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SUBROTO BAGCHI'S "GO, KISS, THE WORLD": EXPLORATION OF LIFE STORY FOR MANAGEMENT LESSON

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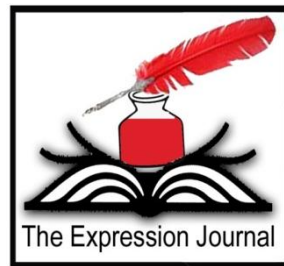
Abstract

Success is not about material accomplishments but the ethical values and positions one takes in one's life. One's bank balance or possessions cannot measure success. It is about having the right values, being connected with the world, taking flight from the immediacy of one's pains, and having empathy for others that defines success. Subroto Bagchi's lecture "Go, Kiss the World," an inaugural address to aspiring management professionals, emphasizes the need to go beyond textbooks and learn from life and connect with the world in the proper sense of the term. The speech has autobiographical elements to a certain extent. Still, the incidents from his life are just used as anecdotes to emphasize the ethical values his parents have inculcated in him from his childhood which the hardcore management professional often learns the hard way. The research paper "Subroto Bagchi's "Go, Kiss, the World": Exploration of Life story for Management Lesson" is an attempt to not just critically gauze Bagchi's speech but to understand how the ethical values of personal and professional lives are interspersed and how these values are the yardstick against which one should measure one's success. It teaches us that amassing material possessions, is not the bench mark of success. Everyone should make an effort to leave any space or thing in the same or in a better manner than they received it. Success is about being empathetic and considerate, sensitive and stoic, incorporation and involvement and the ability to rise above ones comfort zone. It's about firmness of character and about focussing more on giving than receiving.

Keywords

Connections with the World, Ethical Values, Immediacy of Pain, Management Lessons, Materialism, Professionals, Subroto Bagchi, Success, Consideration.

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Subroto Bagchi's speech "Go, Kiss the world" was delivered as an inaugural address to the students of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. Although it seems to be an autobiographical account of his life, in many aspects, it surpasses the genre of autobiography to become one of the vital management and leadership discourse of the present times. The values that Bagchi learnt during his journey in life, especially from his parents, form the crux of the speech, which he beautifully connects with the management lessons and the ways one should find some value in life. Usually, it is felt that professional and personal lives are much different from each other, and therefore the norms and actions of both lives cannot be applied to each other. However, Bagchi affirms how our personal lives are interspersed with our professional lives and how the values we grow up with are significant in figuring out the best management and leadership lessons. The paper does not undermine the management lessons that the management institutes endeavour to inculcate in the students but merely suggests that when one learns from life, one can find many vital aspects of professional management. Thus one can think of achieving greater success.

The journey of Subroto Bagchi has been from a small place in Orissa, Koraput, to winning the world. His journey is, in some ways, the epitome of success, and therefore, he emphasizes how in this journey, he has always thought of pursuing life with ethical values. Bagchi speaks about how he pursued this life because of the lessons he learnt from his parents. Even on her deathbed, Bagchi's mother, instead of asking her son to be by her side, had asked him to "Go, kiss the world." The magnanimity of Bagchi's parents and their emphasis on learning ethics from childhood has made him succeed tremendously. The author emphatically speaks about the same to make the management students and the readers learn some of the same tenets of success and life skills.

Therefore, the first aspect that Bagchi emphasizes is inculcating the right ethical values. Values are instilled in us, not in a day, but have to be inculcated from our childhood, "My parents set the foundation of my life and the value system, which makes me what I am today and largely, defines what success means to me today" (n.p.). Subroto Bagchi, thus, starts his

speech with a great emphasis on incidents from his boyhood when his parents set examples before him. Ethical values are necessary for success, whether one talks of the business world or personal life. Meaning of true success can only be valued when good values are instilled. Making money is never an objective in itself, “it is important not to measure personal success and sense of well-being through material possessions” (n.p.). Thus, to a batch of aspiring management professionals, this is probably one of the greatest lessons that success cannot be just understood in terms of one’s salary and perks and material possessions but has to be in terms of what values one has grown up with and how one lives with those values. Bagchi states that those “early childhood lessons in governance” are the lessons that “corporate managers learn the hard way, some never do” (n.p.). What corporate managers fail to learn during their academic and professional lives is how to respect every work and not misuse any resources, especially when the resource belongs to the public. Today lean philosophy is one of the foremost measures that the world is applying in management and supply chain mechanisms as it is by being sustainable in one’s use of resources that not only one can save the environment but also can ensure some profitability (Shamir&Eilam 2005). Without being sustainable, inclusive and ethically correct, one cannot live a fruitful life or achieve success. Therefore, interestingly, Bagchi emphasizes that when aspiring managers train for the next two years, they should not merely focus on what is being written in the textbooks but learn from their lives as life is a better management teacher than a textbook.

Only an ethical person can figure out how s/he can achieve incredible success. When one grows up with this value, one necessarily practices it and does not need a motivational lecture or a book to make one understand the true essence of life and success. Whether it is about respecting the work of the subordinates (who, for some reason, are less fortunate or did not get the right opportunities for success) or whether it is about leaving behind a better environment for the future than what one got from one’s predecessors are some of the significant lessons with which Bagchi starts his speech. By referencing incidents from his personal life, he states how the lessons he learnt from his family and its values have made him a considerate person. For example, he states how he was given the value of education and to treat every human being with respect in his childhood, where the driver was also treated with respect and the kids were taught not to call him by his name and to use respectful suffixes ,his father's official government jeep was not to be used for personal work. All these minor incidents, one may think, are too negligible to be counted in one’s life. These taught him the value of human dignity and not to misuse facilities given by office. Bagchi attaches much importance to them as these minor incidents that he experienced because of his parental supervision and instruction in his childhood profoundly impacted his life, making him the person he is, “It is more important to respect your subordinates than your superiors”(Bagchi, n.p) Accumulating possessions for oneself has always been a benchmark of personal success. Still, Bagchi emphasizes how we need to move beyond that narrow definition of success and have a broader vision of life which will make us realize the true meaning of success. When one curates a beautiful garden in a government quarter which one knows one may leave anytime soon, the garden is not just meant for one’s own, but also for leaving behind for the future occupants of the government quarter. “That was my first lesson in success. It is not about what you create for yourself but what you leave behind that defines success” (Bagchi, n.p.). One must remember that the speech is an inaugural lecture in a premier management institute of the world. When Bagchi provides personal anecdotes to suffice the greatest of the management lessons, it is to uphold the institution's role. He wanted to emphasize that there is a need to

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build connections and connections with the world and personal life incidents to the professional world. Bagchi states casually that one should leave behind a newspaper or a toilet seat as one expects it to be. This habit speaks of being considerate towards others. Consideration is important to build good will in any business.

Building connections with the world is his next important lesson. In a globalized world, we do not live in isolation. Though modern existence has become so that we are continuously being alienated in our own spaces, leading to isolation and solitude, which often can lead to many social and psychological problems (Kraiger et al. 2020). However, it is necessary to understand that there is a need to find ways to build connections with the world as it is by doing so that one can genuinely emerge to be successful (Northouse 2018). The first step to building such connections is to be updated with the developments of the world. Bagchi speaks of the importance of newspapers during his childhood; he had only newspapers to connect to the world as he grew up in Koraput, a small town in Odisha. The complete newspaper that he used to read to his mother everyday, developed in him a sense of belonging and being part of the entire world. Today we have far means to connect, whether social media, other cyber media, or television. These are not just mediums of entertainment but the means through which one can build connections with the world and stay updated about the world's ongoing.

Furthermore, it is by being aware of the world that we can make intelligent decisions, as a minor incident in the farthest corner of the world can have a heavy impact on our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine have made us realize how the happenings from different corners of the world impact us. All living beings share a common destiny. In such a globalized environment, one needs to be abreast of the developments, and this is what Bagchi terms 'building connections.'

Building connections is also implied in Bagchi's speech when he states how one needs to build connections between one's formal teaching and what one unconsciously and unknowingly learns when one interacts with one's family, surroundings and the person one meets. While speaking about his father, he states how even when he is on his deathbed at Safdarjung Hospital, he rose above the "immediacy of his pain" and was more worried about the long duty hours of the overworked nurse. While speaking about his mother in a hospital in Odisha, he states how she tells him to "Go and kiss the world" instead of kissing her. Both his parents had been instrumental in his upbringing, and even when he is good enough to have his second stint in the US, his mother speaks to him about finding the true meaning of one's self by exploring the world and himself rather than spending time kissing the ailing mother. Another lesson that Bagchi talks about that he learnt by seeing the lives of his parents is not to consistently and continuously complain and grumble. His mother spent the last 32 years of her life in blindness, but she never complained or cursed her fate. She saw light even in her blindness. The broad vision of the parents had gone into making what Subroto Bagchi achieved in his life. He thinks the values his parents inculcated in him put him in a position of success and achievement.

In an inaugural lecture, when Subroto Bagchi asserts the significance of values and connections with the world, it is because after watching the professional world from close quarters, he has probably realized that the training that is imparted in the management institutes management lessons provides an academic as well as real-life experience of the world of business and management, but do not emphasize how one needs to find a proper balance between the theoretical knowledge of management and profit-making ventures and the significance of ethical values in business (Northouse 2018). Indeed, business ethics is

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taught as a significant part of management lessons. Still, connecting business ethics with the personal values that are imparted by our parents when we grow up can make someone find a fulfilling career. His parents had different opinions on many issues concerning the world, this made Bagchi realise and accept the concept of agreeing to disagree, and the potential of disagreement. Bagchi is not critical of the management lessons. Still, he emphasizes that beyond the management lessons in the academic environment of the most significant management institutes, there is a vast world of learning, and that is one's personal experiences.

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