old generation, the same generation becomes obsolete every decade and we have to make sincere efforts in order to retain excellence in our professions. The kind of competition we are facing today is almost killing. This is so in all the fields and whether we like it or not, the competition is only going to increase in times to come and more and more excellence would be required in all the professions even for survival what to say of growth.

What has been the result of this, is worthwhile to examine. In the blind race for outer growth, we have neglected or even forgotten our inner development. This has led to great frustration and the very purpose of outer growth has been lost. What should have been the cause of our happiness, is making us miserable. Not only this, many of those who held or hold high positions have brought bad

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name to their profession and some of them have behaved even worse than a beast. Though the course of nature keeps exposing them from time to time but the damage they cause to humanity is quite often irreparable. Also, the fact is that in the ultimate analysis, the worst victim of such a situation are they themselves though they may not realise it or may refuse to do so.

To most of us this situation appears gloomy but I see it from a positive point of view. To me, it is an indication of the fact that, if we fail to look within ourselves, nature will create conditions to compel us to do so and it may do so through different means. Perhaps prevailing frustration and dependency is one of the means. We should not, therefore, feel dejected in such a situation and consider it to be an opportunity to attain excellence in our own fields. This is true for all professional fields as all of them are important for the integrated development of human society. I am of the view that excellence is the need of hour for our own happiness and growth also. This can be achieved greatly by adopting a positive approach in our working.

Before going deeper into the subject, I would like to explain the first two words of the topic. The first word is 'Positive'. I consider this word to be a symbol of growth in a larger sense. It is not different from the word 'Yoga' which means addition and communion. It is something which elevates, enriches, enlarges, expands and grows. It has no place for selfishness, narrowness, mental poverty, parochialism and constriction. It is not a matter of charity but essential for our true growth. After all, each one of us is a part of the whole and can survive only as long as the whole survives. One, therefore, gives nothing to others but only to oneself. Thus, the process of giving is no different from receiving because, where looked in totality, it is a matter of exchange only. Thus, a positive approach always means growth-oriented approach even if it may externally appear otherwise.

The second word 'Thinking' is also equally important. After all, the process of thinking is, what differentiates man from animal. It is a wonderful faculty provided by God to human beings. And it is the quality of thinking which distinguishes one person from another. Our best friends and our worst enemies are our thoughts. Our dignity depends upon the quality of our thinking. Every action, whether constructive or destructive, begins with a thought. As are the thoughts, so are the actions. Thus, our thinking has a great impact on the quality of our actions and in turn on our lives.

With this background, it becomes easier to understand the phrase 'Positive Thinking' as something growth-oriented, taking a larger perspective and greater happiness as goal. Here an individual considers himself or herself as a part of the whole and the gain of the whole automatically becomes the gain of the individual. When a larger number of people adopt this approach, there is greater prosperity and happiness in the society. In the process, the individual is also elevated coming closer to the true goal of life. In a way there is no difference between positive thinking and value-based thinking. It may also be called spiritual thinking. When one thinks of spiritual growth, larger growth is automatically implied.

The concept of positive thinking is important in all aspects of life and for all people. It brings both external as well as internal growth. A person may be rich or poor but positive thinking makes his life enriching irrespective of his material possessions. Now, I shall try to relate the concept of positive thinking with professional excellence, the need of which has

already been established. We are living in a period which can easily be called as one of the most challenging humanity has seen so far. The expectations of a civilised democratic society have grown so much that they pose a great challenge before its managers, be they in any field. In order to meet this challenge, they need to adopt a positive approach. It is my experience that a clear concept of life and its values is of great help in developing positive approach leading to excellence, contentment, satisfaction and fulfilment in life. Some one has rightly described a winner's creed in the following lines :

If you think you are beaten, you are;
 If you think you dare not, you don't,
 If you'd like to win but think you can't,
 It's almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost,
 For out in the world we find
 Success begins with a person's faith;
 It's all in the state of mind.

Life's battles don't always go
 To the stronger or faster hand;
 They go to the one who trusts in God
 And always thinks "I Can."

Now, we come to some important attributes of a positive and successful professional.

1. Integrity — The foremost requirement for professional success is the integrity of the person. It is also necessary to understand the full dimension of the quality called "Integrity". The dictionary meaning of this word is Entireness, Wholeness, the unimpaired state, Uprightness, Honesty, Purity etc. In a way it covers almost all qualities of a good human being and is much more than the normally understood meaning of the word. A professional, while discharging his duty, is supposed to have a complete view of the situation without being influenced by external factors and take upright decision with a pure and honest mind. This is what can be an ideal definition of the quality called "Integrity". Therefore, any deviation from this would mean loss of integrity. It is, therefore, necessary to understand all possible factors which help us to maintain our integrity and assimilate them in us to avoid loss of integrity. In my view, these factors are nothing but positive thoughts which help us to take a positive view of every situation and this gives us more satisfaction than what would apparently come from the loss of integrity. My personal experience is that fifty per cent of our problems are taken care of, if we maintain our integrity in a true sense. This is possible only by developing a positive approach towards life and by looking at it in totality rather than in fragments. Also, one should work with full integrity not by compulsion but by choice. That only will lead to excellence.

2. Knowledge — Knowledge is the second most important requirement of a successful manager. Knowledge is power and without it, it is difficult to command true respect from others. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that we know our job well and master it as early as possible. It does not mean that there is need of knowing each and every thing but definitely the essentials should be known. It is also important that we keep a learning attitude and do not hesitate to learn from others irrespective of their status. This willingness to learn itself earns respect for us. At the same time, we must respect the knowledge of others and our position should not come in the way of appreciating them. The attitude of mutual respect is very essential in any profession and if we do so, we shall not only be obeyed but will be respected too.

3. Trust — It is another important factor necessary for professional excellence. This is possible when we accept the fact that each person is potentially divine and if the right environment is provided to him, he will show his excellence. Trusting is one of the important components of this environment. Only a person who is confident of himself can trust others. Thus, trusting itself is a divine quality. We must accept the fact that there is an inner urge in each of us to perform our best and most of us can do so only when we are trusted. Also, it may be clarified here that trusting does not at all mean "not being careful" that one has always to be. Even while one walks on the road, one has to be careful. This does not mean that one should not walk on the road. My personal experience is that trusting is rarely harmful while non-trusting is always so. At times, we have to deal with negative and wicked elements. My feeling is that an environment of trust brings a positive change in them also and if there are some exceptions, they can always be dealt with strongly. The only care to be taken is that strong action should be taken as a call of duty and not as vendetta.

4. Accessibility — A professional has to deal with a large number of people both inside and outside the organisation. They come to him for various official as well as personal matters. A good professional has to be accessible within reasonable parameters. I am of the view that this accessibility is able to take care of a good number of his problems and gives much less occasion to negative elements to play mischief. Unfortunately, many of us get trapped by vested interests in such a manner that we are distanced from reality and get a version of things which is far away from truth. Such a caucous should be broken with wisdom and courage. Many happenings which we see around today are the result of lack of accessibility. Even a person with genuine intentions may fall victim of the designs of vested interests, if he is not wise enough. Again, it is a result of positive thinking which helps us in remaining accessible to those who need us. As a manager or administrator, if we consider it a privilege to be of service to others, we can always find time and occasion to meet those who come to us. My experience is that a common man or employee gives the best feedback which we can use for larger interest. The mere fact that you love meeting others instils confidence among the people and leads to excellence.

5. Compassion — Compassion is more than mercy. It is putting oneself in the position of the person in trouble. When one does so, he becomes more considerate and helpful. Definitely it does not mean being sentimental which may take away the objectivity. For an effective professional, compassion is a great quality. With compassion, one is able to help others without necessarily helping. Compassion imparts dignity to a person in trouble. Quite often we are not able to help but by compassion we show our willingness to help. This does

wonders. My experience is that with compassion, even severe punishment is accepted gracefully and does good to the person on whom the punishment is inflicted. On the other hand, even reward may have no meaning if given with indifference. Again, compassion is a quality which comes as a result of positive thinking or spiritual development and helps greatly in achieving excellence.

6. Fearlessness - Fear is a big hurdle in our growth, be it for any reason. Positive thinking helps in winning over this fear. Be it the fear of survival or any thing else, it takes away the objectivity of a person and in all probability leads to loss of integrity. A positive thinker always takes things in his stride and sees an opportunity for development in every situation. Once we accept things as they come, the cause of fear itself disappears. Not only this, a fearless administrator is able to instil fear among the wicked which either makes them behave properly or keeps them away from the scene. This imparts more confidence among the good people and the process perpetuates. There are many instances which show that it is possible to show courage even when most of the system is against you. Once courage is shown, things change fast in your favour. However, in the process, humility should not be lost. In fact, humility is an ornament of the courageous person and it should never be confused with weakness. On the other hand, it adds to the strength of the bold. Qualities like courage and humility are also the result of positive thinking.

7. Patience - Patience is another important quality necessary for professional excellence. After all, we work in an environment which is not always favourable. We come across many unreasonable persons, situations and events. We have to deal with them with patience. Loss of temper is highly detrimental in such situations. At times, it may be necessary to convey displeasure with firmness. But quite often it is patience which pays rich dividends. Not all problems have an immediate answer and take time for solution. A good manager does not spend undue time and energy on such problems. He also has the necessary wisdom to identify such problems. This approach is again positive thinking and greatly helps in achieving excellence. However, one thing is sure, that good intention and effort definitely lead to good result, though it may take a little longer at times. One should also remember that the path to success is through the stair case and not through the elevator. Success achieved this way is long lasting too.

8. Acceptance — There is a well known saying 'Accept what you cannot change'. There is a lot of wisdom in it though an intellectual debate can be had on this. I am of the view that if understood correctly, this approach leads to excellence in all spheres of life. We live in an environment which has a great variety. It is not necessary to reach a consensus or to give one answer to all the problems. Perceptions change with persons, situation and time. Our perception may be different from others and we may not be in a position to act as per our perception. In such a situation, it is wise to accept a different viewpoint if it is in the larger interest. A good professional is supposed to have this kind of flexibility. He does not make an issue which can be avoided and there is no question of thinking in terms of self-prestige. Quite often, flexibility brings us more prestige than rigidity. For excellence, flexibility is an important requirement and this is again a part of positive thinking. Here one should remember the following :

"For every malady under the sun,
There is a remedy, or there is none.
If there is one, go, try, find it,
If there is none, then never mind it"

These lines sum up the whole concept of acceptance and need no further explanation.

There may be many other attributes for success and excellence. I am not going into them. However, with a general positive approach, it is possible to face all situations gracefully leading to larger welfare. This approach itself is sufficient to achieve the true goal of life. Sometimes, a question arises in our minds. Does positive thinking always work? Of course, it does. Positive thinking will work if we are willing to work at it. It is not an easy discipline. It takes hard work and strong belief. It also requires honest living and a keen desire to succeed. And we will need to keep working at it constantly to achieve success. Just when we believe we have mastered it, we will have to develop it again. At times, there will be frustration but then we have also to remember the following :

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centred

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

People favour underdogs but follow only topdogs.

Fight for some underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People really need help but may attack you if you help them.

Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

Thus, a positive thinker is very clear and convinced in his approach and success is always available to him. Such persons change the things for the better not only for themselves but for others too. This is what I consider 'Professional Excellence' in true sense.