

Whither Wisdom? Exploration into Alternative Sources and Methods of Learning

Sanjoy Mukherjee

Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong, Meghalaya, India
E-mail: sunjoy61@gmail.com

Abstract

The great poet T S Eliot lamented thus:
“Where is life we have lost in living?
Where is wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is knowledge we have lost in information?”

The authentic critics of mainstream management education are well founded in their arguments. Sumantra Ghoshal and also Warren Bennis and many more voiced the need for evolving theories and practices of management beyond the classical models of leadership and management. Time has come to take a look into wisdom traditions of the East and the West to break the cocoons of a structured yet fractured modernity. The oral and conversational traditions of the East have a gold mine of wisdom just waiting to unfold for global welfare, common good and planetary sustenance. This will give a new boost to the emerging concern for human values, business ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainability of life and work both from macro and micro dimensions. Time has come for some deep and radically different thinking beyond the corridors of dominant modes of conceptual and instructional modes of pedagogy without any disrespect.

“Unless we increase in wisdom as much in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase in sorrow.” (Bertrand Russell). The evidences of sorrow and disaster at the levels of the individual and organizations are evident enough worldwide from Enrons to the economic meltdown..

The present paper attempts to offer a few gems of thoughts and ideas from Indian classical wisdom with its practical implications for modern management. The sources range from the ancient to modern – from the Upanishads and the Gita to Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda among other Indian stalwarts in thought leadership as well as in the arena of meaningful and globally beneficial action. Tagore created an educational institution in the lap of nature while Vivekananda was the founder of probably the first Indian international twin-organization, with headquarters in India and centers world over, that was rooted in Indian spiritual wisdom but channelizing itself in social and educational activities.

The paper will also throw light into alternative methods of learning from the art of questioning to the ethics of conversations till silence –from upholding the exuberance of positive emotions beyond the reach of reason. Inspiration will also be drawn from the life and work of Swami Vivekananda, the volcanic monk of India and the founder of the first global Indian institution, who was a living synthesis of East and West, of contemplation and action.

Sri Aurobindo, the Cambridge educated teacher, revolutionary and finally a seer spiritualist from India had

proclaimed: “There are two great forces in the universe – silence and speech. Silence prepares, speech creates.” Are we willing to dissolve in silence awhile for re-creating our turbulent and bewildering world towards a semblance of sanity, joy and freedom?

Keywords: *Art of Questioning, Value-based Education, Transformation, Sustainable Future, Learning Path, Management Paradigm, Alternative Learning, Indian Wisdom*

Prologue

“From the Unreal, lead me to the Real!
From Darkness, lead me to Light!
From Death, lead me to Immortality!”

- Brihadaranyak Upanishad

“Let it be! Let it be!
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be!” The Beatles

Let us begin with a scene from a school in Kolkata more than a century ago.

It was a documentary on a great Indian genius Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate poet and philosopher. The creator of the documentary was another great Indian master Satyajit Ray, winner of Oscar for lifetime achievement in Cinema. Tagore was sent to several schools by his parents. But he never enjoyed that experience and ran away from each of them. Ray portrayed it in his masterly way. It was a classroom situation. There was a teacher nameless and faceless. His mechanical voice was all that was heard: “Can you see a box?” He shouted. “I can see a box” - was the loud and mindless response from the students. The young poet did never participate in this monotony and drudgery. The camera of Ray brilliantly captured the young boy looking out of the window while all this nonsense was going on in the name of education. He was looking at wind blowing and birds flying. He was looking at Nature for learning and inspiration.

It was Tagore who, later in life, created an

educational institution “Vishwa Bharati” in the lap of Nature far away from the metropolis in the lap of Kolkata. Its motto was – “Where the world becomes a single nest”.

The premise of our Indian search for wisdom was asking questions. It began in the days of the Vedas and Upanishads millennia ago. 'Nasadiya Sukta' or the Hymn of Creation in the Rig Veda just raises questions. Sri Aurobindo, the great modern poet and prophet-philosopher of India, composed a poem 'Who' in which he asked questions deep and profound. Rabindranath raised burning questions to challenge lifeless and stereotyped educational system and Vivekananda bombarded his spiritual master with fiery questions on the existence of God. The education this unorthodox monk designed for the future was for life-giving, man making, and character building.

In the light of the above, let us take a look at Ian Mitroff's 'An Open Letter to the Deans and Faculties of American Business Schools':

“I am writing to you because of the appalling and the sorry state of the business schools. I am outraged over what we as business educators have allowed to develop... *At best*, we are guilty of having provided an environment where the Enrons and the Andersens of the world could take root and flourish. *At worst*, we are guilty of being active accomplices and co-conspirators in their shoddy and criminal behavior....”

And Mitroff continues:”...The problem is not just that our underlying values are faulty. To be sure,

this is a fundamental part of the problem. The real problem, however, lies much deeper.

More specifically, we have promulgated:

A mean-spirited and distorted view of human nature;

A narrow, outdated, and repudiated notion of ethics;

narrow and highly limited definition of, and the role of management in human affairs;

An overly reified conception of the 'sub-disciplines of the field of management';

A sense of learned helplessness and hopelessness among faculties, students and workers regarding control of their careers and lives.” (Mitroff: 2004)

Are we ready to ask such questions that challenge the very premise and basis of management thinking and practice today?

The Big Picture

In the second decade of the 21st century leaders of business organizations or otherwise are increasingly finding themselves grappling with *turbulence* and paradoxes. All calculations and predictions going hay wire in the face of a global economic crisis caused by the present alarming pandemic, time has come to take a deep look into and seriously question some of our fundamental principles and dominant assumptions on nature of work, purpose of life, role of business and leadership in social and environmental sustainability. This marks a *transition* from managerial obsession with techno-economic imperatives towards an expanding and inclusive perspective of business with diverse constituencies in a much broader global setting. At a micro level it also marks a transition from our limited notion of the self as an economic entity to a deeper

understanding of our emotional and spiritual identity and viewing ourselves deeply in an organic relationship with others in space and time. Learning to live with uneasy questions that challenge the conventional mental models and stereotypes and finally embarking upon an adventurous odyssey into search for the real answers are the characteristics of this unsettling transition. We are compelled to take a fresh look at ourselves and the world at large with an element of creative tension and irresistible discontent. The beginning of this journey in search of light from new horizons also heralds the hour of *transformation* from a mad, 'brave new world' of speed, information and numbers towards a sustainable earth with a passion for excellence, commitment to quality, concern for harmony in relationships, a quest for enduring values and an earnest seeking for wisdom. (Mukherjee, 2018)

Towards a Sane and Sustainable Future

It has thus become imperative for us to take a holistic view of the organization beyond its profit motive and offer an integral model for all round human development *transcending* the limited notion of the techno-economic man and foster a values-based organizational culture which enhances holistic managerial effectiveness for an ethically sound, socially responsible and ecologically sustainable future business scenario.

What is more important is to unfold a learning voyage from the abundance of information (in mental as well as cyber space) through different disciplines and frameworks of existing knowledge of the self and the organization towards new vistas of wisdom with the twin purpose of enlightenment of leadership consciousness and transformation of our organizations, society and the planet at large. The focus and field of action is the mind of the leader that must be equipped with multiple levels of complementary competencies to be able to

navigate through the turbulence, manage the transition with elegance and finally reach the enlightening experience of the transformational turnaround.

In order to achieve *holistic effectiveness* in our personal and professional spheres one needs to strike a *dynamic balance* between such apparent polarities as:

- Skills and values
- Intellect and Emotion
- Knowledge and Wisdom
- Work and Life
- Quantity and Quality
- Growth and Sustainability
- Business goals and Societal Well Being
- Profits and Planet

Key Areas of Future Concern for Transformation

The key areas of concern and activity of such initiatives in quest of wisdom in management may revolve around the following:

- a) Human Values in Business and Management for flowering of inner world of leaders
- b) Business Ethics that deals with principles and practices at a functional level in management that business leaders must need to institutionalize on a top priority basis
- c) Corporate Social Responsibility that expands the concerns of corporate leadership beyond the boundary of the organization to include the proximate as well as the distant stakeholders as an integral part of business strategy and policy
- d) Sustainability of organizations, communities and the planet at large for creating a global vision and inspired action by business leaders

e) Integration of inputs from frontiers of knowledge and action (like Arts, Literature, Music, Poetry, Performing Arts, Films etc.) beyond the corridors of traditional management thinking for breakthrough ideas and innovative practices on Creativity, Leadership, Teamwork, Motivation, Stress Management etc.

f) Responsible Corporate Governance that will aim at disseminating inputs to organizations and implementation of best practices

g) Mainstreaming UN Global Compact Principles in the field of learning and education, management or otherwise

h) Evolution of an Alternative, Sustainable and Holistic Indian model of management with perspectives, principles and processes that are in consonance with Indian cultural roots but having significant global relevance and universal appeal

I) Integration of Spirituality and Management at a non-denominational level

Uniqueness of Knowledge Creation towards Wisdom

The uniqueness of the new initiative will be in its conceptual diversity, multi-disciplinary character, pedagogical innovations and state of the art delivery mechanisms that expose the participants to a whole repertoire of alternative sources and methods of learning (Eastern and Western, ancient and modern) beyond the conventional modes of classroom lectures and case studies and discussions. These include:

- Learning from Nature
- Immersion in Silence and Contemplative as well as Meditative practices
- Sharpening the Art of Seeing and Listening as a means to enliven experience and role

- effectiveness
- Lessons from Illuminating Conversations
 - Integrating inputs from Arts, Literature, Music, Theatre and films for Leadership Excellence
 - Insights from Wisdom Literature of Oriental as well as Western traditions, cultures and philosophy
 - Storytelling and Experience Sharing
 - Guidelines from Lives and Works of Thought as well as Action Leaders from different fields, both Eastern and Western
 - Participation in Dialogues rather than debates for Collaborative Learning

Beyond the cliché of changing the mindset, this will lay thrust on alternative learning that will actually help us *expand the mind space* and thereby overcome the barriers to holistic perception and widened perspectives created by our dominant limitations of linear thinking and trap of binary and judgmental functioning of our mental faculties.

The Learning Path for Future Management

Beyond the inputs on conventional management disciplines, time has come to chart out a parallel learning path for management students and corporate executives to graduate from information through knowledge to wisdom as outlined below.

- Creating a platform of shared understanding through awareness creation and sensitization for ethical revitalization (**Business Ethics**)
- Opening up the leadership mind to broader issues beyond the limits of the self or the organization through creative stakeholder engagement and dialogues involving diverse constituencies (**Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development**)
- Igniting the fire or spirit within the deeper self prior to harnessing and unleashing our

unlimited potential (Human Values in Management, Wisdom Insights into Management, Spirituality and Management)

- Raising our consciousness to an adventurous flight to scale the height of leadership wisdom for Effective and elegant management of turbulence and uncertainty in future (Enlightened Citizenship and Responsible Governance)

Let us now briefly explore what Indian wisdom can contribute in this direction.

A 'True Story'

We begin our journey into Indian wisdom with a story about Truth.

A valiant young warrior approached a king to seek her beautiful daughter in marriage. The king found the warrior otherwise suitable except that he was somewhat over confident and callow. So he sent the warrior on an errand to go and find Truth. Only then the king would give his daughter in wedlock. So the energetic warrior set out in search of Truth. He went to temples and monasteries, sages and monks, forests and mountains for months but nowhere he could find Truth. In utter despair and seeking refuge from a thunderstorm, one night he found himself in a dank, musty cave. Deep in the darkness of the cave, was an old hag who was ugliness personified – matted hair, warts on face, folded skin, bony limbs, broken and dirty teeth jutting out and with bad smell in her breath. But she greeted her with warmth. They had conversation the whole night. And the warrior was increasingly coming to realize that his search has come to end. She *was* Truth. In the morning, when the storm ceased, the warrior prepared to return and took leave. “Now that I have found Truth, what will go and tell the people in the palace about you?” he asked. The wise old woman smiled and said, “Tell

them that I am young and beautiful.”

What does it imply for us who are often condemned to fall into the trap of misplaced certitude? Truth is not always true but that does not mean that it does not exist. Unraveling the multiple layers of the same Reality is the journey of life all about. This is what Indian wisdom teaches us to deal with paradoxes, ambiguity and uncertainty that the current global reality presents to all of us! (Tharoor, 2005)

Indian Culture and Tradition

The 5,000-year-old Indian tradition and culture is so vast and diverse that it is almost impossible to identify one single and homogeneous Indian philosophy. However for the purpose of our exploration, a few relevant sources of classical Indian literature have been chosen here that may be useful to modern management in search of wisdom. The texts chosen here are the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. The Upanishads constitute a veritable treasure house of precious wisdom transmitted in the form of conversations between a teacher/master and a learner/disciple. Bhagavadgita, is actually a case study of the applied wisdom of the Upanishads in a battlefield on the eve of the unfolding of a drama of death and annihilation.

Towards a Comprehensive World View

Upanishadic wisdom offers to the world an all-embracing view of spirituality and advocates a harmonious pursuit of both the material and spiritual dimensions of our existence for a richer experience of work and life in fullness. *Ishopanishad*, the oldest available Upanishad, deals with this problem upfront, dispels the myth of a “nonmaterial” notion of Indian wisdom and states that if we pursue material knowledge and spiritual wisdom simultaneously, in a balanced manner,

then a harmonious blend of these two pursuits will offer us the experience of fulfillment in life – individual as well as collective, personal as well as organizational.

Decision Making Insights from the Bhagavad-Gita

The celebrated text Bhagavadgita (commonly known as the Gita), which treasures the kernel of Upanishadic wisdom, is set in the background of a battlefield, Kurukshetra, where the haunting specter of a holocaust from genocidal action is waiting to unfold. The protagonist Arjuna makes after entry into the battlefield of Kurukshetra. At the very sight of the venerable and beloved veterans on the rival side, Arjuna succumbs to physical as well as psychological collapse and declares to his charioteer that he will not fight.

Arjuna's crisis is commonly experienced by most of us in the battlefield of life. It is a conflict of values arising from directions and guidelines from two sets of human faculties – the rational and the emotional. In order to understand and relate to the world, the exercise of both these faculties is necessary. But rational competence does not always come of aid to solve the problem at an emotional level. The crisis of the Gita is a pointer to the fallacy to which all modern managers are susceptible by over reliance on intellect. So, where do we look for the answer to the problem?

The root of the problem is in the inner world of Arjuna, who must go back to the center of his “I,” which allows him to experience the full knowledge and potential of the “I” prior to any action.

The Gita offers a three-tier sequential methodology for the resolution of this conflict (Mukherjee, 2007). The three steps in this journey which are actually three levels of human consciousness are as follows:

- i) *Disengagement from the problem* – to gain inner consolidation and repose.
- ii) *Engagement in Higher Wisdom* – for loving and emotive communion with a source of enlightened knowledge
- iii) *Re-engagement in the problem* – for application of the illumined wisdom in the immediate context of action.

Death as a Great Learning Experience

The pathway to wisdom is usually blocked by our one-dimensional perception of life as a series of outcomes - predictable and desirable. But such linear thinking fails miserably when we confront the phenomenon of death. Our plans and predictions go for a toss when we are faced with the reality of death. The irony of human life is that even though we are aware of the inevitability of death, the uncertainty of the space, time and context of its advent keeps away from our consciousness the certainty of its advent. One serious lacuna in our present system of imparting knowledge is the almost complete absence of understanding and mastering the problem of death. Our understanding of the purpose of life and work can hardly be complete if we fail to accept the constant and dynamic interplay of life and death in the drama of life. Hence we find the stereotypes of business leadership obsessed with success and profits along with a skewed notion of progress and development. With the dawning of wisdom one learns to interpret death beyond its physical connotation and expand it to include death of ideas, institutions, models and even relationships. It empowers us with the courage and spirit of adventure to embrace the new and the unknown. The play of life and death has been beautifully captured in the following verse by Rabindranath Tagore:

“The dance of Life and death
is ever to the rhythm of breath.”

Indian wisdom makes signal contribution to the world in the *Kathopanishad* where *Nachiketa*, a young lad, was so keen on knowing what lies beyond death that he did not succumb to any of the allurements offered by the Lord of Death (*Yama*) who finally had to unveil to the boy the mystery of death and beyond.

When shall we be bold enough to learn from Death for a better understanding of Life?

The Emerging Paradigm in Management Thinking and Practice

Access to these insights is not necessarily a result of our conventional learning prevalent in modern management education that enhances our acquisition of scientific knowledge through quantitative tools and techniques. Of late, we find powerful critique of our existing methods of learning coming from illumined minds in the management academia (Ghoshal, 2005; Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). There is also the crying need to find ways that connect “...our heart and head [that] does not split knowledge into dualities of thought and being, mind and body, emotion and intellect, but resonates with a wholeness and fullness that engages every part of one's being.” (Kind et al, 2005). Unless we pay serious attention to integrate insights from other sources of learning beyond the corridors of business schools, we may continue to make the mistake of 'solving the wrong problem precisely' using the scientific / technical perspectives while the systemic and spiritual perspectives get pushed out of our domain of vision and concern (Mitroff, 1998). The grave implications of the resulting pseudo-solutions for our economy and life-world have been aptly captured by Ims and Zsolnai (2006) in the opening chapter 'Shallow Success and Deep Failure' of their edited volume 'Business Within Limits' in which they have advocated a radical shift in our world-view based on Deep Ecology and Buddhist

Economics. A somewhat similar paradigm shift has been outlined by Michael Ray (1992) who proposed that vision must replace profit as the key aim of business. The main pillars of a wholesome business transformation process, founded on human values for a sustainable future, have also been presented by Chakraborty (1995) in his concept of the 'Business Ashram'. Little wonder Stephen Covey (1995) also advocated a shift in the ruling management metaphor from stomach to spirit, a move from emphasis on competence to character.

Now all this points towards the urgency to explore certain non-conventional sources and methods of learning (Mukherjee, 2007) for comprehensive spiritual awakening in individuals and organizations that will lead to the development of a 'quality mind' (Chakraborty, 1998) or 'quality consciousness' (Chatterjee, 1998). Michael Gelb (1998) has drawn our attention to the principles of learning and creativity laid down by Leonardo da Vinci, the multi-faceted genius of European enlightenment for living a life of fulfillment in harmonious relationship with the environment. Weick (2006) has advocated a completely new approach to learning through 'heedful relating' by cultivating the art of mindfulness. Growing interest in spirituality at work is becoming evident from the steady rise in publication of articles on Spirituality and Holistic Management by scholars in leading business journals (Biberman, Whitty and Robbin, 1999; Bell and Taylor, 2004; Cash and Grey, 2000; Fischer 1999; Mitroff and Denton, 1999 etc.) The concepts of Synchronicity (Jarowski, 1998) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) (Zohar and Marshal, 2000) are significant developments in this direction. Adler's paper on 'The Arts as Leadership' is a notable contribution towards integration of Arts and Leadership (Adler, 2006).

Lessons from Great Indian Masters on Alternative Learning

Let us now venture to see what lessons we can draw

some of the great wise leaders of modern India

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941): Learning from Nature and Life

Thoroughly disgusted with the mechanical modes of learning, Tagore advocated and lived for propagating learning from Nature and Life. The crusade against the Mammon and the Machine in favour of an education in quest of joy and freedom was vibrant in Tagore. Long before the modern critics voiced against dehumanizing mechanization of life, Tagore wrote the play '*Rakta Karabi*' (The Red Oleanders) where *Nandini*, a woman who was joy and freedom personified came to the rescue of a whole village or township unconsciously immersed in the drudgery of a machine like existence. She gives her clarion call:

“Nature beckons you at the advent of the Fall /
Come ye running, one and all!”

Almost a century back he upheld the spirit of sustainability in his masterpiece of a drama '*Muktadhara*' (The Free Flow) where the protagonist lays down his life to stop the artificial flow of water from a dam constructed to separate humans and landmasses with ulterior motives around self-interest.

In another play, "*Achalayatan*' (The Dark Chamber), he launched a severe tirade against life and education that is lifeless and claustrophobic for those who would love the windows of perception to remain open for abundant exchange of thoughts and ideas. The poet ignites us all to break the prison walls of bondage in the name of knowledge: “Oh! When at dawn did you give us the call? /None of us knows, none at all!”

Similar is the message of Wordsworth in his immortal creation, 'The Tables Turned' –a must read for all educators in management or otherwise.

“Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it....
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.”

The sun is the highest source of energy in the world of Nature. The poet Tagore would begin his day by watching the sunrise, a ritual that had remained with him throughout his life. Rabindranath (who was named after the Sun God) had always displayed unusual sensitivity to Nature, a simple and intimate communion.

On one occasion, a stronger vision occurred in him as the sun was rising through the leafy tops of the trees. “As I continued to gaze, all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance This radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart, and flooded it with universal light.” (Robinson, 1989)

Shall we care to take a deep look at Nature for learning?

\
.In his award winning creation, *Gitanjali* (The Garland of Songs) the great master raised the question – “Prisoner, tell me, who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?” “It was I,” said the prisoner, “who forged this chain very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus, night and day, I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip.” (Tagore, 2012)

The predicament of Management education worldwide can be succinctly described in these

golden words of wisdom as above. The Iron Cage of Max Weber and the Scientific Management of F W Taylor have led us to a level of quantitative perfection to a fault without a halt. But the competence to deal with uncertainty, unpredictability and paradoxes is far from our access as leaders of tomorrow.

Strangely enough, almost five centuries back, Leonardo da Vinci, upheld the principle of 'sfumato' - the ability to handle complexity and paradoxes as a cardinal principle of learning and creativity. But the leaders of business are still comfortable in their zone of their obsession with numbers and calculations! Linear thinking and binary logic still dominate their minds creating formidable roadblock to wisdom.

b) Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902): Insights into Wisdom Leadership

Let us now turn our attention to Swami Vivekananda, the cyclonic monk of India, who appeared like a volcano in the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 with India's message of Universal Religion to the world. A contemporary of Tagore, Vivekananda was the epitome of a grand synthesis of tradition and modernity, the East and the West, action and contemplation, spiritual realization and social service. His immersion into the depth of meditative experience would awaken his highest spiritual energy that was to find expression in his thundering messages of igniting the spirit within us. Vivekananda assimilated the wisdom of ancient India, enlivened during his tutelage under his spiritual master Shri Ramakrishna, and disseminated it to the world in the language of modern times .

A paragon of inspirational leadership par excellence, Vivekananda understood the importance and limitations of rules and procedures. His insights into the institution

building process can serve as valuable guidelines for future leaders in quest of a global vision. “Lay down the rules for your group, and formulate your ideas and put in a little universalism, if there is room for it ... There must be room for sects as well as rising above sects... Frame laws, but frame them in a fashion that when people are ready to do without them, they can burst them asunder. Our originality lies in combining perfect freedom with perfect authority.” (Nivedita, 2006)

This great leader was also an exemplar when it came to brilliant yet empathetic communication “... He was never known to show the slightest impatience at interruption ... no external circumstance seemed to have the power to ruffle him. Moods of storm and strength there were in plenty; but they sprang, like those of sweetness, from hidden sources; they were entirely general and in their occasion.” (Nivedita 2006) In a soul-stirring biography of this great monk, the French Nobel Laureate Romain Rolland compared him with the genius of Beethoven: “His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses.” (Rolland 1975) A veritable dynamo of a spiritual leader who lived for thirty nine years, Swami Vivekananda spent a lot of his time in the last two years of his life in close communion with nature and his dear pets. A spiritual leader who has reached the highest state of realization becomes child-like in his actions and demeanour. As Rolland (1975) describes: “He led a country life, a kind of sacred bucolic like a Franciscan monk. He worked in the garden and the stables ... surrounded by his favourite animals... with whom he ran and played like a little child... He walked about in an ecstasy, singing in his beautiful, rich, deep voice... without heeding the passage of time.”

Vivekananda epitomized a grand synthesis of learning from within and without. According to him, it is possible for the human being to be

completely absorbed within in a state of yoga even amidst the hectic flurry of activities in the heart of humdrum of urban life. “This is the question: with every sense and every organ active, have you that tremendous peace in which nothing can disturb you? Standing on the Market Street, waiting for the car with all the rush going on around you, are you in meditation, calm and peaceful? In the cave, are you intensely active there with all quiet about you? If you are, you are a *yogi*, otherwise not.” (Chakraborty and Chakraborty, 2006)

For further insights into silence, let us now turn to Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual genius and seer-psychologist. “There are two great forces in this universe, silence and speech. Silence prepares, speech creates; silence acts, speech gives impulse to action,” says Sri Aurobindo. Silence is not a cessation of activities but an intense yet subtle phase of conservation of energy.

The Questions Forever

In his brilliant and insightful work, Erich Fromm (1976) had raised the question: 'To have or To Be?' One of the ways to keep this spirit of dialogue alive and aflame is to preserve the pertinent, often disturbing, questions without rushing for the easy and quick answers to find the magic formula that never exists. The great poet Rainer Maria Rilke thus appeals to our patience:

“I want to beg you as much as I can, to be patient
Toward all that's unsolved in your heart,
And to learn to love the questions themselves...”
(Zohar and Marshal, 2000)

Rabindranath Tagore composed the following masterpiece just ten days before his death (translation by Amiya Chakravarty):

The first day's sun
asked
at the new manifestation of Being,

Who are you?
 No answer came.
 Year after year went by,
 the last Sun of the day
 the last question utters
 on the western seashore,
 in the silent evening -
 Who are you?
 He gets no answer. (Robinson, 1989)

Who is it that asks questions out of sense of wonder? It is the Child within all of us.

Quest for the Child Within

But where is the mind that chooses willingly to face turbulence, navigate through transition and embrace the quantum transformation? The best answer comes from Sri Aurobindo:

“What is God after all - an eternal child playing and eternal game in an eternal garden?”

The child within us may have the magic mantra of this transformation but it has hardly been tendered for long years under pressure of modern education in our times of speed, technology and progress. Even great masters like Mozart or the volcanic Indian monk Swami Vivekananda were childlike in disposition. But we have sacrificed her beyond redemption at the altar of education. Tagore was sensitive enough to quit schooling in childhood so that that the child in him with a vibrant and beautiful mind could ever flow in abundance like 'Awakening of the Waterfall'

(*Nirjhorer Swapnobhongo*):

“I shall run from one mountain peak to the other,
 And roll from a bed of earth to the other,
 Laughing aloud, singing amuse,
 Clapping with every rhythm of life!”

May we awaken the Childlike Leader within all of us to become the harbinger of new light and fresh air into a stifling dark chamber that we call learning and education!

Epilogue

We began our journey in Prologue with the picture of a classroom learning that was so dull and dreary that the young Tagore was looking outside at Nature. How then can one make a learning ambience interesting so that students get ignited in their minds and creatively engaged in the conversation? Here is an example of a teacher in ancient India who could do it by raising profound questions and thereby taking the students to a different level of perception and wisdom.

This is the story of a sage and his disciples. The sage asks the disciples, “When does the night end?” “At dawn, sir,” say the disciples. “I know that. But when does the night end and the dawn begin?” The first disciple who came from tropical south India replies: “When the first glimmer of light in the sky reveals the palm fronds on the coconut trees swaying in the breeze, that is when the night ends and the dawn begins.” The sage says, “No”. Now the second disciple who hails from the cold north, answers: “When the first rays of the sun kiss the snow on the mountaintops of the Himalayas and the ice starts melting, that is when the night ends and the dawn begins.” The sage says, “No, my sons.” Then he goes on to reply: “When two travelers from opposite ends of our land met and embrace each other and they realize that they sleep under the same sky, see the same stars and dream the same dreams, that is when the night ends and the dawn begins.”

Postscript

Let me conclude on a personal note. It was 32 years back when I was a student of management at the

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. One Sunday morning while I was giving lectures to friends in a street corner gathering ('adda') in South Kolkata on newly acquired Theories of Learning when I found a tall, fair and bearded man with imposing appearance came in front of me smiling. I was engrossed in my lecturing on Cognitive Learning, Action Learning, Experiential Learning and so on. He stopped me and asked, "Do you know what is learning? The word 'Learn' has five letters the last four letters being 'Earn'. So, you earn something while you learn. But it is the first letter 'L' that makes the real difference. If you earn something with LOVE then only it becomes Learning, otherwise not."

I was stunned into silence.

I never met the person later in life. But as I write this paper on Learning, I offer my tribute to that unknown wise man from the streets of Kolkata in India who offered me a precious pearl of wisdom that will remain with me for life.

Note: All translations from Indian languages of poems and writings from ancient or modern writings are mine except where exact citation is given as references.

References:

- Adler, N. (2006), 'The Arts & Leadership: Now That We Can Do Anything, What Will We Do?', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5(4), 486-99
- Bell, E and S. Taylor (2004), 'From Outward Bound to Inward Bound: The Prophetic Voices and Discourse Practices of Spiritual Management Development', *Human Relations*, 57(4), 439-66
- Bennis, W.G. & O'Toole, J. (May, 2005), 'How Business Schools Lost Their Way', *Harvard Business Review*, Online Version
- Biberman, J.M. Whitty and I. Robbins (1999) 'Lessons from Oz: Balance and Wholeness in Organizations', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12 (3), 243-53
- Cash, K.C. and George R. Grey (2000) 'A Framework for Accommodating Religion and Spirituality in the Workplace', *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(3), 124-34
- Chakraborty, S.K. and Chakraborty, D (2006), *Human Values and Ethics: Achieving Holistic Excellence*, ICFAI University Press, Hyderabad, 228-229
- Chakraborty, S.K. (1995), *Ethics in Management: Vedantic Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
- Chatterjee, D (2006), *Break Free*, Penguin Portfolio, New Delhi
- Chatterjee, D (2003), *Light the Fire in Your Heart*, Full Circle Publishing, New Delhi
- Chatterjee, D (1998), *Leading Consciously: A Pilgrimage to Self-Mastery*, Viva Books, New Delhi
- Covey, S.L. (1992), *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Simon and Schuster, London
- Fromm, E., (1976), *To Have or To Be?* Bantam Books, New York
- Gelb, M.J. (1998), *How to Think like Leonardo da Vinci*, Delacorte Press, New York
- Ghoshal, S (2005), Bad management theories are destroying good management practices, *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1)
- Ims. J.K. and Zsolnai, L (2006) *Business within Limits: Deep Ecology and Buddhist Economics*, Peter Lang, Bern
- Jaworski, J. (1998), *Synchronicity: The inner path of leadership*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers
- Kind, S., Irwin, R., Graucer, K., & De Cosson, A (2005), Medicine wheel imag(in)ings: Exploring holistic curriculum perspectives, *Art Education*, 58 (5), 33-38
- Liu, L. (2010), *Conversations on Leadership: Wisdom from Global Management Gurus*, John Wiley & Sons (Asia), Singapore
- Mitroff, I. & Denton, E. (1999), *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco

- Mitroff, I. (2004), 'An Open Letter to Deans and Faculties of American Business Schools', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 54(2), 185-89
- Mukherjee, S. (2007), Dialogues from the Land of Love and Death, *AI & Soc* (21) 121-140
- Mukherjee (2018). Management and Liberal Arts: A Transformational Odyssey with Rabindranath Tagore, in Bouckaert, L, Ims, K.J. and Rona, P (Eds.). *Art, Spirituality and Economics: Liber Amicorum for Laszlo Zsolnai*. Springer Nature. Switzerland. 141-144
- Nivedita, S. (2006), *The Master as I saw Him*, Udbodhan Office, Kolkata, 46, 258
- Pruzan, P., PruzanMikkelsen, K., Miller, W. and Miller, D (2007), *Leading with Wisdom: Spiritual-based Leadership*, Response Books, New Delhi
- Ray, M.I., (1992), *The Emerging New Paradigm in Business in Renesch, J., ed.*, "New Traditions in Business: Spirit and Leadership in the 21st Century" BerrettKochler, San Francisco
- Rolland, R. (1975): *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, AdvaitaAshrama, Kolkata, 146, 159
- Robinson, A. (1989), *The Art of Rabindranath Tagore*, Rupa& Co., Kolkata, 42
- Tagore, R (2012), *Gitanjali*, NiyogiBooks, New Delhi, 16-17
- Tharoor, S. (2005), *Bookless in Baghdad*, Arcade Publications, New York, 225-26
- Weick, K. (2006), Faith, Evidence and Action: Better Guesses in an Unknowable World, *Organization Studies*. 27 (11), 1723-1736
- Zohar, D and Marshall, I (2000), *SQ: Spiritual Intelligence, the Ultimate Intelligence*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, 296