

अद्वैत

Holistic Individual Development Program

A Program in two Workshops:

- Evolving from Manager to Leader
- Excellence through awakened Decision-making

Advait Life-Education
Invoking Oneness Within

Literature, Human Nature and Leadership

Literature is an interpretation of human and social nature by the writer. Literature addresses the perennial questions of meaning, purpose, vision, values and existence. Great pieces of literature present the complexity of human relations, to enable the reader to interpret and come to her own conclusions. It's this interpretation that is the key to personal and professional growth.

How does the study of literature help in preparing for this role as leaders or decision-makers? It helps the readers learn to interpret life — of themselves, of others. A purposeful study of great works of literature broadens one's viewpoint and helps in self-development. It helps in attaining greater breadth and capacity to respect others' opinions, and ability to put things in perspective and see a holistic picture. It also helps in attaining the versatility that allows one to switch from one subject to another and deal concurrently with many subjects. And finally, it gives greater ability to perceive, conceptually interpret and judge.

It is for these reasons that organisations aspiring to develop inspirational leaders – ranging from companies like General Electric and Royal Dutch Shell to institutions like Harvard University and United Nations- are increasingly discovering the deep utility of literature-based programs in developing transcendental leadership.

Literature-based Instruments

The programme shall use stories, excerpts from classics, movies, role plays, discussions and free-flow sessions. This workshop combines management science with literature, philosophy, drama, mythology and experiential knowledge. Human beings have a great flair for stories. A story is the most basic and most effective way of weaving together different aspects of activity, thought and existence.

The methodology utilises the power of literature to address the perennial questions of meaning, purpose, vision, values and existence. Great pieces of literature present the complexity of human relations, to enable the reader to interpret and come to his or her own conclusions. It's this possibility of interpretation that make great classics — works that have never finished telling all they have to tell.

The Workshops

The following two workshops are being offered as part of this program:

1. Evolving from Manager to Leader
2. Excellence through awakened Decision-making

The objectives and instruments pertaining to these workshops are discussed in the subsequent sections.

It is best if a participant goes through both the workshops. However, depending upon the need of the organisation and the individual, either of these could also be opted for.

The Methodology

Number of participants: The workshops would proceed with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 25 participants. The participants would be divided in groups of 2-4 each. Each group would be assigned a particular reading and lead issues pertaining to the reading.

Duration: Each of the two workshops would span over a single day (6-7 working hours).

Pre-work: Before the day of the workshop, the participants are expected to:

1. Individually go through each of the 3 readings (Time investment: 1-2 hours per reading).
2. Individually analyse each of the 3 readings with the lead questions as the pointer.
3. Meet in their groups and discuss only the reading assigned to their group. (Time investment: 2 hours)

The Workshops: Each of the two workshops would span over a single day (6-7 working hours). This time would be distributed as follows:

1. First hour would be devoted to a directed analysis of the readings using the pointers provided by the Facilitator.
2. Next 5 hours would be spent in presentations and discussions by the various groups on the topics assigned to them.
3. The last hour would be spent in bringing together the learnings and formulation of an action plan.

The Experience

The participants go through an involving and intense day where they rapidly alternate between light-hearted laughter and serious introspection, and bursts of energetic debate and argument versus silent moments of deep realisation. Whatever the colour of the various moments that the participants create and witness, what is certain is that there is deep and continuous involvement. Since the workshop takes the participants deeply into their own inner worlds, their dilemmas and decisions, it is impossible for a participant to remain aloof.

What is important is that the experience does not end with the workshop. It rather begins with it. The aim is to initiate the participant on an inner journey with no return. It is tried that with time, the effect only grows further, rather than fading.

The Facilitator

Prashant Tripathi is a Post Graduate from IIM-Ahmedabad and B.Tech from IIT-Delhi. He opted out of a bureaucratic career in Civil Services and worked with organizations like TCS, GE, ECS and BCCL in the areas of Analytics, Consulting and Strategy formulation. Responding to a deep need of bringing an essential completeness to the way professionals and students are trained and taught, he founded Advait Life-Education as a close expression of his self.

Besides leading Advait, he regularly conducts creativity workshops and conducts Self-awareness courses for participants from IIT Delhi, MDI, Gurgaon, IMT, Ghaziabad, and other Institutions. His corporate workshops have been conducted for executives from Nepal Electricity Authority, Continental Carbon and Dentsply India.

Workshop: Evolving from Manager to Leader

The Manager and the Leader

Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things: Peter F. Drucker.

A manager is essentially a status quo person, someone who looks to smoothly perpetuate the existing order of things. Even if she is mandated to bring about change, the direction and broad contours of the change are set by others. Even if she sets it by herself, it is done within the existing and permissible framework of professional operation. A Manager is not a person who is necessarily self-illuminated.

A real leader, a master, however, is a being who has awakened. She has gone deep within to see what lies there and what moves her. This going within is also what keeps her connected through very intimate bonds to people who choose to come to her so that they can see their own lights better – people whom we call as followers. The compelling vision of the true leader comes from a deep internal source.

Needless to say, the Manager and the Leader are two hugely different roles. However, organisations regularly keep on considering management and leadership as somewhat interchangeable roles. They look within the ranks of managers to search for leaders, which is alright if the organisation is a stagnant one. However, those organisations that are on a journey must very diligently identify their leaders. The change from a manager to a leader is, by no means, automatic or experience-dependent. For a leadership role, the substance needs to be both identified and nurtured differently.

Objectives of the Workshop

After attending this workshop, participants should be able to

1. appreciate the importance of, and possibly invoke, a deep inwardness that is the source of the vision and energy of the leader.
2. appreciate the role of moving from a superficial way of connecting to others to a deeply central way, as a basic enabler of learning and followership.
3. unleash the thought, integration and creativity that helps shape the leader's vision into a tangible outcome, possibly within the organisational framework.

For Whom

The workshop would be ideal for participants who

1. are currently in leadership roles and seek to move further on the journey.
2. want to integrate their individuality as person and the workplace demands as a leader.
3. seek clarity on their beings, motivations and purposes in order to have a fulfilling personal life and professional growth.

Though the selection of candidates for this workshop depends on the nature of work, composition and values of the organisation, it is recommended that the participants should have enough work-experience to appreciate the complexities of leadership and enough learning ability to assimilate and evolve.

Indicative Instruments

- **The Journey before the Leading**

Herman Hesse: Siddhartha

Hesse tells of a man and his search for liberation. It's interesting to see that Siddhartha practices different methods of finding peace, only to realize that he must find his own way to totality. We are left wondering if Siddhartha could have reached where he did without experiencing the kaleidoscopic world of sensuousness, wealth and indulgence. Must each one travel a necessarily different path? What is the significance of the river in this context? What does one follow: the path that the Buddha preached, or the path that he followed?

- **The Make of the Leader**

Osho: The Rebel

Osho presents his concept of the new man whose time has come- Zorba the Buddha. He says that mankind has lived believing either in the reality of the soul and the illusoriness of the matter, or vice versa. The humanity of the past can be divided into the spiritualists and the materialists. But Osho presents a new view of the reality of man- the materialist and the spiritualist together. Not just consciousness, not just matter, but both. Brilliant, insightful and stunning, Osho wants the new rebel to be as silent as the Buddha and as full of dance and music as Meera.

- **Freedom into Leadership**

Jonathan Livingston Seagull: Richard Bach

It is a fable about a seagull learning about life and flight, and a homily about self-perfection. Jonathan, a seagull who is bored with the daily squabbles over food is seized by a passion for flight. He pushes himself, learning everything he can about flying, until finally his non-conformity results in his expulsion from his flock. An outcast, he continues to learn, increasingly pleased with his abilities as he leads an idyllic life. Beyond this point, his journey to higher learnings and return to his flock as a Master is equally captivating and meaningful.

- **The Individual as the Leader**

Ayn Rand: The Fountainhead, Ch 1

The Fountainhead has been an immortal story igniting the minds of especially the young, world over. We come across Howard Roark, the classic epitome of individualism. A character that demands sacrifice more than adulation. Awe-struck as one is left, certain questions invariably creep up in due course of time: How individualistic can one get? What is the role of ego in a person's life? To what extent is it really possible to break away from tradition and create something totally new?

- **The Traps of Leadership**

George Orwell: Animal Farm

Orwell uses his allegorical farm to symbolize a totalitarian system. Some animals take most of the power for themselves, thinking that they are the best administrators of government. Eventually the power corrupts them, and they turn on their fellow animals, eliminating competitors through propaganda and bloodshed. Broadly speaking, Animal Farm satirizes leaders- their rhetoric, ability to manipulate others, and insatiable lust for power. But it is more than just a critique of a particular ideology. Does staunch adherence of an ideology itself become the cause for its decay? Is a concept of power-less leadership possible?

Workshop: Excellence through Awakened Decision-making

Decision-making and value-clarity

The individual employee within the firm is constantly required to make decisions. The importance and complexity of the decision-making increases with decisions made by managers or managerial teams. Still more important are the decisions made by a leader.

The cumulative impact of this continuous decision-making is nothing less than the destiny of the firm. Sometimes, even a single decision can be very far-reaching in terms of the series of inter-related events it unleashes across various domains and the multi-level impacts it creates- some today, the others in future.

Once it is seen that each single event or decision creates infinite ripples in persons, sections within and outside the organisation, and in time, it should become imperative that decisions are made on as holistic a basis as possible. That would require an integrated view of the world and the self. However, most people and organisations are trained and taught to be compartmentalised, divided, deeply fractionated in their beings. It starts with our education's overbearing emphasis on differentiating and gross neglect of unifying. The left brain doesn't work with the right one and there is hardly any harmony between the heart, mind and soul. Where quantitative analysis and logic prevails, intuitiveness is missing. Where there is a great emphasis on the details, an eye for the bigger picture is missing. If rigour is promoted, then playfulness, and hence creativity, is compromised. In short, decision-making as being practised is often terribly sectional, and, hence, mostly inadequate.

Objectives of the Workshop

The workshop aims that the participants should:

1. proceed on an inner journey to places essential yet inconspicuous.
2. scrutinize their value hierarchy and confront its contradictions, if any
3. see whether their professed values are congruent with a) the organisational values, b) the universal values, and c) their practised ones
4. try to put together a framework for decision making in life, specifically in profession.

For Whom

The workshop would be ideal for participants who

1. are in managerial or leadership positions that demand decision-making spanning multiple dimensions.
2. want to appreciate the full context and impact of their decisions.
3. seek to have an integrated view of the individual, team and the organisation in light of their respective eco-systems.
4. seek to appreciate the concepts of vision, idealism, values, beliefs, ambition, virtue etc and apply these to facilitate evolved decision-making in organizations.

It is recommended that the participants should have enough work-experience to be in decision-making positions.

Indicative Instruments

The Insanity of the Innermost

Cervantes: Don Quixote

A joyful read that it is, the comic aspect of the story has underlying serious intentions- Critique of life in a world dominated by greed, pride, and violence, and author's stance in defence of certain ideals. Is Don Quixote's insanity, in part, a form of higher wisdom? In his madness, he sees humble people as noble and elevated and challenges the rich and the powerful, often calling them monsters and villains. Does he accomplish what he desires? Is there anything noble or admirable in his actions or beliefs? What makes Don Quixote's actions comical? What makes them noble and elevated?

Flying Alone

Jason Reitman: Up in the Air

The movie works by contrasting the life of a Business consultant who wants to travel a baggage-free life(his euphemism for relations), with those of the people he works to fire. On one end, we look at the people getting fired. On the other end, we see the problems with Ryan's way of life. The interviews with the people who lost their jobs explaining that it was family and support that brought them through bad times hit a perfect note for bringing both parts of the story together. The movie raises some significant questions: What leads to Ryan's disappointments? What is sublime about his way of life? Is it sustainable for a young person entering business?

Inner values vs. Outer norms

Ayn Rand: The night of January 16th

The play deals with issues of a man's ability to regard oneself as important and exist in a society where moral decay is ever prevalent. It also deals with issues of love, loyalty and betrayal. One particularly interesting feature of the play is that members of the audience are picked to take on the role of jury members each night. Depending on whether the "Jury" finds the defendant of the case, as in the play, "guilty" or "not guilty" - the play would have different endings.

The limits of responsibility

Bowen H.McCoy: Parable of a Sadhu

McCoy's "parable" teaches, not only because it offers what McCoy calls a "classic moral dilemma," but is told in the form of a compelling story. McCoy offers, in his reflections on his encounter with the sadhu, some instructive clues about how ethics works. It is a story that illustrates how our purposes, morally neutral in one context--McCoy did not set out on his journey to harm a holy pilgrim--blind us to the needs of others, and paradoxically, our own needs as well.

Perspectives in Seeing

H.G.Wells: The Country of the Blind

Well's story may be seen as an allegory of society's treatment of those with ability or intellect beyond the understanding of the many. An isolated community will tend to be closed-minded and xenophobic, and will persecute and (if necessary) maim anyone who is different and/or non-conformist. The maxim, "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King", from Desiderius Erasmus, is not necessarily always true. A keen reader of the story well identifies with the theme of blindness all around.