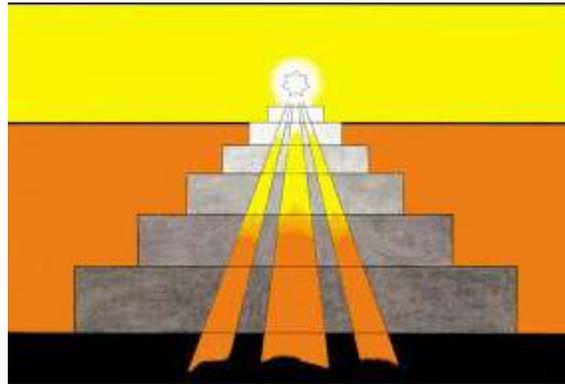


Evolution of spiritual leadership- from Enjoyment to Sacrifice



“A leader has to give up to go up; and then he has to give up even more to stay up”- John Maxwell

Many imagine if they grow to be leaders they would have lot of power and freedom; you could enjoy many pleasures and rights. However spiritual leadership focusses more on our responsibilities rather than our rights; it calls upon individuals to strive to live by high ideals and strong integrity. Spiritual leadership is all about a progressive evolution of our consciousness; to graduate from a selfish, narrow minded outlook towards life to live by the standards of giving and sharing, selflessly.

The evolutionary stages of spiritual leadership is from

Enjoyment (Sensual/Passion)

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Education (Study/Ponder)

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Endure (Sacrifice/Part with)

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Enlightened experience (Sanctify/Purification)

Enjoyment (Sensual/Passion)



Most moderns grow up watching television and movies where the hero enjoys pleasures. Success is often equated with gratification of senses, and the focused goal of many is uninterrupted enjoyment. Desire for sensual pleasures motivates many to work hard, take risks, and seek leadership positions.

A life centred on sensuality not only brings distress to oneself, it's also a disservice to the team. Looking at things and objects from our point of view; how they give pleasure to our own senses and mind makes us selfish and hard hearted. This has been the major cause of unhealthy cut throat competition that pervades all aspects of our lives.

Although passion is the impetus to create, it often blinds one to the adverse consequences of one's thoughts and actions. Sustainable leadership calls upon leaders to tap their innate goodness; to align our thoughts and actions to the correct principles.

Spiritual leadership begins with being open minded to learn about spirituality; the non-material aspect of our existence.

Education (Study/Ponder)



A culture of education and study of life's mysteries helps one go deeper in life. One ponders on one's goals and duties. Are we simply doomed to a robotic existence of eating, sleeping, mating and defending or is there a divine purpose to our existence? Is there more to life than my career? Do I want to die a billionaire or being somebody who has added meaning and purpose to many lives?

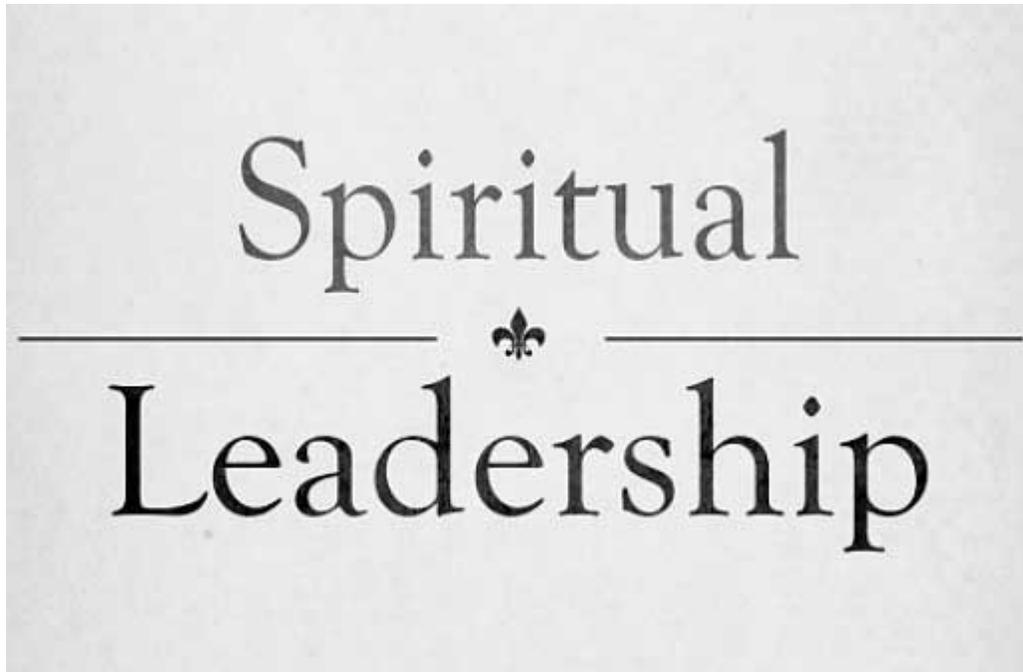
This personal journey requires leaders to take out time and introspect. Radhanath Swami quotes his teacher Srila Prabhupada who said, "*Disturbance in life is due to want of an ultimate goal*". If we have a noble purpose in life, life, death and all the things that happen in between wouldn't disturb us; we'd rise above our petty selfish pursuits.

One major deterrent in being introspective is the glamour media which has hooked people from all walks of life. Peter Burwash in his *'Improving the LANDSCAPE of your life'* explains how one of America's worst exports has been the illusions created by the world of advertising. The avalanche of commercials inflates our desires and seeks to convince us that we'd be happy only if we consume and enjoy more. Our high need for stimulation and excitement is perfectly exploited by the electronic media, and little do we realize that we are depriving ourselves of deeper levels of happiness. Seldom do we question the notion that money and success brings happiness. It never occurs to us that in societies where wealth is abundantly found, happiness can be scarcely found.

For millennia, humans have craved for more, and the modern society is expert in stirring our heart with more and more desires. But is our life meant for this, or can we seek to part with some

trivial pleasures to experience something higher. This inner journey helps us explore a higher meaning to our existence.

Endure (Sacrifice/Part with)



Education and study of spiritual subjects isn't sufficient. There is no dearth of scholars and intellectuals in this world. As Radhanath Swami says, *"The world has no shortage of information but it acutely lacks transformation."*

A spiritual leader is not one who is simply well read and can impress his team members with a barrage of wise sayings and philosophical musings. He goes a step further; he translates the education to action.

This simply means to shift the focus from self; from seeking self-aggrandizement to serving others.

One of the classic turnarounds in corporate history that we studied in Business school was of Chrysler Corporation, and the main factor that helped revive the company was the principle of sacrifice practised by its leader Lee Iacocca. The company started in mid-1920's and had become a tremendous success story in the automobile industry and by mid-1940's captured 25% share of the American automobile market. But by 1970's the company declined rapidly and in 1978 headed for bankruptcy.

In November 1978 when Lee Iacocca was offered the leadership position of Chrysler, the company's finances, and production and supply systems were in a major mess. Iacocca started the revival with a personal sacrifice; he reduced his own salary to one dollar a year. He then asked Chrysler's top executives to take a 10 percent pay cut. For Chrysler to succeed, all

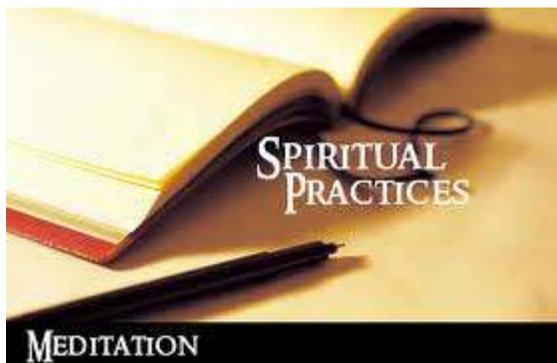
employees, beginning with the leader Iacocca made sacrifices together. To cut the long story short, by 1982, they turned around with highest profits ever and the next year they repaid all the loans. Iacocca later shared his realization, *“Leadership means setting an example. When you find yourself in a leadership position, people observe and follow your every move.”*

Spiritual leadership also reminds us that sacrifice is not a one-off payment; it’s an on-going process where a cost is always involved in moving forward. For every person the nature of sacrifice could be different. But essentially as you rise in leadership, responsibilities increase and rights decrease; you lose the right to think about your own selfish desires. The higher the level of leadership people want to reach, the greater the sacrifices they will have to make.

But this isn’t painful because sacrifice by definition means giving up something for some better purpose. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “For everything you have missed, you have gained something else; and for everything you gain, you lose something.”

Living a life of sacrifice, and enduring the ups and downs with a cheerful disposition, and being connected to a strong internal anchor helps us graduate from having knowledge to getting rich realizations and experiences.

Enlightened experience (Sanctify/Purification)



The happiness experienced at this stage is more fulfilling and deeper than the titillation of senses that we go through in passionately gratifying our senses.

When asked what the goal of life is, most people answer ‘to be happy’. But if you ask them what they think will make them happy, almost all answers focus on themselves. If we try for a change the principle of service and living for others, we will see a dramatic change in the way we feel within ourselves. A new paradigm of happiness will spring forth in the heart. Happiness derived from sense pleasures pales in comparison to this experience.

The happiest in this world don’t necessarily have the best of things, but they make something good out of whatever happens. Life is not about accumulating but becoming a person of substance. Material life with all its razzle dazzle cuts a sorry figure in front of a life centred on selfless service.

A life of giving purifies our consciousness, while passion- characterized by greed, lust and hankering for name and prestige-burns the heart with negative energy. Spiritual leaders nourish themselves with spiritual practises and meditation, and this helps them give abundantly. And in giving they get more grace. It's a virtuous cycle of experiencing rich emotions and also adding to the spiritual wealth of others.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating...

About the Author

Radhanath Swami was born in Chicago in 1950. In his teens he set out to wander the world on a spiritual quest, eventually discovering yoga path of devotion. He presently travels in Asia, Europe and America teaching devotional wisdom but can often be found at his community in Mumbai. People who know Radhanath Swami speak of his dedication to bringing others closer to God. Almost in the same breath they speak of his lightness, simplicity and sense of humor. Visitors and friends are inspired by his unassuming nature and natural unwillingness to take credit for the works he inspires - community development, massive food distribution to indigent children, missionary hospitals, eco-friendly farms, schools, ashrams and emergency relief programs.

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