

Published: Monday February 15, 2016

Understanding and managing conflict

T. T. SRINATH

I was at a dinner party a few days ago, where a group of guests, including me, were talking about different political parties and their leanings. One person took a rather strong stand on religious affiliations, and this led to a heated exchange between a few of us. Conflict was evident, and the discussion ended in an impasse.

I realised then that conflict oftentimes occurs because our values or aspirations are being challenged, ignored or impeded in some way.

This also applies to internal conflicts. When I, for example, believe that I am fighting injustice, I sometimes find myself acting unjustly towards another. At this point, I am plagued by conflict between the assumptions I have about myself and my experience of myself. When I try to rationalise my actions, such as saying, "It is because he did it to me first," I am actually failing to take responsibility for the freedom I have in the situation.

My comprehension of the situation is that conflict actually demands us to understand beyond the words that are said, and the intentions as we perceive them, sometimes even recognising that the person we are conflicting with might him or herself be going through deep anguish in coming to terms with their dilemmas.

Conflict can actually be valued as an opportunity to clarify what is important to us, and what we are willing to sacrifice in order to have some of our values realised.

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com)