

12

MANTRAS OF EFFORTLESS LEADERSHIP



**NOBODY TOLD
YOU BEFORE**



CA PAWAN KR AGARWAL



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PART-I





Introduction

Woes of a First-time Author

“A great deed is rarely done at the first attempt.”

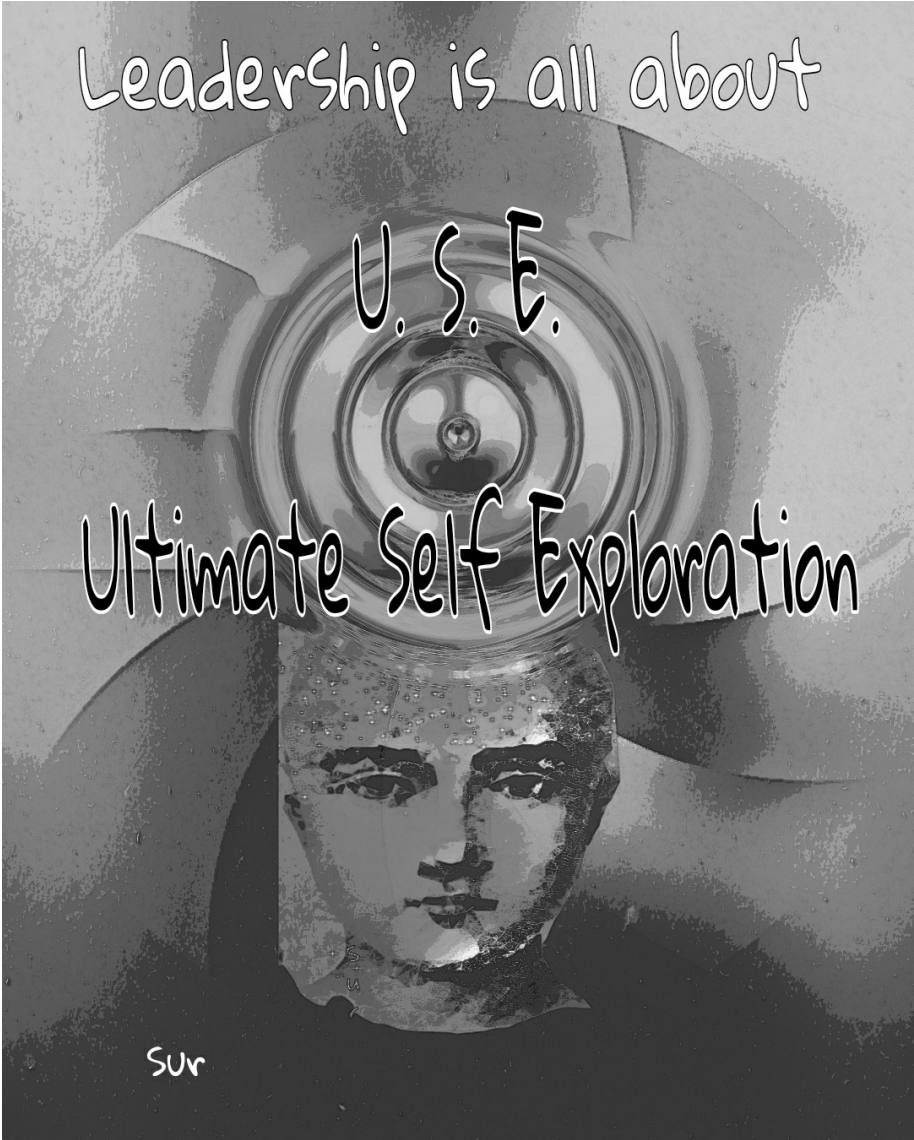
—Napoleon Bonaparte.

Leadership is all about

U.S.E.

Ultimate Self Exploration

Sur



Introduction

Woes of a First-time Author

It takes a herculean effort to write a book. It is a collaborative effort. Writing a book, especially one on *leadership*, takes a significant amount of time, resources, and energy. Without the blessings of some supreme cosmic power, it is not possible.

Firstly, while creating this book, it never came to my mind that *I was writing this book*. I always felt that He was writing this book through me.

Secondly, my book is not a reflection of my understanding and perception. This is my way of learning from hundreds of accomplished people, experts, books, and great leaders. While reading the books of great people, I used to take notes of inspiring ideas, thoughts, and triggers. I have more than 1500 pages of handwritten notes that have been jotted down in the last decade or more.

Thirdly, it reignites my passion. I have thoroughly enjoyed creating my book. It is a challenging job but at the same time, it is exciting.

The man behind the iconic *Amar Chitra Katha*, Anant Pai (popularly known as Uncle Pai) says, “not only should one read books but also take notes from them and later discuss how one intends to adopt those values in one’s life.”¹

¹ Uncle Pai: A biography by Rajesh M. Iyer.

I expect similar actions from my dear readers. Please take notes and discuss the same with others (including me). Never dismiss or accept an idea at the beginning itself. Contemplate the same and then decide whether it is worth adopting.

Many friends have helped, guided, and inspired me to write this book. I loved reading books since my childhood. I have read countless books since then. To write this book alone, I have read more than 100 books—most of them being biographies and autobiographies of Indian heroes and leaders with whom we can relate. One of my friends asked me to suggest one book which he should read. It is a difficult question. But I sincerely recommended *Bhagavad Gita on Effective Leadership* by Pujan Rokan. Another book I would advise you to read is *Developing the Leader Within You* by John C Maxwell. This celebrated book, containing 10 chapters must be read slowly. Complete the assignments and action steps suggested by the author at the end of every chapter. Go for a free leadership assessment from the author by visiting his website. You may also enjoy free daily video counseling with John Maxwell.

There must be thousands of books on leadership. Mind-boggling theories of leadership have developed. Experts have carried out massive research and their studies have contributed magnificently to developing leadership theories.

Dr. A. J. Kalam mentioned seven qualities that every leader must possess. They are:

- proficiency in modern technology
- vision
- traveling to the unexplored path
- managing success as well as failure
- courage to take decisions
- transparency in everything
- integrity.

Dr. Sanjiv Chopra (with David Fisher) has beautifully developed 10 qualities of a great leader—listening, empathy, attitude, dreaming,

effectiveness, resilience, purpose, humility, integrity, and packing others' parachutes.²

I have attended many workshops on leadership and they have profound influence on my thoughts, actions, and life as a whole. It was during the COVID-19 period that I had the opportunity to listen to many acclaimed coaches and mentors.

I have realized one thing—that despite a flood of information, coaching, training, and awesome lectures on the subject of leadership, the basics remain the same. Cambridge dictionary defines something basic as simple and not complicated to provide the base or starting point from which, something can develop. Basics are fundamental to help understand, apply, learn, integrate, or assimilate any skill, subject, or learning. There are cardinal principles that are timeless and without knowing them, the superstructure cannot be built. I intend to explain these basics with such an example with which we can relate.

Nothing I have discussed in this book is complicated. In case you feel it is complicated, confusing, or contradictory, go to the basics. Basics are always simple, though they may not be easy.

The American football coach and executive in the NFL, Vince Lombardi said, “Games are decided by the basics.” The same applies to football, cricket, or any other game. You may learn advanced techniques but never forget the basics. So, next time, instead of searching for a difficult answer to a problem, try focusing on the basics. Reviewing your basics would make your foundation strong.

Piyush Pandey of **Ogilvy** has rightly said that “No theory on leadership can teach you better than real stories of leadership.”

One more thing should be remembered—leadership does not mean that you are a manager, CEO, politician, or the president of a social organization. You can lead everywhere and wherever you are at present. You lead in your personal life, job, business, and peer group. Even a child is a leader if he is passionate and eager to learn and grow.

² Leadership by Example by Dr. Sanjiv Chopra with David Fisher (Thomas Dunne Books).

A housewife is a leader who manages a family and the household, nurtures kids, and is aware of social surroundings.

Remember your childhood days. When a few children used to fight with each other, suddenly, a mediator would appear in the form of a leader. It is rightly said that a “leader should be in the street of the society, not necessarily in the corporate world.”

And the fact remains that there is no chartered path in the journey of leadership. There are no canned answers. As David Gergen says, “Leadership is a journey. Each one of us has to take our path and get there our way.”

The Power of Mantras

Leadership is a mindset that is the source of one’s motivation. It gives meaning to what we do and how we invest our time, money, and energy. So, a leader must adopt an infinite mindset. This appears to be difficult but with practice and devotion, it can be achieved by one and all. *Mantras* come in handy in this regard.

Mantra consists of *man* (the mind) and *tra* (originally *tri*) which means *to cross*. So, *mantras enable us to cross the sea of the mind*. You may also call it a hymn, incantation, melody, logo, motto, psalm, or use any other word which prompts you to repeat the same. Yes, I call principles of leadership *mantras* because they are supposed to be repeated as your central thought. Remember, it is very important to be careful of what goes into one’s subconscious mind. *Mantras*, when repeated, sink into your subconscious mind and positively affect your behavior, action, response, and reaction.

Over some time, you begin to truly believe that you can do something and your actions naturally follow. They become your affirmations and your brain accepts them as a fact.

Ekknath Easwaran has written an awesome book named, *The Mantram Handbook*. In his other book, *Mediation* he says:

“In the simple act of repeating the *mantram*, we accomplish remarkable things. The tension in our bodies, the cause of specific complaints and general malaise, ebbs away, and we find

delightfully that real health is more than just an absence of disease. We toughen our will, too, which signals the end of addictions, if any have enslaved us for years. Internal divisions are healed and our purposes are unified. So, we become a beneficent force in life and not, as all of us may have been at times, something of a burden on the earth. We gain access to inner resources—courage, patience, and compassion, which are presently locked up within us. Then all our relationships flourish—we love and re-loved. Gradually, if we repeat it often, the *mantram* permeates and utterly transforms our consciousness.³

Mahatma Gandhi also said that the *mantram* becomes one's *staff of life* and carries one through every ordeal. It is not repeated for the sake of repetition but as an aid to one's effort.

So, use every opportunity to repeat the *mantras*. Each repetition accumulates—to finally pay a rich dividend. A word of caution here! For a *mantra* to be powerful, it must be preceded by thoroughly reading the entire chapter. Each chapter has some central points. The moment you repeat the *mantra*, these central points come to your mind in a flash. A *mantra* refreshes your memory and prompts you to take action. *Mantras* without action become powerless. What you do is more valuable than what you say. So, using the *mantras* in the right perspective will yield the desired result.

Mantras, to be effective, must be understood properly.

Read the chapter three times and then make the *mantras* your daily ritual. Let them penetrate the depths of the unconscious mind. It does not matter whether you chant them aloud, mentally, or just listen to them.

Soon, you will begin to see your leadership skills, in each area of your life, reach a new level.

³ Meditation by Eknath Easwaran.

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita (SMB) is my favorite scripture. I believe that it is not a book—it is a university. My writings in this book are greatly influenced by SMB directly or sometimes indirectly. By indirectly, I mean while I read commentaries on SMB written by others. SMB has given me a purpose in my life to dedicate myself to a noble cause. Today, I am a trustee in three charitable trusts and I use about 80% of my surplus income on charity. Needless to say, almost 80% of the profit gained from selling this book will also go to charity.

One thing is certain—a leader cannot exist unless he has followers—unless there is a team, group, and organization, however small or large it may be. A true leader belongs to everyone—every team member. Take a cue from what CNN IBN’s Harneet Singh once said about Shahrukh Khan. “Shahrukh is the son every mother wishes for, the lover every woman wishes for, the husband every wife wishes for, the father every child can relate to, and the actor every Indian knows about,” he said. He truly is *everyone’s man*.

Styles of Leadership

The traditional style of leadership is based on the concept of “market contract.” Paychecks and other incentives dominate the scene. A leader feels that he has the authority and can get things done by supervising his people.

Another style is based on “psychological contracts” in which a leader creates spaces and opportunities for others. People development gets the top priority. This style has a greater chance of success in creating a team of future leaders.

There is yet another style that is on the wisdom contained in old scriptures, such as the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. Chapters on leading by example, motivation, emotions, servant leadership, beliefs, responsibilities, action, etc., in this book, draw inspiration from such scriptures as well as the lives of our great leaders. I would prefer to call this third style of leadership *inspirational leadership* in which mutual dependence, equanimity, values, etc., are predominant.

SMB explains two more styles of leadership—healthy and toxic leadership styles and the characteristics that enable us to recognize them. Anything including goals, actions, assets, riches, invention, and conception can be classified as good, passionate, and evil.

A survey of above 100 senior executives of Indian companies has revealed that the source of their competitive advantage lies deep inside their companies—in their people. Unlike American companies, which give the highest priority to a stakeholder’s value, Indian companies, today, focus more on coaching and training their employees and social issues. I am of the considered opinion that inspirational leadership is more appropriate in India than anywhere else.

However, I must add quickly that modern theories of leadership cannot be rejected out and out. A tremendous amount of research on leadership is going on all over the world and we know that wisdom can dawn anywhere and anytime.

With the advent of the digital age, now, the Agile technique is becoming popular. There will be a huge change in the mindset of future leaders to respond on a real-time basis. This style is known as the collaborative and co-creative leadership style. But once again, let me repeat and say that the basics remain the same, as the saying goes, “The more things change, the more they remain the same.”

This book contains 14 chapters— an Introduction, 12 *mantras* of effortless leadership, and bonus *mantras* (by Dr. Habil Khorakiwala) in the last chapter. All the chapters revolve around a common theme— ***effortless leadership***. However, each chapter has its existence and can be read independently. It is a small book. One chapter, on average, can be finished in 30 minutes. The summary or takeaways at the end of each chapter will refresh your memory and help you in digesting the content of that chapter.

PART-II

MANTRAS

Mantras, to be effective, must be understood properly.

Read the chapter three times and then make the *mantras* your daily ritual. Let them penetrate the depths of your unconscious mind. It does not matter whether you chant aloud, mentally, or just listen to them.

Soon, you will begin to see your leadership skills in each area of your life reach a new level.



Mantra 1

I Have a Mindset of Positive Thinking!

“Positive thinking may not guarantee success, but negative thinking guarantees failure. So, we might as well be positive.”

—Guru Mahatriaji.

A close-up, grayscale image of a person's eyes, looking directly forward. The eyes are the central focus of the top half of the image.

I have

A large, white, outlined letter 'A' that serves as the first letter of the word 'Amindset' in the main title.

A

The word 'Mindset' in a white, outlined, cursive font, positioned to the left of a dark, textured image of a person's face.

Mindset

The word 'of' in a white, outlined, cursive font, positioned to the left of the dark, textured image of a person's face.

of

The word 'Positivity' in a white, outlined, cursive font, positioned to the left of the dark, textured image of a person's face.

Positivity

Mantra 1

I Have a Mindset of Positive Thinking!

I purchased *Believe and Achieve: W. Clement Stone's 17 Principles of Success* by Samuel A. Cypert in 1992 or possibly 1993. Because it serves as the foundation for all other concepts, the author has chosen *Positive Mental Attitude* (PMA) as the first principle. You can improve your life through this approach since only you have power over what your mind accepts or rejects.

This acclaimed classic is my favorite book. I think I must have read it over 50 times. I still read it periodically. This book has had an impact on me, both consciously and unconsciously. So, it should come as no surprise that I chose a positive outlook as the first *mantra* for my book.

Imagine for a moment that you earn Rs. 86,400 per day. Someone takes Rs. 400 away from you unauthorizedly. Will you throw away the balance amount of Rs. 86,000 and run after that person who took away your Rs. 400?

Most probably you will not. You will put the remaining amount of Rs. 86,000 to good use and take further action to earn Rs. 86,400 again the very next day.

Similarly, we have 86,400 seconds each day. Do not worry if somebody injects negative thoughts into your mind for 400 seconds. Enjoy the remaining 86,000 seconds and make the best use of the same.

Life is much bigger than 400 seconds or Rs. 400 and so are *you*...

Your target should be to eliminate all your negative thoughts and replace them with empowering, positive, resourceful, nurturing, constructive, inspiring, healing, and divine thoughts.

Our mind is continuously generating thoughts. Often, we are not aware of these thoughts. Some of the thoughts are good and some are bad. They may be comforting or peaceful, positive or negative, aspirational or limiting. It is said that we have about 60,000 thoughts every day and almost 95% of them are repetitive and non-inspirational (there may be some exceptions, but this is what it is to be human). What we think and how we think can have a massive impact on our lives.

This is not a book on how to change the structure of our thoughts. Various techniques are available and imparted by therapists, counselors, Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioners, and motivational speakers. This chapter intends to develop a mindset of positive thinking which is a primary requirement of leadership in every area of your life. In my experience, I have found NLP very useful in overcoming negative feelings, such as anger, resentment, anxiety, fear, and inferiority complex. NLP has been discussed in brief in the *mantra-5* of this book.

My concept of positive thinking is quite simple. Every time something good happens, relive it 100 times over and over again and when something negative happens, do not feed on it, do not spare any time for it, and avoid applying your energy for the same. It is a matter of practice.

It does not imply that we suppress our emotions and ignore our negative thoughts. Be mindful of any sad or grieving thoughts. Communicate them to those who are involved. We can sometimes gain support from others by expressing our genuine sadness. Consider what actions you must take to improve your life.

Every problem, challenge, or issue comes with a solution, although, you may not see the same instantly. You might find a solution by consulting somebody like your peers or an expert. You may seek help

from the universe through prayers, devotion, and faith. Why not take the guidance of the supreme power through meditation?

Remember the more you appreciate your self-worth and feel blessed, the more positive energy you will create. To quote Pranay, we may note that “The growth of our positive energy field is the consequence of the growth of our inner consciousness. The more it grows, the more we will be capable of handling problems. In this way, we become clear, transparent, and courageous enough, to find new solutions to leadership problems.”⁴

Exclusive action, backed by some creative thinking and patience will only solve the problem. In any case, never be consumed by the problem. Always see positivity and absorb positivity. Affirm a hundred times that, “I have a mindset of positive thinking and I take responsibility for it.”

I still remember an example, given by my teacher when I was a teenager. I was frustrated as my father wanted me to work in his shop right from 11 am to 7:30 pm. My negative thinking was that my father was torturing me. My teacher showed me another side of the same and told me “Your father is training you to be a good businessman!”

Two ascetics were living in a hut. Throughout the day, they would spread knowledge and teach prayers and worship among the villagers. At night, they would return to their hut.

One night, when they came back, they found that half the roof of the hut had been uprooted by the storm.

One ascetic said, “We do so much for the benefit of the people, yet we are made to suffer like this. Many evil people live happily.”

The other said with folded hands, “Oh! God, you are so merciful! The storm could have blown the whole roof. You have saved half of the roof for us. Thank you so much.”

⁴ Hinduism, Spirituality for Leadership and Success by Pranay.

At night, the second ascetic saw the moon from the hut. He was very happy and said, “Thank God for such a nice moon. But for the storm, I could never have seen this.”

The second ascetic could see the positive side of any situation.

It is up to you whether you want to see the positive side or the negative side of a situation. William Black said, “Keep your face toward the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow.”

A question may arise in your mind about why a vast majority of people find it difficult to inculcate the habit of positive thinking. The answer is simple. Research has shown that less than 3% of people are successful in real terms. This is because the rest of the people have accepted a mediocre life and do not aspire to achieve any sort of perfection. It is only successful people’s thinking—that everything happens for a reason and it serves them. Napoleon Hill said, “Every adversity, every failure, every heartbreak carries with it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit.”

Only a few have made this an integral part of their psyches. Thousands of years ago, Lord Krishna said the same thing in *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* (SMB) 7:3.

“Among thousands of men, a few strive for perfection, and of those who strive and attain perfection, further few know me in all the principles of my existence.”

Perhaps, the positive attitude of a 16 years old boy will inspire you more as it is said that real-life stories are more powerful than theories.

Some of you might have heard about Hrideshwar Singh Bhati, a 16-year-old boy from Jaipur. He was suffering from motor neuron disease and was wheelchair-bound. He used to say, “Either you suffer or innovate.”

During the farewell ceremony of Sachin Tendulkar, he saw that Sachin’s mother and coach were brought on the stage in normal wheelchairs (not power wheelchairs). So, he decided

to invent a power wheelchair and decided to give one such chair as a gift to Sachin.

See the positive thinking of Hrideshwar? He had also invented a six-player variant of chess at the age of nine. He earned a patent for his invention in 2012, thus making him the youngest patent holder in India at that time.⁵

The sum and substance of the above discussion are that there is power in positive thinking, which is your positive *response* to a situation. Negative thinking is your *reaction* to a situation. In *response*, you take responsibility. You are proactive. In *reaction*, you are disempowered. Take a simple example. In cricket, a bowler bowls a googly and the batsman is out. One batsman might react and say, “This baller is stupid.” Another batsman faces a googly from the same bowler. He is out. He says, “I need to train myself further.” It is needless to mention that it is the second batsman who will climb to greater heights in the future.

So, in any situation, whether you will *respond* or *react*—the choice is entirely yours.

Some of the simple techniques that I found to be useful in my life are mentioned below. The list is not exhaustive. It is only indicative. Find your way of remaining positive. There are no fixed rules. Whatever works for you is fine.

1. Whenever a negative thought comes into your mind, say “cancel-cancel” and replace it with a positive thought. It may not bring results immediately, but patience and practice will surely ensure a positive mindset in your life. Remember, Rome was not built in a day. It was built day by day.
2. Faith is the key and meditation is the path to it.
3. To cultivate a cheerful outlook, Norman Vincent Peale recommends practicing *happiness thinking*. Happiness is the most important thing in the world. There is never a dull moment. Every experience is a chance to grow.

⁵. Sources: *Wikipedia* and *Life Positive*, a monthly magazine. Hrideshwar expired at the age of 19 in 2021.

4. Be with nature every day for at least 20 minutes. See the sunrise, sunset, trees, animals, clouds, the rain, and listen to the chirping of birds.
5. Count your blessings. Maintain a journal and write down all your achievements and joyful moments, howsoever small they may be. Read them as often as possible.
6. Make time for physical exercise at least four days a week and incorporate some breathing exercises (*Pranayam*) into your routine. Because there is no way to breathe in the past or future. Breathing with awareness is beneficial. You must live in the present moment.
7. Live in the present, not in the past or the future. The future depends upon the optimal use of your present. The moment you say to yourself, “What should I do at this moment,” you will feel an explosion of energy. Try it. Learn to ask yourself “What should I do at this moment?”
8. Keep yourself occupied. An empty mind is the Devil’s workshop. Henry Ford said, “I keep my mind so busy thinking about what I want to accomplish that there is no room for thinking about things I don’t want.”
9. Have an attitude of gratitude. When a leader is grateful to his team members and others, he immediately gains their respect and cooperation. The benefits of gratitude are numerous. Try to search on Google and you will be surprised. For example, gratitude can improve your immune system and enhance your memory.
10. Always remember that negative thoughts are bound to come to us from time to time. If we are aware of them, we will find that they disappear as quickly as they come in the first place. They die a natural death. Don’t allow them to shape up into a habit. Reduce their power by replacing them with inspiring and positive thoughts. To quote from *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* (SMB), 2:14, “Tough times will come and go away. Learn to tolerate them without being affected by them. Nothing is permanent in this world.”
11. Whenever anything happens, we make a story in our minds. Sometimes this story is disempowering, negative, and reflects our helplessness. Can we make this story (read self-talk) empowering and positive? Remember, the story of two ascetics?

12. Avoid the company of negative people as far as possible. They destroy your self-confidence and disturb your logical thinking. Never agree with them and above all do not try to change them. Just maintain a 50 feet distance from them.

13. Be blissful, be playful.

A leader must be capable of exhibiting bliss in all the areas of his leadership role. Blissful leadership is said to be equal to purpose-driven leadership. This makes the leader more energetic and proficient in his behavioral pattern. Similarly, being playful does not mean cracking jokes or being humorous. It is about your mindset. Playful leaders are engaged in those activities which they enjoy most. This is a process that ensures the psychological safety and security of the followers. So, first, have a clear purpose and objective as to *your why*, and then let the bliss and playfulness take over to make the team productive and result-oriented.

14. Guard your self-esteem. Self-esteem is nothing but your self-respect and confidence in your abilities as well as your overall opinion on how you feel about your shortcomings and limitations. Self-esteem should be natural and your true being. An inflated self-esteem is as bad as low self-esteem. Inflated self-esteem makes you self-centered and egoistic. Low self-esteem is counterproductive. Maxwell Maltz says, “Low self-esteem is like driving through life with your handbrake on.”

15. Never compare yourself with others. Steve Jobs said, “Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your inner voice.” So what matters is your opinion about yourself. Stop comparing yourself with others. What you see on social media about others is seldom true. Try comparing your photograph on Facebook and your Aadhar card—you will be shocked. The best way is to ask yourself whether you are better than what you were yesterday. Be your best version every single day. It is the key to success and growth.

16. Lastly, let us take a leaf of advice from the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna says in SMB, 18.22, “That knowledge by which one is attached to one kind of work as the only work, without knowledge

of the truth and which is very small, is said to be in the mode of darkness.”

It means we must accept reality. If plan A does not work, we must have plan B ready, then plan C, D, and so on. So, know the truth and never be attached to any particular activity.

17. **If you do not adopt *mantra 1* of the positive thinking approach, the rest of this book will not be of much use to you.**

To conclude this chapter, I would like to quote from an article by Professor AVR Rao, published in *Life Positive*, (the October 2021 issue):

“Take a solemn oath that you will never entertain negative thoughts about anything or anyone, even in times of an intolerable situation of despair or disappointment.”

I advise that you raise your right hand and repeat the above affirmation once again preferably before a mirror. Do it now.

I will never entertain negative thoughts about anything or anyone, even in times of intolerable situations of despair or disappointment. Amen!

**Remember, no one is stopping you from lighting a lamp
in the dark night**

—Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan.

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