

## 7 Spiritual Perspectives on Personal Leadership by Swami Chidananda and Prasad Kaipa

Life is like a game of cards.

The hand that is dealt you is determinism;

The way you play it is free will.

– Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, 1st Prime Minister of India (1889-1964)

How do you deal with change? How comfortable are you with what is on your plate? Are you creating or are you resisting? The quality of your leadership depends on how you deal with the cards that you draw and how you succeed using what you got! In this brief article, we present an approach to increase your personal mastery and leadership effectiveness drawing from ancient spiritual wisdom from around the world.

**Integrity:** Integrity, at its best, is alignment between thought, word and deed. When we have integrity, the fragrance we enjoy is the state of no inner conflict. Others around us also sense certain strength about us. We say what we mean and we mean what we say. And our actions are not at variance with our words. When there are gaps between our words, thought/felts, deeds and our state of being, those gaps impact our credibility, commitment and courage. When we walk the talk, demonstrate our commitment to what we have taken on through our actions and have courage to listen to our inner voice, we demonstrate integrity and that builds our character and confidence.

**Confidence:** When we feel good about our own capacity and the position we have taken in particular situations, we exude a great sense of well-being and the vibrations that emanate from us make others feel our positive state of mind. They, then, are more likely to extend their cooperation and play their roles in complementary ways. This is also related to our faith in what our company stands for. The feeling then is: My organization is doing something great, and I am indeed in a position to contribute significantly towards the fulfillment of the organization's goals. When we have self-confidence, our ability to resist temptations goes up and our self-restraint leads to further increase in our self-confidence.

**Restraint:** Our life would be happier if we handle difficult situations with thoughtful reflection and identify noble (win-win) responses wherever possible. When we cannot, at least, we should keep under check negative emotions. Expressing displeasure is one thing but giving vent to our anger in destructive ways is quite another. It is important to become conscious and hold back inappropriate thoughts and words – in public and in private. They harm us even if we indulge in them in secrecy because our attitude gets picked up by others no matter what we do and don't do. It is as important to restrain our tongue as much as our actions – if not more – because in the name of 'telling the truth' and in the name of advice – we lose our self-restraint and that results in loss of energy and enthusiasm in both parties.

**Energy:** It is important to find ways to keep our energy – physical and emotional – high on important occasions. A diabetic friend once confessed that she would eat some sweets, knowing well it would cause early fatigue to her, and would then feel low in energy, leading to a lot of procrastination. 200-300 minutes a week of physical exercise, experts say, is needed typically for us to stay fit and energetic. In addition to physical and emotional, intellectual and spiritual energy would help us translate our creativity into innovative offerings and engage regularly in reflective and meditative practices. In these days of complexity and uncertainty, managing energy is as important as managing time. When we are aware and alert about opportunities to contribute our energy and time to what is important, we become effective leaders.

**Alertness:** This is again a state of mind where we rise above our mechanical ways and conditioned mind. When we shake off old conclusions and look at things with a fresh, open mind, we ignite new ideas and see new patterns and learn something fresh. We need to take note that everyday new opportunities emerge and if we have our eyes open, we could seize those opportunities. People change their mindsets and behaviors and when those changes are noticed and appreciated, they will continue to move in the same direction and that requires alertness on our part as a leader. In a similar vein, yesterday's enemy could extend a hand of help to us today; the friend of yesterday could betray us today. Alertness and trust in right information and right experts in addition to our own intuition would help us become better leaders in the long run.

**Trust in Self and in Right Experts:** As a leader, we have to know when to trust our intuition; and when to trust external data and information. In doing so, we have to consult right experts. For example, Google has become a valuable source of information and many of us make the mistake of trusting whatever we find online more than we should. We need to validate the source of advice and information whether it is coming from experts or from other sources. We need to actively seek out experts whom we trust -- people who can give timely and valuable advice. We have to learn, over a period of time, to balance advice received externally and intuition developed internally. Second part of trust is about timing. It is absolutely important to consult experts at the right time, well in time. One right input coming to us at the right time can help us execute our projects effectively and successfully.

**Execution Effectiveness:** Every time we do something that we had promised to somebody, our credibility/reputation/trust grows. When we procrastinate, our image in others' eyes suffers, even if we give the best explanation or justification. Effective execution means we have to pay attention to four things: completion/time, resources (people/ finances etc.), quality (excellence) and satisfaction (customer and self). Efficiency allows us to complete the project on time but effectiveness means working with our team with emotional intelligence and that increases quality of work that they bring to the project resulting in higher customer satisfaction.

The seven principles (start with the letters I CREATE) listed above help us increase our personal mastery and lead wisely in turbulent times.