

Integrity

Gurjeet Multani

Research Scholar, JJTU

Abstract- Guru Gobind Singh Ji taught us that the true wealth in this world is that of ethics, and truth. Everything else is a mere illusion. May we all be able to follow Guru Gobind Singh Ji's example of love, integrity and peace.

This paper is my personal reflection on what I have carried with me throughout my life and my career spanning over fifteen years. It has been with me at every step of the journey. It is still with me, everyday of my life and that is nothing but integrity.

Keywords: - Integrity, Career

I. INTRODUCTION

I come from a small city in Punjab i.e Jalandhar and my dad has spent forty years in the Indian Army and my mother was a homemaker, a lady who was an embodiment of grace, elegance and a person with an extremely elite choice. My dad retired as a colonel. I grew up with small town values. I went to many schools which kept on changing as my father got posted from one place to the other. I studied in St. Joseph's convent school for four years and a low point in my young life involved Sister Teresa, my English teacher, who was one of the most wonderful, wonderful women who devote their entire lives to teaching students like myself the principles of English language. I recall an incident when she caught me one day when I was trying to help one of my less intellectually gifted classmates with a report writing assignment. To this day I have never forgotten the stern look on her face and the words that she told me when she realized what I was doing. She said, "Your friend was only in the danger of failing in the report writing while you have failed me, and worse, you have failed yourself". I failed myself! Those were the words which were seared into my mind. I shall never forget them as long as I live. This incident will always be a part of my being. Whatever was taught to me I took it seriously and this later became a part of my career also and I vowed to be true to the percepts of the organization I am working for. The singular distinguishing, defining value of my entire career which is a priceless quality is called integrity.

Integrity is the touchstone upon which everything depends. It is an exhortation that should be affixed on every individuals mind. Why do I feel so strongly about this? I write this from a sense of professional obligation to share it with whoever will read it. It is because it has been seen the price the person has to pay for an ethical collapse or a breakdown. The organization or a person whose integrity is questioned is terribly disheartened and dismayed by the consequences. Without integrity first and foremost we lose public trust and confidence, the people fail to accord us the pride and respect although most people dimly perceive the nitty-gritties of what we do; to take us on faith and to trust us. It has been seen and learnt that it is the dignity of all the people

who come into our care and our sway, not just our juniors but also their loved ones, the quality of their lives at work and home- there should be a sense of worth if we have been entrusted with a responsibility. The first great measure of a professional and the quality that preserves public trust in who we are and what we do. It is the sine qua non, the spirit of open and honest communication, of teamwork or the staff etc. It is the unswerving loyalty and disciplined obedience to the others that pays off. However exceptions are always there.

So integrity is the most important asset as a professional. We need to cherish and guard against all assaults, temptations, snares and illusions. A well-known saying which says "When integrity fails, everything fails." It is a well-recognized fact that there is no sense of outrage equal to that of people shocked by a scandal in high places; or of a unit whose mission and reputation has been soiled by an incompetent or unscrupulous leader; or an employee abused by a boss or a spouse betrayed by unfaithful wife or husband or an organization awash in honor violations. Knowing well the consequence people still try to grasp power, distort values, violate oaths and trample on the most common human behavior. The cardinal sin for any professional is the loss of integrity. But people forgo integrity, the reputation earned over years for trivial gains and lose the public trust for momentary personal convenience. We should not only have and build on our integrity but also preserve it, protect it and shield the sense of propriety, of right and wrong against the on slots of careerism, the thirst for monetary gain, the hunger for power, the fear of failure which many a times can overwhelm our decent and honest behavior. The integrity that I have built over so many years has come from living in the company of some great people, my family whose iron clad standards, towering strength help to build and reinforce my own sense of integrity and its importance.

II. WHY INTEGRITY FAILS

Why, then, does integrity fail? Why it is that people of great reputation and talent lose their way and fall a prey to temptations and risk a lifetime of work and achievement? Why do leader abuse their authority and exploit their people through an exaggerated sense of

importance and power? Why do the people disregard directives and procedures? I think integrity fails because of a fundamental flaw in character, a flaw that can be termed as “Confusing who you are with what you are.” Lord Acton once said, “Power corrupts a man and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He got that right. He understood what ambition, ego and greed can do. Secondly integrity fails because of human frailty-simple fear. Sometimes its fear of failure. For students the trauma of taking examinations and being assessed leads to a temptation to resort to cheating. Failure may also happen because of fear of embarrassment or taking responsibility for mistakes. We often lie to cover up, to shift the blame, to avoid confrontation, to not accept responsibility etc. Further integrity fails because of sheer lack of competence. People are at times inadequate to their tasks and duties. Or it may simply be a matter of poor discipline or lack of application or bad training or supervision or failure to deal with a lack of intelligence or misassignment of subordinates.

Integrity fails because of weak moral reasoning. At times we handle moral dilemmas and conflicts badly, using poor judgement. Sometimes we suffer from a kind of moral blindness. A number of moral problems or issues confront our Indian society- corruption in the public life, deteriorating standards of the environment, poor health care, inefficient government bureaucracy, inadequately educated workforce, insufficient capacity to innovate, crime and theft, lack of improvement in defense technologies, apathy of honest and educated people towards politics, high rate of inflation, transportation and above all the prevalence of “chalta hai” attitude. All these issues are somewhere or the other linked to the moral problems. Integrity fails because people fail to realize the moral issues because they lack education and are not conversant with a personal code of conduct. Let us not forget that every human being has a gift of God or Nature i.e the conscience. Each individual is born with a latent conscience, which normally emerges into its full working capacity in youth or young adulthood. It is a capacity to identify, among our own acts and intentions, those which are morally wrong and those which are morally correct. Conscience, however, does not identify acts and motives as morally admirable or praiseworthy. At best, conscience is clear or clean, not self-congratulating. The conscience of a person is not an intellectual moral advisor, it is only seen as an instinctual inner voice or a sign that indicates a moral problem, warns us when tempted, and broods us to reform when guilty. A deeper problem is that the popular view of conscience as an instinctual indicator of morality

neglects the prior and indispensable roles of reason and judgement in determining what is right and wrong. Basically integrity is at the core of what it means to be amoral being. Acting with integrity means being in accord with ones highest self-accepted norms and imposing on oneself the norms demanded by ethics and morality. Yet integrity does not imply reluctance to compete or to fight. This very quality is compatible with being a wily, fierce competitor, opponent or enemy even while exercising the restraint that precludes certain actions in which the unscrupulous might engage. Competing with integrity is not synonymous with competing successfully but it is by no means antithetical to it. IBM is an example of a successful, fierce competitor i.e. widely acknowledged as acting with integrity.

III. PRESERVE THY INTEGRITY

To preserve our integrity we need to nourish and reinforce it. First and foremost integrity involves a sense of personal responsibility and accountability. That means reading and studying ethics, reflecting on consequences, and thinking about implications and outcomes.

Second, it means to develop mental toughness. Mental toughness is absolutely essential to being in charge of others, to accepting responsibility and holding subordinates accountable and not tolerating a diminishment of standards. It requires a brutal self-assessment and introspection.

Third, it means keeping a sense of perspective, remembering that we owe something to the society and our ultimate objective is not only making money, seeking power or status. We all have a greater responsibility towards the Almighty, to our country, to write living, to our family and to ourselves.

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, your integrity (or lack of it) is shown in what you do when no one else is watching or listening. You assess yourself, according to your values and standards; what it means to you when the chips are down, when values conflict and when things go wrong; what it means to you when temptation beckons, or small misrepresentations of a quick profits at the expense of your integrity. Ultimately integrity is your biggest asset that you will bring to the organization and a person whose character is founded on rock solid values and unflinching competence will never look back in life.