



RIDE THE WAVES OF CHANGE GRACEFULLY

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Change is inevitable and the pandemic has once again proven this reality. Like the ticker of the stock market, change is unpredictable and when it occurs at rapid frequency, it can be overwhelming and scary. The pandemic has shaken the foundation of many businesses. Lower participation due to illness, continuing work from home, and repeated lockdowns have hit the level of motivation and productivity and hit the bottom-line.

I was speaking to leadership team recently who has spent so much time redrawing their plans, that they become fearful of moving forward. They have lost nearly a year of actually doing business and are concerned of not being able to sustain the business. To thrive in such circumstances, speed is of essence. It becomes critical to assess the situation dispassionately and creatively adapt the strategy. To take decisions with imperfect information, a leader needs to be able to collaborate with experts ease, be resilient and agile.

Externally, technology has helped us stay connected, work from home and access resources and relationships globally. However, internally, we can be resilient and agile in the face of crisis, when we take leadership of our inner self. Leadership is commonly understood as the act of forming an organization, leading a team and achieving goals. This is a limited definition of leadership. True leadership starts with self leadership. Self leadership requires us to take leadership of our inner self i.e. our thoughts, emotions, energy and breath and actions. When we take leadership of ourselves, we can unleash our potential fearlessly.

How can we develop self leadership?

The play of life is designed to turn us inwards and integrate our thoughts, emotions, breath and energy such that we live our truth. We often take decisions by trusting our intuition. However, our inner clutter of fears, attachments, perceptions, assumptions, expectations, etc obstructs us from knowing and trusting our inner self. The ego keeps raising its head repeatedly to survive and prevents us from being vulnerable and collaborative.

The more we feel alone, the more we try to cling onto our sense of individuality and external crutches like titles, objects, home etc. This habit becomes a vicious loop and stress and anxiety become a part of our life. We can break out of this web of entanglements by turning our attention to our inner reservoir of possibilities.

Our inner self is infinitely resourceful and creative and inclusive. I have always been inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's commitment to the principle of Ahimsa. Silently sitting in meditation and spinning the chakra helped him disconnect from the external noise and focus internally.



WE CAN CALM OUR INNER TURBULENCE BY REGULARLY PRACTICING MEDITATION, YOGA, READING, PRANAYAMA, PRAYER OR MANTRA CHANTING, MUSIC, ART, WRITING ETC. IN THAT MOMENT OF SILENCE, WE CAN LISTEN TO OUR VOICE OF WISDOM. THE VOICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IS THE 'KNOWN IN ALL UNKNOWN'S'.



We can calm our inner turbulence by regularly practicing meditation, yoga, reading, pranayama, prayer or mantra chanting, music, art, writing etc. In that moment of silence, we can listen to our voice of wisdom. The voice of consciousness is the 'known in all unknowns'. It navigates and empowers us to unleash our potential. By consistently living in alignment with the inner voice, we can live a life of mastery.

Identify patterns to unleash potential

Entrepreneurs take a leap of faith into the unknown when they notice a gap or opportunity in the market to offer products and services. They explore different ways of doing things, and passionately steer through the changing environment by partnering with the team. The entrepreneurial instinct to identify gaps or patterns and explore fearlessly exists in all of us.

All scientific, technological and industrial revolutions have occurred due to the ability of some entrepreneurs, scientists, explorers, to take a risk. Last many years, technology has changed our quality of engagement with the world. At a touch or swipe, we can access everything sitting at home. Now, if we look back and consider could we have imagined a world where technology would become such a powerful tool.

We need to stay open to new expressions, new perspectives, new possibilities, new people because we never know what lies ahead. I was working with a senior leader who was not feeling particularly valued in his job. He tried to change roles, however, it did not enhance his relevance significantly. When he realized that his assumptions and fears were limiting him from exploring newer avenues. Then, he decided to quit his job and pursue different options. He restructured his life by joining an organization as a consultant, investing in start-ups, taking on advisory positions as well as supporting social causes. Redesigning his life based on his passions made it more meaningful and fulfilling.

Our ability to trust our instinct or intuition can be consciously expanded and applied in all relationships of life. The more we trust and live true to our inner self, we are able to shed our attachments and expand our capacity to observe life dispassionately. For instance, we can track trends in the stock market and decide when to sell or buy stocks. Similarly, there are patterns that exist in our behaviour, relationships, beliefs and various other facets of life. An expanded observer can spot patterns with ease and take leaps of faith to harness opportunities.

Leaders who focus on deepening their relationship with the inner self, understand and accept the interconnectedness and oneness of life. They are comfortable 'not knowing' and collaborating to grow take decisions. Therefore, this approach to leadership paves the way for developing relationships of trust and inclusion of diverse perspectives. Such leaders commit to living a life of excellence and happiness.

Rise from being helpless to hopeful

We serve each other by being a catalyst to another's transformation - we can either do this consciously or unconsciously. When we live consciously in tune with the law of interconnectedness and oneness, we can influence and impact lives powerfully. By living a life of purpose, we feel empowered, satisfied and fulfilled. Our presence itself becomes a source of inspiration for the world.

As we deeply anchor internally with our inner self and shed layers of our attachments, the inner voice becomes clearer and more prominent than the noise of the ego. As an expanded observer, we can find our Ikigai, by noticing a convergence of our skills, passion and what the world

needs. The dots start connecting to forming a clearer pattern of how best we can add value and be relevant to the world.

I am a qualified chartered accountant, who decided to walk down the path to inner transformation in 2006. I found my calling as a coach. From thereon, I have been sharing my experiences and learnings as a coach, author, motivational speaker and leader. Last year, at the start of the pandemic, I noticed a convergence and decided to launch a leadership institute to promote, develop and inspire people to live with authenticity. Many opportunities, new relationships and creative expressions have blossomed into my life in just a year. I have converted the pandemic into an opportunity to serve humanity rather than feeling pulled down as a victim of circumstances.

There are an abundance of possibilities and opportunities available for us to express our leadership. When we get attached our fear of unknown, we limit our ability to live a life of purpose. However, when we accept circumstances as a catalyst to awakening the leader within, we are able to confront our fears and serve the world. Above all, we can grow from being a victim of circumstances to an inspirational leader.

Last year, so many people have stepped out of their comfort zones and opened their arms to serve selflessly. It has been deeply heartening to see people unite to fight the virus and serve humanity. Doctors and frontline workers have gone beyond the call of duty, organizations have transformed digitally at faster speed than ever before, people have adapted to working from home, senior leaders have been sharing experiences and knowledge freely.

The pandemic is yet another scenario that has occurred for the transformation of humanity on a globally. Many are suffering and have lost their lives, jobs, near and dear ones... lets not waste their sacrifice. Each one of us can choose to live as a leader and serve humanity or live as a helpless hopeless victim. Lets move beyond our perceptions and turn inwards to find our true purpose, such that we can ride the waves of change gracefully.

Ashu Khanna, an authentic leadership expert and master coach, is the Founder & CEO of Arka Leadership, an institute focused on developing authentic leaders and inspiring people to live true to their inner voice and unleash their potential to the fullest. An explorer at heart, she embraces, she is highly perceptive and compassionate. She has successfully partnered with senior leaders and teams to realign their life and reimagine possibilities.

An author, she has published 4 books, sharing insights from her journey of transformation and revealing the road map to happiness and authentic leadership. A sought after Speaker, she has been ranked # 29 by Your Story amongst the 100 Emerging Voices in India. She is the Founder President of the Mumbai Chapter of International Coach Federation. She passionately volunteers at various NGO's and academic institutions to develop aspiring leaders and entrepreneurs. She is a qualified chartered accountant and has worked in India and SE Asia.