

# Awakening

 Voice of Love



Leadership is in the ability to win in unexpected situations, to be creative when no solutions seem apparent and to feel in control of the situation. Situational Leadership is to customise one's approach to the situation to get the best of what is available.

He was the pride of every teacher. His grasp, his retention and his recall was incomparable. It is not without a reason he was a state rank holder in his board exams, the topper in Indian Institute of Technology and has now passed out among the top ten from Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He had a problem of

choices when it came to choosing his first employer, but the passionate citizen decided to stay in the soil that nurtured him. Today will be his first day at work as a Product Manager in an Indian company that had grown global. Ved and Avyakta sat in the balcony with a cup of tea in their respective hands. Greenery all round, chirping birds, flowing clouds, fresh breeze, expansive space - all

these will provide a poetic setting, but the plain fact is that this 6'x4' small balcony was overlooking the road. There was intermittent traffic noise, but don't you get tuned to certain noises that they cease to be a disturbance any more. Nothing dreamy about the setting but sure enough, this was going to be the beginning of a dream.

More than your own success, the success of people you have groomed, gives you greater satisfaction. To Avyakta it was a moment of parental pride. Ved has been everything a father would want of his son. The son asked the father, "Abba, you seem to be more nervous than I am!"

Avyakta replied, "It is not fear of failure Ved, but the anxiety for excellence. You have pampered our expectations with your results. You have raised the bar of expectations. Nothing but the best from you is accepted. I know you will, but..."

Ved intervened, "I know Abba, every successful academician is not necessarily a success in his life. What is it that I need to know, that you know I couldn't have learnt from schools?"

Avyakta waved his hands to the children in a school bus that passed by. Simple, costless luxuries! Children always respond, and inexplicably any response from a child curves the lips into a smile. Ved took the empty tea cups and deposited them in the kitchen sink. To ask a question and to peacefully wait for the answer, without getting desperately restless - isn't it by itself a professional virtue? Ved returned.

Avyakta straightened and said, “The platform of life isn't too tailor-made. The setting isn't perfect. In academics you had to outperform others, but now you have to joint-perform with others. In academics you had to compete, but now you have to make things complete. Leadership is a cruel game. You have to complete the puzzle, but all the pieces are not with you. So your success no more depends only on you, and yet, anyone's failure is your failure. Simply put, in academics answers are question dependent, but in leadership solutions are situation dependent. Leadership isn't about the chair, position, reports, ratios, adulations, perks and benefits... but it is about prudence. It is in the ability to win in situations that arise unexpected,

to be smart in the moments of need, to win others to your cause, to be creative when no solutions seem apparent... basically to feel in control of the situation.”

“*Amma* has never stepped into a college, nor been through any leadership training,” Avyakta added. “But she is a master at situational leadership. As crazy as each one of us are in the family, so crazy and varied are our tastes. She knows how to manage (read manipulate) the resources in the kitchen and serve the same dish with different flavours and finishes, and satisfy all of us. Yet, I see everyday in professional life, the so called professionals getting paranoid when expectations deviate from the prescribed norms. Habitual thinkers they are, most of them

struggle to think outside the box. Not only now when there is financial abundance in the family, but even when I was earning only one-tenth of what I am earning now, *Amma* was able to manage the family and still provide for all within those meagre means. Efficiency in project management is about producing the optimum results with the available budget of resources, which *Amma* has always done. Yet, I see the so called professionals always, always and always cribbing about inadequacy of resources. A sudden epidemic breaks out and a few of us fall sick. *Amma*, almost effortlessly reorganises her schedules and creates the time to care for us. She never complains about scarcity of time. Unannounced a brigade of relatives invade the house and an hour later dinner is ready for them too. She never grumbles of too much work or cries about additional responsibilities.”

Ved's eyes were wet. So often we do not recognise the obvious. So often we understand the value of people only in their absence. Ved wanted to go to the *pooja* room and

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hug his mother, but didn't want to disturb the flow of his *Abba's* words. So wiping his tears he continued to listen.

Avyakta continued, “Her approach to you is so different from her approach to mothering your brother. Temperamentally the two of you are so different and so has to be the approach. That's why *Amma* always says a good mother cannot be the same mother to all her children. You should know when to stand like a rock and when to flow like the river. There are times when you have to give others their small victories and times when you have to gain the victory of the moment. In all, there are no 'no solution' moments for *Amma*. Yet, for most professionals there are no 'no problem' moments.”

Avyakta explained, “You couldn't have asked for a better role model than *Amma* in 'Situational Leadership'. What your *amma* could do at the micro level, with the edge of education, I expect you to do at the macro level. Situational Leadership is, let problems come from anywhere, anytime, but I will find solutions for it every time. To know how to win in a situation is Situational Leadership. Instead of expecting circumstances to be customised, customising your approach to circumstances is Situational Leadership. Brilliance of the moment is Situational Leadership. To get the best of what is there is Situational Leadership. Qualifications can give you a head start in career, but the leader who leads by the philosophy that there are no 'no solution' situations is the leader of the future.”



“Do you know Ved,” Avyakta enquired, “If you put a buzzard in a pen eight feet square and entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of its ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner! The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of ten to twelve feet. Without space to run, as is his habit, he will not even attempt to fly, but will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail with no top. Similarly, the ordinary bat that flies around at night, a remarkable nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or a flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly, and no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off like a flash. Even the bumblebee, if dropped into an open tumbler will be there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never

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sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.”

Avyakta summarised, “In many ways, there are lots of people like the buzzard, the bat and the bee. They are struggling with all their problems and frustrations, for they know not, how to think according to the demands of the situation. Situational Leadership my son, Situational Leadership... that's going to make all the difference.”

Avyakta got up, hugged Ved, kissed him on the forehead and went to the master bathroom. Ved entered his bathroom. Half way through his shower, with soap and froth all over, he realised the water wasn't flowing. Desperate and exasperated, he was about to scream, “What do you people do in the house? Can't you keep the tank full? First day to work and...” The mantra 'Situational Leadership' lingered in the back of his mind. He re-engineered his thoughts. “How would *Amma* respond to this situation?” he enquired. Suddenly there were 'n' possibilities. His next thought went, “I couldn't have asked for a better management prophecy to begin my career. Thank you *Abba*.”