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Let's not force the organisational pace

Today's youth need to slow down and give themselves the time to grow and mature with experience..

— Lingaraj Panda



A gradual process of change.

T.T. Srinath

The stone step of a temple lamented to the presiding deity, “Everyone worships you, yet people stamp on me as they enter to see you. Why should I suffer such insult when you and I are made of the same stone?”

The stone idol, the presiding deity, said with compassion, “There is a difference between you and I.” “And what is that?” asked the step. The idol then replied, “I have had to undergo pain while I was being sculpted, and now that I am fully finished, people bow to me in supplication. You did not undergo any pain when you were being created, so you are suffering now.”

Such is the truth about organisations. Many youngsters who join organisations, seek instant rewards. They wish to gain immediately the benefits of long years of work. Yet, this does not happen. Organisations mature persons slowly. They chisel you, pare you down and slowly bring to life the wonderful person that you are. Organisations shape character, they instil values, teach one a way of life, a philosophy by which to live and function. Yet, this happens slowly. Many youngsters cannot wait to discover the gold, they need it now. This does not happen.

A King was walking down his garden one day when he chanced upon a larvae on a mulberry tree. He noticed the larvae struggling to come out of the cocoon. Feeling compassion for the struggling larvae and wanting to spare it the pain of freeing itself, he took a blade of metal

and tried to cut open the cocoon. When he had successfully cut open the cocoon, he sadly noticed a half-formed, dead butterfly. Life is a process; you cannot push its pace.

At training interventions, organisations often talk to their employees about being patient with the system; rarely do they speak to them about being patient with themselves. Thus, there is an urgency and a desire to see quick results. Organisations have also started preaching the mantra of QSQT, Quarter se Quarter thuk, thus no one is in it for the long haul.

The urgency to get ahead, the desire to prove oneself, results in youngsters pushing the boundaries, sometimes beyond limits, and this result in friction, in fissures that cannot be mended easily.

Organisations may benefit from adopting the Buddhist practice of living mindfully, with awareness and tolerance. By choosing to adopt such an attitude, they would have to breed patience and tolerance within. In so doing, they also prescribe to their employees the need to slow down. When one slows down, there is time to think and act with responsibility. Organisations that operate at a feverish pace cause their employees to run faster, to outpace themselves and, thus, burn out. The need is to 'thin slice', to break down into manageable chunks, whatever is being done.

The refrain that 'we may lose out if we slow down' is really a misconception. After all, it takes nine months of waiting for a baby to be born. If creation demands that wait, why should organisations not?

When organisations tell their employees that they are in a hurry, employees assume they are being told that they do not have much time. So they rapidly increase their strides within the organisation and soon find they must look elsewhere to maintain their speed.

About 20 years ago when I was conducting a training programme, I asked the participants how many would retire from the current organisation. More than half put up their hands. Recently, at a training programme, I repeated the question. Only two persons in the group of 20 put up their hands. I asked the group why they were not willing to commit themselves to staying on in the organisation. What they said was truly revealing: "The organisation does not want us to stay for long. They will be happy if we serve a few years and move out."

Such was their answer. If they are to be believed, then it is true that organisations are not investing in them for the future. Thus, the mood among the young is to move fast, gather the spoils and leave.

What then is the answer for organisations and the individuals in them to build for the future? Committing to each other in a way that celebrates, that cherishes, that acknowledges and that touches the heart is the only answer. They still say of some old-world organisations — Excel Industries, Mumbai, being one of them, many Tata companies being another; 'Soldiers don't retire from here, they just fade away.'

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