

Ambition-

A Servant or Master?

*"Intelligence without ambition is
a bird without wings".*

- Salvador Dali

Every human being lives with ambition. Just think, what would life be without ambition? Ambition is the fuel which drives us towards our desired destination. Ambition is far beyond desire and is born when our desire meets the firm resolve. Ambition throws challenges. The bigger the ambition, the more roadblocks we must expect on the way.

Ambition, to me, is the 'spark within' which ignites the desire. It is a prime moving force which motivates us to work towards our goal. Ambition keeps us energized, excited & ebullient to attain our goal. However, the road to destination is not a bed of rose. You meet tough challenges on the way. Please keep in mind that our ambition has to overtake fear to make our lives worthwhile.

The words Goal and Ambition are frequently used interchangeably. But they are not the same. Let us understand the subtle difference.

A young school student has the ambition to become a doctor. Ambition creates a pathway for him to realize his dream. But more than just having a direction, he will need to work hard, show dedication & practice perseverance to become a doctor. Ambition is the path, whereas effort and perseverance are the vehicles to reach the goal. The goal is the destination.

Ambition is not what one 'would do' but what one 'does'. The stronger drive to fulfil the ambitions differentiates successful people from

others. As long as we are in control of our 'aims' and 'guiding principles' to realize our ambitions, as long as we are not causing harm to ourselves or others and as long as our means are pure – we are the MASTER of our aspirations.

Unfortunately, ambition often stretches into overambition. It is difficult to set a definition for an overambition. The trouble sets in when we become greedy and run after unrealistic desires. Still worse, we do not hesitate to resort to unethical, unfair, corrupt or selfish means to fulfil our aspirations. We get so much consumed that we suffer burnouts, stress and mental breakdowns. Our relationships with our dear ones get hit. I have witnessed tragic downfall of successful businessmen because of greed and overambition. This happens when we allow ourselves to become the servants of ambition.

Our ambition impacts others too. Mahatma Gandhiji's ambition was to get freedom for India. Adolf Hitler's ambition was to rule over the world. What a stark contrast in the approach - Nonviolence and empathy of Gandhiji vs merciless killing of thousands by Hitler. Napoleon Bonaparte explains very well: "Great Ambition is the passion of a great character. Those endowed with it may perform very good or very bad acts. All depends on the principals which direct them."

We need to learn a balancing act to be able to discriminate between ambition and overambition.

Alan Lightman quipped: "If a person holds no ambitions in this world, he suffers unknowingly. If a person holds ambitions, he suffers knowingly, but very slowly."

Let us explore further.

What could be the connection between ambition and devotion to God? If our ambition is only for fame, position, prestige or sensual pleasure, it will not leave any place for others or God in our minds. But it takes a different dimension if our ambition is to contribute to the world's well-being (like Mother Teresa's).

In chapter 3 of Bhagwat Geeta, Lord Krishna cautions us about unhealthy ambition.

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥

(The knowledge of even the most discerning gets covered by this perpetual enemy in the form of insatiable desire, which is never satisfied and burns like fire.)

We must ensure that both, the means and end are pure and ethical.

It is up to us to take a call – whether we want to be the MASTER of our Ambition or a SLAVE!

Communication-

The Human Connection

*"Communication to a relationship is like
oxygen to life. Without it, it dies."*

- Tony Gaskins

We often perceive Information and Communication as the same, but they signify different things. communication is far beyond just speaking. Information is giving out; Communication is getting through.

communication is exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data to receive and understand the message with clarity and purpose. Communication is only EFFECTIVE when we communicate meaningfully to the recipient, not ourselves.

We now live in an era of Information Technology, which has made the world easily accessible. But isn't it ironic that genuine communication is becoming a rarity? The possible reason is Emotional Disconnect. Emotional Awareness is vital for a meaningful communication.

Communication's goal is to create better understanding and rapport. We need to realize that everyone's perception is different. So, it is crucial to understand and respect others' opinions while communicating with them.

For communication to be effective, it must be BRIEF, PRECISE, RELEVANT and EASY. These four aspects are very important for a purposeful communication. Only such kind of conversation will keep others interested.

Speaking Truth is equally vital for a long-lasting compassionate relationship. The consistency in our behaviour and talk would win us respect

as well as credibility. Our image would be hit severely if our words are inconsistent. Moreover, no one would take our conversation seriously.

Another crucial facet of an effective communication is HOW we communicate. Often we are right but because of choice of our words and tone of our voice, the conversation takes an ugly turn. The right message does not get across. The outcome may be even worse. The relationships are severed forever. It would help if we take hold of ourselves when we are angry. An angry mind can't be reasonable. Nothing lowers the level of conversation more than raising the voice. We must ensure that we talk to others in a way that heals and does not cause wounds.

Sometimes, we want to say NO but end up saying YES. It leads to stress in our lives. We have to learn to say NO – in a polite yet firm way. Remember, we can 'disagree' but should not become 'disagreeable'.

To become an effective communicator, we must be good LISTENERS. Patient and eagerly listening ears are the most potent tools for purposeful communication. Most of the time, we hear 'to reply' and not listen 'to understand'. When we listen, we learn to respect others' opinions. Cultivate a habit of being a good listener.

The words are precious. Save them wisely. Speak 'only' if it improves the silence. Someone remarked, 'Wise men speak because they have

something to say; Fools because they have to say something.! The bottom line is, we must know when to speak and when to keep quiet.

Always remember our body speaks, too. Non-verbal communication plays a pivotal role. We hate or love some people even before talking to them because of their poor body language. When the eyes say one thing and the tongue other, a practised man relies on the language of the first. There is a world of communication which is not dependent on words. Positive communication entails positive body language.

Remember Peter Drucker' famous words - *"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."*

George Bernard Shaw said: *"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."*

Remember not to underestimate the power of Self - Communication. We become aware of our strengths, weaknesses, and mistakes. Understanding them would make us effective communicators and better human beings.

There can't be a better motivational force than Self-Motivation through Self-Communication. Moreover, it makes us more confident. Through Self Communication, we understand the profound importance of "thinking first" before reacting. We develop an attitude of response and not a reaction. We can prevent impulsive

decisions or instant responses to others' words, which may lead to disappointing outcomes.

Famous author and monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes, *"Once you communicate with yourself, you will be able to communicate outwardly more clearly. The way in is the way out"*.

'Mis-Communication' & 'Non-Communication' are potent killers of a relationship. The relationship never dies a natural death. It dies because of ego, improper communication – wrong words or tone. It is not the distance but the lack of communication which keeps people apart.

Let me end by quoting insightful words from Nicky Gumbel –

"A lot of problems in the world would be solved if we talked to each other instead of about each other".

Are you an effective communicator?

Envy-

A Global Pandemic

*If envy were fever,
the whole world would be sick!*

ENVY is one of the deadliest diseases human beings are inflicted with. It is a PAN HUMAN phenomenon. Every human suffers from it to some extent. Envy traps us in its deadly tentacles so much that we cannot let it go despite the suffering caused by it. Remember, it is not the greed but envy which drives the world.

Why do people envy?

For most, right from childhood, the attitude of comparison is inculcated in minds – be it at school or home. The result is finding others' possessions much better than yours. Envy thus results from COMPARISON SYNDROME. You fail to realise your worth. The envious people end up with low self-esteem. Still worse - most of the times, jealousy is towards materialistic possessions, viz. money, cars, professional success, home and much more. A pretty woman is envied by other women who are not so good-looking. A person afflicted with any disease is envious of others who 'apparently' appear healthy. The list can go on and on.

We need to understand that each person is unique and cannot be compared and should not be compared. We are, what we are and can't be the same as others. We should not lose our identity and try to be someone else. Osho's comments highlight this point very well. *"Existence creates only originals; it does not believe in carbon copies."* Our jealousy would disappear if we realise this fact.

Albert Einstein's statement reiterates the same. He said: *"If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is stupid."*

It is vital to realise that we compare our insides with others outside. That itself is flawed. Remember, every person lives with a story we do not know about. Comparison kills the joy of life. Refrain from spoiling what you have by desiring what you have not.

Of late, the most significant source of envy is social media. Seeing happy pictures of others, watching others enjoying vacations at different places, seeing more likes for our friends than us – all these cause jealousy and even lead to depression. Many psychiatrists have reported increasing cases of depression due to the self-inflicted hurt as a consequence of social media jealousy. Everyone yearns for recognition even though it is fake.

Envy has a disastrous impact – lack of self-worth, low self-esteem, emotional pain and depression. Envy and Anger go together most of the time. We are angry because we are unhappy with what we have compared to others.

Let me quote Osho again – *"Because of jealousy, you constantly suffer; you become mean to others. And because of jealousy, you start becoming phoney because you start pretending. You start pretending things you don't have; you start pretending things you can't have, which are*

not natural to you. You become more and more artificial. You are imitating others, competing with others".

It is rightly said; - *Jealousy injures us with the dagger of self-doubt.* Jealousy does to us what rust does to iron. That is why all religions have condemned envy.

Lord Shree Krishna in Bhagwat Gita says:

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः

(One who does not envy but is a compassionate friend to all is very dear to Me.)

Envy is considered one of the seven deadly sins in Roman Catholicism. Islam believes it is an impurity of the heart.

J. Krishnamurthy commented -: "*To live without comparison is to remove a tremendous burden.*" Think about this, our envy lasts much longer than the happiness of a person we envy!

Can envy be helpful?

Yes! It depends upon our attitude. Envy can become motivation if we get inspired by the person envied. The message is - *Don't be envious, be inspired. **Don't envy the harvest of the rich ,envy their planting.*** With this mindset, not only we get rid of jealousy but excel and improve.

Let me end with insightful words from Lord Buddha;

"Do not overrate what you have received, nor envy others. He who envies others does not obtain peace of mind".

Isn't it true that love looks through a telescope, whereas envy through a microscope.