



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.29 DHARMIC LEADERSHIP

“Dharmic leadership” inspires us to live authentically in thought, word and deed, thus showing us the way to moral uprightness and true fulfilment in life.

IN HIS ARTICLE, “Leadership for the Next Millennium”¹, Sudhir Chadavada speaks about dharmic leadership, a subject dear to our hearts. For us, “dharma” aptly describes a fundamental quality that is so urgently needed in our leaders today. Sudhir Chadavada provides an excellent insight into the nature of dharma when he says:

Dharma means being true to oneself, treading one’s own authentic path of thought, speech, and action – the path we each must travel for material, emotional and spiritual fulfilment. On a broader scale, dharma signifies moral uprightness, righteousness, and displaying behaviour that upholds life and growth.

As we pondered the question, “What does it look like when a leader rises up to inspire others to be true to themselves and to tread an authentic path of behaviour that upholds life and growth?” we immediately thought of several political leaders.

One leader was Václav Havel, the first president of the Czech Republic after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Václav Havel describes his spiritual view of life as “mankind’s intimate relation with the great mystery of creation”, which he called “Being”. And to him, the key to social reform was a sense of responsibility based on this relationship with Being:

Responsibility leads man to a permanent, and permanently-deepening, relation with the integrity of Being.

Havel began his presidency by speaking authentically – dharmically – to the people of his country in his inaugural address:

We have been lied to a great deal, and I don’t presume you elected me to lie to you more. We are a morally ill country.

He went on to say that unless they learned to be truthful, open, and respectful with each other, they would never succeed in rebuilding the economy and the country. He later expressed that this renewal of society must be based in spirituality:

¹ The full article can be found at: <http://www.siliconindia.com/magazine/Dec99millennium.html>

It is necessary to restore humanity's sense of responsibility for this world, and this responsibility must have a metaphysical anchor. Humankind's only way out of this narrow pass is a far-reaching spiritual regeneration.

Alvaro Cruz, former Governor of the largest state of Colombia is another example of dharmic leadership. In an interview with our colleagues, he expressed his spiritual view of life as:

Spirituality is a permanent attention to the inner self. To be able to perfect one's behaviour and attitudes, both inwardly and externally with others, basing one's conduct on the human values of love, truth, peace, right conduct and non-violence.

Before running for governor in 2000, Alvaro Cruz had visited South India and had learned a poem that left him feeling "...like I was experiencing enlightenment." He decided that this poem would become the key message of all of his campaign programmes and presentations:

The poem goes like this: "If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the family. If there is harmony in the family, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."

Alvaro Cruz shared that in no political campaign before had any politician ever expressed "a spiritual slogan describing a moral situation". This so inspired the populace that he was voted into office and was given the chance to bring about this kind of restoration.

The president of India, the Honourable A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, has also taken the message of this same poem throughout India. When our colleagues asked him about the purpose of business in society based in his spiritual view of life, he commented:

The most important thing is righteousness, dharma. When there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character... When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world. You see the beautiful connectivity between these (dharma, character, harmony, order and peace)? The question before all of us today is, how do we get righteousness in the heart?

These three political luminaries are showing us the way to authenticity and moral righteousness within ourselves and our societies. They are showing us the way of dharmic leadership.

So ask yourself: *How can I be an example of dharmic leadership – helping to restore authenticity and energizing righteousness in others?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 3 – Spiritual-Based Leaders*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org